



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

### OUR FINANCIAL MESSAGE: 'THANK YOU,' AND 'PLEASE'

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Our Church Council and Finance Committee are excited that our new roof is almost complete! We are happy to report that, so far, our congregation has donated \$64,500 to the Building Together Fund. Thank you! The total cost of the roof, gutters and drainage system is \$50,090. The additional contributions available in the Building Together Fund are designated as a start toward needed renovations and unexpected large repairs in the next two years. These decisions will be made with prayer and coordination with the congregation.

However, the status of our general church budget continues to concern us. We finished last year with a deficit of \$8,000 and little money left in savings. In the first two months of 2026 we had an additional deficit of \$9,600. By March 1 our savings and general checking account were exhausted. We reviewed our expenditures and are confident that there is no waste, and that our funds are used wisely. Thankfully, congregational giving was exceptional in March. That's good news, but for the past 15 months we have not covered our general church expenses. There are times when we have to delay paying monthly bills because there are insufficient funds in our account.

We are encouraged that the monthly trend is improving. Also, new members are helping our congregation grow and strengthening our overall giving. In the past, our contributions have decreased in the summer. Given our lack of financial reserves, this could become a major problem as soon as June. Please continue your ongoing support during the months ahead. If you are able to increase your giving, it will be valued and used carefully. If your family is experiencing hardship, we understand that your giving may need to be limited.

We are grateful that God is with us! Thank you for your faithful generosity and prayers as we continue the work of St. Stephen together.



*The Church Council and Finance Committee*

### SPEAKING OF THE ROOF...



*We asked Pastor Tom for a detailed update.*

The roof over the sanctuary and the columbarium has been replaced, and new skylights have been put in. We are pleased with the work and attention to detail from Apache Roofing. GutterWerks started on Wednesday and will finish in two days,

weather permitting. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this important project! Rita and I are collecting property & liability insurance quotes. Our current provider (the one who said we needed a new roof before they would renew in July) sent a letter last week stating they are no longer offering insurance in Florida. Our new roof will make us more attractive to our next insurer.



## CONGRATULATIONS, MARK

Everywhere you turn this week, you see messages of delight and congratulations to St. Stephen member Mark Mustian. Among many other things, he's the man behind Word of South, which bills itself as "A Festival of Literature and Music." Many of the thousands who attended last weekend's assortment of events – which included a concert by Earth, Wind, & Fire – are raving that this year's WOS was the best ever. Mark must be exhausted ... and feeling pretty darned good.



## COMING UP SOON, ARTOPIA FANS

*Caroline Collins alerted us that tickets are now available for Artopia. She sent us a flyer that contained this message:*

The wait is over! Tickets for Artopia are officially on sale! Join us for one of the community's most anticipated evenings celebrating art, creativity, and impact, all in support of the life-changing work of Big Bend Cares. This unforgettable night will feature incredible artwork, vibrant entertainment, delicious food and drinks, and the energy that makes Artopia such a signature event year after year. Secure your tickets now and be part of a night where art meets purpose. We can't wait to celebrate with you!



[Click Here to Purchase Your Ticket Today!](#)

*Reminder: The chief operating officer of Big Bend Cares is St. Stephen's own Sylvia Smith.*

## CONFIRMATION FOR BIGGER KIDS

*By Pastor Tom*

Long ago, confirmation classes might have been filled with memorization and strict rules. Thankfully, our church has moved away from that understanding and is now focused on lessons that include Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation, Law and Gospel, biblical interpretations and much more. These topics, grounded in relationship-building, make confirmation (dare I say) fun.

Dave Suhrweir, St. Stephen's longtime confirmation teacher, creates his own lesson plans that bring out humor in learning and personal storytelling from participants. If you've wanted to refresh your understandings of Lutheran history and theology, Dave and I would like to invite you to join us for the Confirmation for Adults class. Whether you're taking it as a refresher or as a first-timer, you're welcome to participate. Please see Dave or me for more details.



## EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

Though we are far from perfect, I do see the wondrous things St. Stephen does that hold us together. Whether in prayer, financial assistance or in reaching out to walk with someone needing companionship, St. Stephen takes care of her own. No matter how long you've been connected to this church, you are probably able to tell a story about something God has done in this community to keep it together.

Six years ago, this congregation, along with many others, struggled to survive in the midst of a pandemic – when we had something like six people in worship and were thrust into livestreaming the service with all the trials and errors. It was an amazing miracle that we were able to get through that.

If you've been here a long time, then you might remember when this congregation went through the process and work to become a Reconciling in Christ congregation – the first in Florida to openly welcome people no matter whom they loved. That took a lot of work and difficult conversations that were too much for some people, and some left....

These are just a few big examples, but there are hundreds of smaller, though no less important, examples of people holding this congregation together. Togetherness and mutual aid is this community's foundation.

## BEFORE YOU GO...

- Want to send a note, letter, poem, picture or even hope recipe to retreat speaker Jacqueline Bussie? Thanks to Monty Mortensen, there's a basket in the church office where we're collecting items to send to her. The last day to turn in anything is Sunday. Questions? Ask Monty.
- Our friends from Grace Lutheran want us to know about an upcoming "tango mixer workshop" (I've never typed those three words together until now). Apparently it's a "circle dance for the inexperienced." You'll be led by Roy and Wanda, and there's no charge – although "a can of tuna is welcome." If you think you'll be there, let them know at 517-290-8506.
- Pastor Tom says at least one St. Stephen worshipper who's not an official member of the congregation is ready to become one (despite the fact that we don't tango at St. Stephen). How about you? If you'd like to join as well, let our pastor know.
- If you have an anniversary, birthday, special memory or special St. Stephen person or program you'd like to honor, celebrate by sponsoring the altar flowers for our service. Sign up on the flower chart, out by the name tags, or ask Office Manager Rita to sign you up. Include the \$40 with your regular offering. And then take the flowers home!



Custom Ranchero in Colonial White and Sun Gold Style Tons Colors

**'58 FORD RANCHERO**  
—a worker with the road smoothing ride of a fine car!

When you slip behind Ranchero's wheel and glide away, you'll have to check the rearview mirror to realize you're driving a truck! Only by seeing that whopping load back there can you believe it! Getaway is smooth, powerful... the ride is gentle, easy. Bumps and jays of country roads or peck-marked city streets are gently cushioned. And you get the same down-soft ride even without a load!

The secret is Ranchero's unique suspension—unlike any truck in America. Front wheels cushion shock through 4-way ball-joint suspension, similar in design to that of fine passenger cars. Rear springs are a variable-rate type to compensate for varying loads. The resulting ride combats fatigue, keeps you fresh the day long, ready for an evening's fun... again in your Ford Ranchero!

**RANCHERO** says nice things about your business!

Resorts haul guests and their gear, sails and nails and planks for the pier

TV men put on a good show in 'em

the altar flowers for our service. Sign up on the flower chart, out by the name tags, or ask Office Manager Rita to sign you up. Include the \$40 with your regular offering. And then take the flowers home!

And pictured here is the newsletter editor's latest suggestion, in case the Church Council ever decides to provide him with a company car. It's a '58 Ford Ranchero – you know, a cross between a car and a pickup truck. "When you slip behind Ranchero's wheel and glide away," the text exults, "you'll have to check the rearview mirror to realize you're driving a truck!" Well, not a big manly truck like Pastor Tom's. But sort of a truck nevertheless.

## UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS



- Julia Bonfanti - 5/3
- Emily Jennings - 5/7
- Eva Mustian - 5/8
- Claire Claussen 5/9
- Eunice Muchuruza 5/16
- Jennifer Slusarz 5/20
- Jennifer Dritt 5/21
- Paxton Oates 5/23
- Sandy Larson 5/24
- Blake Simmons 5/25
- Jake Hartung 5/25
- Nicholas Oliveri 5/25

## COMING UP

### Today:

Noon - Al-Anon meets in Pastor Emory Hingst Memorial Fellowship Hall,  
aka Hingst Hall (HH)  
7 p.m. - AA meets in HH

### This Friday:

9:30 a.m. - TOPS meets in HH

### This Sunday:

9:00 a.m. - Bible study  
9:30 a.m. - Choir rehearsal  
10 a.m. - Worship, Fifth Sunday of Easter

### Monday, May 4:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

### Tuesday, May 5:

5 p.m. - NA meets in HH

### Wednesday, May 6:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH  
7 p.m. - Choir rehearsal

### Thursday, May 7:

10 a.m. - Bible study

## SERVING THIS SUNDAY

**Pastor Tom Holdcraft**, Preaching and Presiding; **Colleen Holdcraft**, Assisting Minister; **Loraine Sundberg**, Cup Minister; **Colleen Holdcraft**, Lector; **Colin Hackley and Audrey Post**, Tech Team; **Lawana Lamb-Daniels and Sandy Lamb-Daniels**, Altar Guild; **Kirsten Ebbesen and Rob Schiffer**, Counters; **Erik Robinson and Patrick Kennell**, Ushers; **Denise Bookwalter**, Announcements



If you have news or photos to share,  
please send them to Rita at  
[sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com](mailto:sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com).

Don't forget our Facebook page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/ststephentallahassee>.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, ELCA