



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

### ESTIMATING HOW MUCH YOU CAN GIVE

After several weeks of hearing stewardship inspiration from fellow members, this Sunday we'll have our first opportunity to fill out estimate-of-giving cards for 2026. "It really helps the Church Council and Finance Committee plan our budget," Pastor Tom said last Sunday. If you're new to St. Stephen and find this all baffling, please ask Pastor or pretty much any member for guidance. If you're not worshipping in person and don't have a card to fill out, simply send your information to Rita in the church office. Her contact information is below. Bless you.



*Don't forget that we've all been invited to read and comment on the Finance Committee's tentative guidelines for major financial gifts, which you should have received by email last week. Thanks for your good work, committee members.*

### GOD'S GRACE AND OUR GIVING

*Excerpt from Susan Warren's stewardship message*



It takes a church full of people to keep a church open. We have a wonderful staff in Pastor Tom, Rita and Katharine, but have you ever noticed in the same area of the weekly bulletin it lists "All members" as "ministers"? It's true! It takes each and every one of us and our unique set of gifts to keep this loving and accepting community afloat.

St. Stephen has never been a big-box church. We've seen some larger Sunday crowds as well as some smaller. Members and friends of St. Stephen have always experienced stewardship as a way of life. Year after year, with God's grace and our giving, we continue to meet our church and community needs.

### OUR CHURCH HOME

*Excerpt from Kirsten Ebbesen's stewardship message*

[St. Stephen] is in so many ways like what a home should be, and somehow over time quietly, steadily this community indeed has become [my family's] home; we know it so well. And because this is our home, we take care of it like we take care of our other home down the street: We pay the bills; we replace the roof if needed; we do our best to keep it clean and somewhat orderly, inside and outside; we beautify it in a meaningful way; we make room for music and joy. We also make an effort to get along and communicate and resolve disagreements, so that there is harmony in our home.... We share our gifts from God by bringing our resources and our energy from home out into our neighborhood and into the world, to try and make life better for our brothers and sisters in need.

All this we do, and at the end of the day, we may be spent, but we are also thankful, and we have no regrets about taking care of this, our home, our community, each other. And that is why we come back week after week, year after year; nurturing our faith, sharing our time, using our talents and bringing our treasure according to God's call.



## POINSETTIAS, ANYONE?

At 9:30 a.m. a week from Saturday (Dec. 13), we'll be decorating the sanctuary for Christmas. As part of that effort, we'll be decorating the chancel area with poinsettias for Christmas. Would you like to dedicate one (or more)? The cost is only \$10 (not \$15, as announced last Sunday), and you may dedicate yours to whomever you wish. The dedication list will be in the Dec. 21 and Dec. 24 bulletins. Just email or phone Office Manager Rita with the information.



## ALSO A WEEK FROM SATURDAY...

*Forwarded by Audrey Post, who works at the FSU College of Medicine*

Walk With a Doc takes place from 9 to 10 a.m. Dec. 13 at Cascades Park. Join Amy Neal, M.D. (Class of '08), associate medical director at Capital Health Plan, and Jeffrey Ferraro, M.D., psychiatry clerkship faculty at the Tallahassee Regional Campus, for a discussion about handling holiday grief. Gather near the waterfall for a brief talk. Afterward, participants are encouraged to take a walk with the doctors and enjoy the fall weather. Participation is free but [registration is required](#). CHP's chapter number is 17436.



## THE GIVING TREE

The Giving Tree gifts are due to church on Dec. 14. They should be wrapped with the family # and child's age and gender. Please let Andrea Notley know if you have any questions: 850-443-5293.

## EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

On this first Sunday of Advent, we sing to God about Jesus' return. We see our lives as lives shaped by the Second Coming of Christ. And, as we begin the new church year today, we recall this conviction to be one of the towering marks of our walk on earth. Not only that we live after we die because of Jesus (we will!), but that we live right now in a state of preparation and readiness. Both glad to be here and ready for what God brings next.

## BEFORE YOU GO...

- The OWLs are gathering for lunch at 11 a.m. Tuesday at Casa Grande. Please bring a wrapped Dollar Tree gift (with no name attached). Details? Call Audrey or Barbara.
- God be with the family and friends of dear Connie Taylor, wife of the late Young Bill Taylor and daughter-in-law of the late Ol' Bill Taylor. Her funeral mass is set for 11 a.m. Wednesday at Good Shepherd Catholic Church.
- Simone Schuster once again is inviting us to assist in a trash-cleanup day at San Luis Mission Park. That's beginning at 9:30 a.m. Saturday. Everything is provided: gloves, buckets, grabbers, trash bags, even coffee and Panera pastries.
- Want to become a member of St. Stephen? Some other folks are doing so soon, and it's always nice to have company when you're up there by the altar, taking that important step into membership. Please let Pastor Tom know if you'd like to have that conversation with him.
- We're still collecting bedding for the FSU students who lost many of their belongings in a recent fire. If you have new double-bed sheets or gently used blankets and pillows and such, please add them to the ones already in the fellowship hall.



- **Sunday, from 4 to 5 p.m., the interfaith prayer vigil for immigration justice will continue at the Historic Capitol steps.**
- **Need the contact information for a St. Stephen member? Use your digital directory. Don't have it on your phone? Office Manager Rita can fix you up.**
- **Please remember that you can look up past sermons or newsletters that you missed. Visit our website: <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/>.**
- **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 Rita to sign you up. Include the \$40 with your regular offering. And then take the flowers home!**



## UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

**Annelise Leysieffer - 12/4**  
**Annette Claussen - 12/8**  
**Janet Barber - 12/9**  
**Maria (Ridy) Hofer - 12/11**  
**Laura Sullivan-Hackley - 12/14**  
**Wesley Holdcraft - 12/18**  
**Rita Ford - 12/18**  
**Carol Santos - 12/26**  
**Kate Stuart - 12/29**  
**Tom Holdcraft - 12/29**  
**Mike Martinez - 12/30**

## 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 a.m. - Bible study**

**9:30 a.m. - Choir practice**

**10 a.m. - Worship: Second Sunday of Advent**

**Monday, December 08:**

**5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH**

**Tuesday, December 09:**

**5 p.m. - NA meets in HH**

**Wednesday, December 10:**

**5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH**

**7 p.m. - Choir**

## SERVING THIS WEEK

**Pastor Tom Holdcraft**, Preaching and Presiding; **Colleen Holdcraft**, Assisting Minister; **Audrey Post**, Cup Minister; **Erik Robinson**, Lector; **Colin Hackley and Cindy Suhrweir**, Tech Team; **Sandy Lamb-Daniels and Lawana Lamb-Daniels**, Altar Guild; **Margaret Bowers and Susan Warren**, Counters; **Pastor Tom**, Cantor; **Denise Bookwalter**, Announcements

# Peace



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