



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

St. Stephen Lutheran Church

Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday, January 26, 2025
A celebration of God's inclusive love.



"What is good: what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God." – Micah 6:8

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

Guest Speaker following the service (approximately 11:15 a.m.)

Luncheon in the fellowship hall to follow (near noontime)

(including vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options)

All are welcome. All activities are free.



Speaker: Jonathan Webber
Southern Poverty Law Center
Florida Policy Director



"The Politics of Possibility: Inspiring Hope in Times of Challenge"

➡ To participate virtually, visit <https://www.facebook.com/ststephentallahassee/>
Videos of the service and presentation will be available on that Facebook page for later viewing.

Free-will-donations may be made to Southern Poverty Law Center, a charitable 501(3)(c) organization

- Donation jar in the sanctuary and fellowship hall on January 26th
- Check delivered or mailed, payable to "St. Stephen Lutheran Church."
Please designate for "SPLC."
- Venmo app: @stephen-saint payable to "St. Stephen Lutheran Church."
Please designate for "SPLC."

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, 2198 N. Meridian Road, Tallahassee, FL 32303
(one block south of John Knox Road) 850-385-2728

<http://www.ststephenlutherantally.com>

<http://www.reconcilingworks.org>

St. Stephen Lutheran Church (ELCA) is a Reconciling in Christ congregation that explicitly welcomes people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. St. Stephen is equally committed to anti-racism. We welcome people without regard to race, ethnicity, age, family status, economic status, or differing abilities.

NEW FACE, NEW VOICE

If you haven't worshipped here for a while, you might not have met Simone Schuster, whose voice has helped make the choir sound even more beautiful. We asked Simone to share a few details about herself.

I found St. Stephen by doing a quick search for local Lutheran churches, and I got lucky with the first one. I just moved to Tallahassee in August to start my Ph.D. in the biology program, studying coastal biogeochemistry. That should keep me in the area anywhere from four to six years.

I am from the Clearwater area, where I was teaching middle school and then high school. I joined the choir here and I love to sing. I sing alto, but I was trained in high school for soprano. I just like to sing wherever I am needed and have fun. I actually started singing in my home church, St. Timothy Lutheran in Tarpon Springs, when I was around 8 years old, and I never stopped.

I love being outdoors, reading and rock climbing. If anyone has good park recommendations, they should let me know! I used to be a field tech for a vegetation crew up at Pennsylvania State University, and I still like to exercise my plant ID skills.



UPDATES FROM PASTOR TOM

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE who filled out the time & talent survey. We had an overwhelming response and have summarized the gifts and ministries you all wish to share. A member of the Church Council, a committee member or I will be in contact with you to be sure you're able to do what you're gifted to do!

SOME FINANCIAL FIGURES from 2024:

- Total non-designated income: \$260,574
- Total non-designated expenses: \$278,036
- End of the year +/-: -\$17,462. We were able to draw \$7,133 from savings to help make up the shortfall and began the 2024 year with a checking account balance of \$16,245.



OUTREACH UPDATES

By Coordinator Sharon Simmons

ENDOWMENT IN ACTION: The Peace and Justice Endowment Fund was set up for St. Stephen to be able to help local or state groups on the front line of the work for peace and justice. To apply for a monetary grant from the endowment, applicants must submit an application for review by the Outreach Committee and approval by the Church Council. Last week five applications were put in the mail to interested agencies. God's work, our hands.



TNT: We've begun our annual collection of Toiletries 'N' Toilet paper (TNT) with New Mt. Zion AME Church. There'll be a tub in the fellowship hall for your donations. This collection will run through Jan. 26.

PREVENTING TRAFFICKING: The group Women of the ELCA reminds us that January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month. Sad to say, 71% of victims of human trafficking are women and girls. National Human Trafficking Prevention Month is an opportunity to educate others about identifying human trafficking, preventing it and supporting victims. Robin Hassler Thompson, a Ministry Minute speaker last spring, gave us valuable information. The ELCA also works to end trafficking by asking us to learn to recognize the signs of human trafficking through the Polaris Project or calling the human-trafficking hotline at 888-373-7888. If you'd like to receive additional information, see me.



HONOLULU'S NEWEST PASTOR

Here's a newsy excerpt from former member Lesley Radius' Facebook page.



In just a few weeks, I will be saying Aloha to Fort Worth, Texas, and Aloha to Honolulu, Hawaii. I have been given the privilege to be the Intentional Interim of the Lutheran Church of Honolulu. Karen and I will finally be making our mother happy. She always wanted her girls to live close to each other and finally, eight years after Marie's death, we will be doing that for a "season."

Please keep my present church, St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, in your prayers. It has been a gift to be able to walk with them these last five years, together proclaiming boldly the love and salvation of God. Although the move is bitter-sweet, I know God has a plan to prosper St. Matthew's continued proclamation of the Gospel.

Also, please keep the Lutheran Church of Honolulu in your prayers.... [T]heir beloved pastor of 16 years died unexpectedly. Their hearts are broken, but they trust in a God that promises peace that passes all understanding. So together, we will move forward in God's promises of peace, hope, joy and love.

Thank you again for all your wishes and love. Please know there will be a couch for anyone who wants to come and visit.

EXCERPTS FROM PASTOR TOM’S RECENT SERMON

... Sometimes someone will tell me that they’re paying attention to self-care. “That’s good!” I’ll say. But then they go on to tell me that it means they’ll be taking walks on Sunday mornings instead of coming to church. “I feel so close to God when walking on the trail,” they tell me. I confess that my face takes on an artificial smile because I don’t really know how to respond.... I mean, I love the outdoors as much as most people do, and there’s much joy in taking a Sunday getaway now and then. No one knows more than I that church can be busy and sometimes a hard place to relax, much less experience the presence of God.

Yet something doesn’t seem quite right when someone says they feel closer to God out there than ... in here. I know, maybe it’s a cop-out – and I realize that I’m the pastor, so my perspective is a little skewed – but I also know how difficult it is to pay attention to the most important things. I know how important it is to have a church community that holds me accountable and misses me when I’m not there. This congregation misses you when you’re not here.

And I know that while being in nature is a form of adoration, and smacking a golf ball on a Sunday morning is relaxing ... what I know even more is that when I miss church I’ve jumped over an important part of my journey. I’ve skipped an important part of my routine and then become easily distracted....

In nature, we don’t learn how much God loves you or me, and the person we call our enemy. A beautiful beach and majestic mountain vista won’t teach us to see the Christ in other people. No star communicates these teachings. They aren’t bad, they’re just incomplete.

So, we come to church and we worship in a sanctuary that teaches about God’s universal love. We go out into nature and connect that love to God’s wonderful creation and respond by caring for what God has made. We gather together and sing songs that tell of the sacred story, and pray prayers that call for miracles because the God we worship loves the world so much that a Son’s been given unto us. The only tree I know that can reveal the depth of that kind of love ... is the cross.

BEFORE YOU GO...

- Please mark your calendar for February 2. After church we will hold our Congregation meeting to approve our 2025 financial budget, vote for new Council members, and discuss future ministry opportunities. The meeting will begin in the fellowship hall shortly after worship ends. Hope to see everyone there!
- No doubt you’ve studied, and possibly memorized, Dave Suhrweir’s flyer at the top of this newsletter. Our annual Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday is coming up a week from Sunday, and an important part of it is our potluck luncheon. Dave’s flyer



- “We apologize for the chilly sanctuary the last couple of Sundays!” says Pastor Tom. “We’re working to solve this problem by programming the heat to come on earlier on Sunday mornings.” Jim Christianson took this photo of Janet Barber and Ridy Hofer bundled up Sunday morning. Mark Greeley, on the other hand, seemed perfectly fine in his short-sleeved shirt. If you’re not like Mark, you might want to come prepared this winter, just in case. Maybe bring ... a holy comforter?



- **Speaking of Mark:** He has details on the upcoming St. Stephen camping trip. See him or Colin Hackley if you want specifics.
- **Barbara Ehlmann announced Sunday** that Lawana Lamb-Daniels is a new member on the board of KidSafe. Good news!



- 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!



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Nathan Basford - 01/19
Myrna Dowdell - 01/21
Stephen Barton - 01/22
Denise Bookwalter - 01/22
Ann Hingst - 01/22
James Gunderson - 01/24
Sandy Ness - 01/24
Gladys Kane - 01/28
Jennifer Buchanan - 01/29
Graham Hackley - 01/30
Jayden Schiffer - 01/31

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 Saturday:

10 a.m. - Sew for Hope meets in FH

This Sunday:

9 a.m. - Book study

9:30 a.m. - Choir practice

10 a.m. - Worship, Baptism of Our Lord Sunday

4 p.m. - Congolese Christian worship in FH

Monday, January 20:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in FH

7 p.m. - TIMA meets in FH

**The office will be closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.*

Tuesday, January 21:

5 p.m. - NA meets in FH

Wednesday, January 15:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in FH

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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2198 N. Meridian Road | Tallahassee, FL 32303

The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor