



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

You, too, can own a St. Stephen T-shirt! The price is only 22 bucks, and you're guaranteed to look (almost) as good as our pastor ... or your money back! (Not really.) There's also a St. Stephen sweatshirt, for \$35. Such a deal! See Margaret Bowers for all of your T-shirt questions. (Photo by Lori Zengel)




GOD BLESS YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

By Pastor Tom

As we look forward to ministry in a new season, I am excited about our impact and about continuing to serve our neighbors and God. I am grateful for your past generosity in supporting a welcoming and inclusive community. Our values lead us to be authentic and truthful, two characteristics that people long for. I humbly ask for your continued support.

This Sunday, on Christ the King Sunday, we will celebrate with the collection of the 2025 Estimate of Giving Cards. These cards will help guide us in planning ministry and working within a budget for good stewardship. There is always, each year, a leap of faith that God will provide through each of us. If you cannot attend worship in person this Sunday, we'll continue to accept cards, phone calls or emails to record pledges, with gratitude, through the end of the calendar year.



2025 Estimate of Giving
In support of God's mission for St. Stephen Lutheran Church:
To be an active community that welcomes all people to nurture and share their faith and gifts with everyone, according to God's call.

NAME(S): _____

I/we pledge to intentionally give financially to the ministry of St. Stephen Lutheran Church:
(Please select one option)

\$ _____	per week
\$ _____	per month
\$ _____	per year

I/we understand that this plan can be changed by notifying the financial secretary.

Every gift you give helps St. Stephen reach out to those in need and share God's love in tangible ways.

UPDATE ON THE GIVING TREE

By Andrea Notley, coordinator

The Giving Tree is ready! Anyone who is interested in adopting a child from the Giving Tree, please let me know! You may call or text me at 850-443-5293 and I will send you more information about the wants or needs of the child. If you are interested in helping but not interested in shopping, please let me know also. A donation can be made by including it with your offering and put "Giving Tree" in the memo line.



AN EASY WAY TO SUPPORT KidSafe

By Dottie Hinkle, executive director, Lutheran Social Services of North Florida

Thanksgiving is the day we give thanks for our many blessings. Hopefully we enjoy family and friends and feel the closeness of community. But then ... Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday pull us back into the hectic rush of consumerism.

Giving Tuesday (Dec. 3) is our opportunity to get some of those good feelings back by focusing on those who are not part of our immediate family but part of God's family. We hope everyone will take a few minutes to reflect on the needs of the vulnerable among us by making a donation to a local charity of your choice. Hopefully some of you will choose KidSafe.



INVITES YOU TO JOIN US ON
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3 FROM 5-8 PM
FOR SHARE NIGHT AT



Butter Burgers, Frozen Custard, Cheese Curds and more.



2439 N. Monroe Street

Culver's will donate 10% of all sales from 5-8 pm during the Share Night to KidSafe to provide safety seats for children in low-income families.

www.kidsafebigbend.org

Then, join KidSafe for some Wisconsin fare at Culver's on North Monroe Street. Culver's will give 10% of all sales from 5 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 3, to KidSafe to provide new child safety seats for vulnerable families right here in Tallahassee.



NOISY OFFERING: HAITIAN CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

St. Stephen members Rudy and Susan Hehn were the Ministry Minute speakers last Sunday. They first went to Haiti in 2011 and returned three years later. As many of you know, Rudy worked as a family physician in Thomasville for 20 years and then became a hospitalist. Susan worked as a registered nurse and later as director of children's ministries at First Presbyterian. They began attending St. Stephen in 2018. Here are excerpts from the notes Rudy typed up.

Our first trip to Haiti was sponsored by First Presbyterian Church in Thomasville. This was a year after Haiti had been devastated by an earthquake. The church had been destroyed and they were worshipping under a tarp with wooden benches. This was also our medical clinic. It was rewarding that we could offer a glimmer of hope and prayer. It was also discouraging, as the needs were overwhelming, and it seemed our brief visit offered no long-term solutions.

[The second trip, in 2012, was with a group called Haitian Christian Ministries.] Once again we saw overwhelming poverty and need. Electricity would come and go. Some areas had plumbing, some did not. Transportation was challenging. But this trip was different. The Haitians had built a church, basic but solid. There was a concrete block school, and there was a one-room medical clinic attached to that. They had a generator and a central water spigot. And working with the kids was amazing....

On Sunday we joined the Haitians in worship. The church was filled with music. Communion wafers came wrapped in tin foil to avoid spreading cholera. We didn't understand the language but it didn't matter. I got teary.

This trip was different for Susan and me because we saw an opportunity for change. HCM had been working in Haiti since 1989. Their mission statement is "Only the hope found in Jesus has the power to transform lives, families and communities." They have three goals: teach the word of God, plant churches and meet the physical needs of the people.



They started with a single church pastored by a Haitian minister. They now help to support eight churches, a medical clinic and three schools with 1,600 students. The schools are K-12 and center on learning skills, reading and math. Students get one hot meal a day, which is sometimes the only meal they get. They also get worm

medicine, immunizations, vitamins and medical care.

We support HCM because we believe they are making a difference in Haiti. The church communities are transforming the Word of God into better lives for Haitians, especially for Haitian children. The volunteer staff have a personal connection with the churches in Haiti. Despite the chaotic environment in Haiti, the dysfunctional government, and the logistical challenges, they've been able to get materials and funds to the right places. We've seen the results. The goal of the churches is to become financially independent, but right now they still need our help....

We'd like to go back, but all trips are suspended for now because of the risk of travel to Haiti. However, we're continuing our financial support. Of the 1,600 students, about half have a U.S. sponsor. If you're interested, it's \$35 a month to support a child. [Not \$40, as the flyers at church indicated.]

St. Stephen's Noisy Offering is this Sunday, and the proceeds will all go toward Haitian Christian Ministries. So come prepared! To find out more, visit <https://hcm.in.org/> . Photo of the Hehns by Caroline Collins.



SMILE FOR THE CAMERA

Every year or so, we like to get a fresh congregational photo. We've been looking for a time when a goodly number of us will be around anyway – and the date we've chosen is Sunday, Dec. 15, immediately after the liturgy. That's also the day of the children's Christmas program, which is woven into the liturgy.

So please scribble "Cong. photo after church" on your calendar for Dec. 15. And practice smiling. *(The cropped picture above is from 2006. See any familiar faces?)*

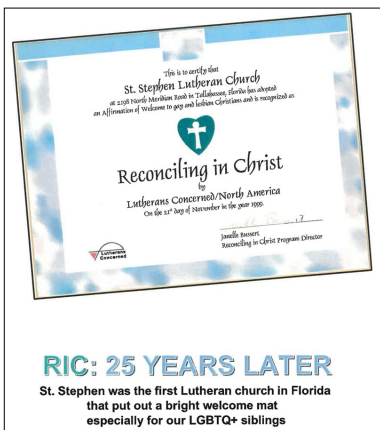
THANKSGIVING WITH THE RITA BRIGADE

The irrepressible Rita Ford and her Thanksgiving guests will be celebrating the holiday not at home but in our fellowship hall. And they're welcoming anyone who doesn't have other plans to join them. The meal starts at 3 p.m., and Rita said you don't need to bring a thing. "I did this last year, and it was a success," she said. "I had some refugees that came. I'm expecting about 19 refugees this year." Giving thanks never looked so good.



'KEEP BEING A BEAM OF LIGHT'

Pastor Tom and Dave Suhrweir sent copies of our "RIC: 25 Years Later" booklet to the bishop, to his assistant and to Reconciling Works. They sent compliments, and Dave asked to have them printed in the newsletter.



"This is very, very nice. Well done, and may St. Stephen keep being a beam of light for the LGBTQIA+ community in Tallahassee and an inspiration for other of our congregations." (Bishop Pedro Suarez, Florida-Bahamas Synod)

"This is a fantastic piece of witness, not to mention history to be kept. Thanks for sharing." (The Rev. Dr. Derek M. Hoven, assistant to the bishop (North Region))

"Thank you for ... sharing this beautiful document. What a brilliant way to share your congregation's story, ministry, and work. I have shared this piece with staff and board members. Thank you for your partnership in this holy ministry." (Aubrey Thonvold, executive director, Reconciling Works)

'DON'T BE ALARMED': EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

... You are perhaps, like me, imagining some very dark times approaching. People I care about are being threatened. I know it is the same for you. Let me assure you, none of this is new, and one of the worst things we can do is separate from one another. The urge is to run away or seclude ourselves, but that's what the liars and deceivers want.

Jesus said, "Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' And they will lead many astray." Jesus goes on to say, "Don't be alarmed. This must take place, but it will not be the end. It's the beginning of birth pangs."

And birthing is dangerous. Our task, then, is to keep our hearts true; hold fast to the hope Jesus gives; and provoke one another with love and good deeds. We are not the first to experience times like these, but we are prepared, and not alone; God is still with us.

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS



Cindy Suhrweir - 11/21
Sue Canning - 11/25
Marley Bonfanti - 11/26
Michael Bonfanti - 11/27
Phil Williams - 11/29
Nancy Staff - 12/01
Bob Eshleman - 12/02
Annelise Leysieffer - 12/04
Annette Claussen - 12/08
Janet Barber - 12/09
Ridy Hofer - 12/11
Laura Sullivan - 12/14

BEFORE YOU GO...

- **No newsletter next week. Happy Thanksgiving!**
- **President Denise Bookwalter** included a message of thanksgiving in her announcements Sunday. She thanked everyone who works behind the scenes to make St. Stephen a loving community. And, she added, if you've been thinking of a way that you could use your God-given gifts to benefit the congregation, please talk to Pastor Tom, Denise or any member of the Church Council. Likewise, she said, if coordinators at church put out a call for assistance, consider answering that call, if you're able.
- **CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS:** We'll be decorating the chancel area with poinsettias for Christmas. Would you like to dedicate one (or more)? The cost is \$10, and the dedication list will be in the Dec. 15th and 22nd bulletins. Just fill out the form in the narthex and place it with your payment in the offering plate, or email Lori with the information. The deadline is Sunday, Dec. 8.



- 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 nametags, or ask Lori to sign you up. Include the \$40 with your regular offering. And then take the flowers home!

COMING UP

Today:

Noon - Al-Anon meets in fellowship hall (FH)

7 p.m. - AA meets in FH

This Friday:

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

This Sunday:

9 a.m. - Book study

9:30 a.m. - Choir practice

10 a.m. - Worship, Christ the King Sunday

1:30 p.m. - On Purpose Women meets in FH

4 p.m. - Congolese Christian worship in FH

Monday, November 25:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in FH

7 p.m. - TIMA meets in FH

Wednesday, November 27:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in FH

The office will be closed on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. If you have an emergency, you can call or text Lori at 850-264-4414.



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>.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, ELCA
2198 N. Meridian Road | Tallahassee, FL 32303

The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor