



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



St. Stephen Lutheran Church

invites **ALL** to join us for

TEA & MUFFINS

to honor all of the ladies of St. Stephen
this Sunday May 11, 8:30 a.m.

WANTED: ONE OFFICE MANAGER

By Pastor Tom

As most of you know, Office Manager Lori and her husband will be moving to North Carolina, and she has submitted her resignation effective July 31. The Church Council and I would like to offer interviews for the position first to members of our worship community – and ensure there's enough time to train a new person to work with Lori before she leaves. The deadline for this internal hiring process is May 23. If no one within St. Stephen is interested in the position, we'll post an ad beginning in June.



Qualified applicants would meet first with me. After that, if they were still in the running, they would be interviewed by a larger group and, ultimately approved with the Church Council. If you're interested, please let Lori or me know and we'll send you a detailed job description.

THANK YOU, TECH TEAM

By Pastor Tom

Gremlins in the technology: It doesn't happen often, but sometimes an issue occurs that keeps us from livestreaming our services. That's what occurred this past Sunday. Our tech people worked hard to figure out what was wrong but could only get the audio to record the service.



It's not as simple as pressing "record," so I'm so thankful for our communications and tech-support team that works every Sunday to bring the service to people near and far. If you haven't had the chance yet, please thank them for their care and commitment.

Here's the latest list of our tech-team members: Caroline Collins, Mark Greeley, Colin Hackley, Colleen Holdcraft, Jonas Holdcraft, Sandy Lamb-Daniels, Audrey Post, Sylvia Smith and Cindy Suhrweir. Please let us know of any names we're missing.

'HEADING TOWARD REMISSION'

We asked Ann Hingst for an update. You'll like it.

"Many, many thanks for all your prayers! They seem to be working as my labs indicate that I am heading toward remission, though it may still take months. I am tolerating the monthly chemo, and when I recover from it I feel fine. I still need to be isolated until my immunity returns. Greta has moved in permanently, which is a real blessing. She will be my housemate when I go into remission, but will revert to caregiver when needed. Greta and I both miss being at church in person, but see you every week online. We look forward to being back with you as soon as possible!"

How about that – another tribute to the tech team. Way to go, guys.

WHY CAN'T WE THINK ANYMORE? BECAUSE WE DON'T READ

By Stephanie Leitch, published April 30 online in The Orlando Sentinel

Let's not worry too much about the books that bills in the Florida House and Senate want to remove from the shelves of school libraries this week. It's just a minor chink out of the hull of a ship that's already sinking.

Let's be frank: When was the last time any of our students visited a library? The library at Florida State University has already been branded Club Stroz (which actually boasts a concierge desk) to get the kids to come in.

The result? Hardly any of my students know that Robert Manning Strozier Library is a library, and for the dearth of books they might encounter there, they can be forgiven for thinking so. Don't worry, says FSU branding, at least that gets the kids to come into a safe and welcoming environment. And most of the middle and high schoolers in my county already refer to their schools' libraries as media centers. Hard-to-find books are already "soft bans" on books.



The problem with not encountering books is that we also miss their lessons and the life kit that reading develops. I gave David Brooks' column ["We're just not as good at thinking anymore."](#) which appeared in *The New York Times* print editions April 11, some mental high-fives for explaining why my brightest college students can't concentrate long enough for them to produce a research paper: They haven't read enough to be able to write.

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I have sat through decades of faculty meetings fielding complaints from my colleagues about students' inability to write. I finally understand that the key to solving the problem of bad writing is to read good writing. The empathy that we develop in reading about characters in books as we accompany their choices and decision-making is critical to how we grow as humans.

Not reading affects our ability to reason. It's a problem compounded by screen culture, for sure, but we start to tap this brain drain already in our middle schools. Course-management software prioritizes multiple-choice questions that require no writing. Even short-answer questions don't give young brains enough mental gymnastics to sustain an argument over a longer term.

My kid's teachers can't assign a book to the whole class because parents against inappropriate content have their hands tied. Do you know what an assignment for an English Language Arts class these days looks like? "Describe a bento box that the protagonist in 'the book of your choice' would pack." How is a teacher to grade this? And what student isn't simply going to watch a trailer to the corresponding movie in order to do the assignment? Was that book read? Probably not. The various book-ban lobbies coupled with numbskull assignments create a perfect storm in Florida.

"The Sins of Sor Juana," Karen Zacarias' play about the Mexican poet Juana Inés de la Cruz, chronicles a moment in the life of a vibrant young mind fed on a diet of Erasmus, Aristotle and Copernicus. The play shows us episodes in Juana's life where she had to compromise to pursue her writing, and, importantly, the activity that nurtured her writing: her reading. Eventually finding brief refuge in a convent (a path frequently taken by early modern women who chose to think rather than to submit to patriarchal culture), Sor Juana's intellectual activity is supported until the arrival of an archbishop who is threatened by her writings. Enter the book bans. After her books, pens and paper are removed, what is left for this one bright light? A life of blind devotion, and, oh, cross-stitching.

Why are we no good at thinking anymore? Because we're terrible at reading. As the parent of a Leon County high schooler, I can count on one hand the actual books my child has been assigned to read in school. With very few exceptions, most of these have been either excerpts or anemic works that hardly pass for literature. The brain drain threatens the preparation for making the hard decisions that life requires of us: what do we do with an ailing parent, how should we treat our neighbor, what do we do if a friend betrays us?

If we remove the books from our shelves (whether by active bans, or concessions to course management software), we rob ourselves of the empathy that makes us human in the first place. As a tribute to Sor Juana, crack the spine of an actual book sometime soon. The professors of your students and children will thank you.

Stephanie Leitch is professor of art history at Florida State University.

ON YOUR SHOPPING LIST

Here's what we're collecting for Pastor Tom to take with him to the upcoming Synod Assembly:

- Body wipes
- Travel-size lotions
- Deodorant (men's & women's)
- Bug spray
- Sunscreen
- Razors (men's & women's)
- Men's boxer briefs (M/LG/XL)
- Women's underwear (L/XL,2X)
- Unisex T-shirts (L/XL)

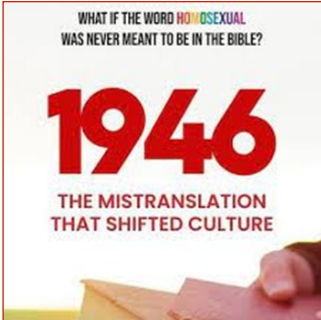
A tub is available in the Hingst Fellowship Hall for your donations. Deadline is June 8.



COMING UP IN JUNE

By Pastor Tom

- St. Stephen will host the Interfaith Pride Service at 7 p.m. June 18. Please come for the celebration and support of the LGBTQIA+ community and local interfaith clergy partners. There will be light refreshments available following the service in Hingst Hall.



- What if the word “homosexual” was never meant to be in the Bible? The Mickee Faust Club, in partnership with the Tallahassee Film Society, is showing “1946: The Mistranslation That Shaped Culture” at the Challenger Learning Center IMAX Theatre. Time is 3 p.m. June 28. More information is available at <https://www.1946themovie.com>.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD: EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM’S SERMON

... What sort of revelation have you experienced? What has happened in your life that told you God’s got this, even when it felt like you were going mad or metaphorically drowning?

If you say you’ve never been visited by a presence outside of yourself, then you haven’t been paying attention, or you haven’t had moments when you needed God/Higher Power/Divine Creator. If that’s the case, you haven’t lived very long, because that time will always come.

And when it does, that presence which comes will not announce itself, or always shock us into recognition. Most often, the Lord comes in quiet times and in the silence of grief; in the soundless mess of anxiety and the hand-wringing moments of guilt. Come hell or high water, the Lord comes.

You cannot predict the visit or always see it in the moment, but we can live in the awareness that helps us to be sensitive to the presence of this God who’s been running with humanity from the beginning and still runs with us....

BEFORE YOU GO...

- OWLs will meet at 11 a.m. May 13 at Panda Buffet. Call Barbara to RSVP at 850-591-7423 or let her know at church.
- Thank Margaret Bowers for that pretty poster at the top of this newsletter.
- By the way, on Sunday Margaret gained another grandchild – her fifth! Oliver Zsolt Bowers weighed in at 10 pounds, 4 ounces. “We are so excited! They live here in town. My son is Derek. His lovely wife is from Hungary, so the middle name is a Hungarian name. I’m very blessed.”
- There’s still time to make your Noisy Offering in support of the Peace and Justice Endowment Fund that Ann and Emory Hingst established.
- Sunday, May 25, at 3 p.m. is the annual Unity in the Community program at Allen Temple CME Church on Kissimmee Street. This event raises money to support scholarships for graduating high-school students who need financial assistance to attend FAMU, FSU or TSC. A Noisy Offering last month was collected to support this program. After the service will be a sit-down dinner. Please RSVP to Brenda Christie at 850-599-1948 or email at bchristie15@gmail.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 Lori to sign you up. Include the \$40 with your regular offering. And then take the flowers home!



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS



Eva Mustian - 05/09
Claire Claussen - 05/09
Jennifer Dritt - 05/21
Paxton Oates - 05/23
Sandy Larson - 05/24
Jake Hartung - 05/25
Blake Simmons - 05/25
Lawana Lamb-Daniels - 05/30
Bevin Reardon - 06/03
Billie Reardon - 06/03
Susan Hehn - 06/11
Billy Oates - 06/14
Tim Larson - 06/16
Ruth Hartung - 06/23
Steve Kunst - 06/23
Sandy Davis - 06/28

**If you have an upcoming birthday not listed above, let the church office know.*

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:

10 a.m. - TOPS meets in HH

This Saturday:

1:30 p.m. - Al-Anon District meets in HH

3:30 p.m. - HH Carpet Cleaning

This Sunday:

8:30 a.m. - Mother's Day Tea & Muffins Social

9:00 a.m. - **NO** book study this week

9:30 a.m. - Choir practice

10 a.m. - Worship: Fourth Sunday of Easter



Monday, May 12:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

7 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

7 p.m. - Compassionate Friends meet in Matthew room

Tuesday, May 13:

11 a.m. - OWLs gathering at Panda Buffet

5 p.m. - NA meets in HH

Wednesday, May 14:

10 a.m. - Friendship Quilters meet in HH

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

7 p.m. - Choir practice



If you have news or photos to share,
please send them to Lori at
sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com.

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

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The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor