



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



Here’s another opportunity for you to gaze at yourself. In this version of the congregational photo, you’re acting a little goofy. (Zoom in on Pastor Tom.) What would Martin Luther say? (Photo by Colin Hackley, of course)

HONORING PASTOR TOM AND COLLEEN

Sunday was a special day of celebration, as we publicly gave thanks for all that Pastor Tom and Colleen mean to the people of St. Stephen. There were cakes, there were flowers, there were gifts, there were cards by the dozen – and there was a lovely moment toward the end of the service. Ceilia and Violet Greeley read aloud words of praise that Rita Ford had found. In case you missed it ... read on.

PASTOR’S APPRECIATION

When Jesus celebrated his victory over sin and death, he chose to send gifts to those he set free. He could have, of course, chosen to give us anything: knowledge, spiritual growth, protection from the Evil One, or even comfort during trials. In the end, though, when Jesus celebrated his victory over sin and death, he chose to give us all these things – because, Pastor, he chose to give us *you*.

A TRIBUTE TO THE PASTOR’S WIFE

Behind the sermons, prayers and song,
She walks in faith, enduring long.
A gentle strength, a quiet grace,
She brings God’s peace to every place.

She holds the load that few can see,
With love and deep fidelity.
An open heart, a listening ear,
She calms the doubt and dries the tear.

Not for applause or earthly pride,
She serves right by the shepherd’s side.
Today we pause, with thanks and prayer,
To bless the love she freely shares.

(Photo taken last year by Colin Hackley, slightly cropped)



A GRATEFUL REPLY

Dear St. Stephen Family,
Last Sunday was a joyful day when Colleen and I experienced your kindness, encouragement and love. Thank you for the many cards and gifts! What touched me most was the reminder that I am not serving cards alone. We are blessed to have one another as we walk this journey, care for one another and show grace in so many ways. Each of you makes this church a place where people find hope and belonging. I am grateful to be your pastor and thankful for the privilege of serving alongside you on this journey of faith.

In Grace and Peace,
Pastor Tom



LET’S FINISH THE YEAR STRONG

From the Finance Committee

The feared summer slump came late this year – maybe it’s from El Nino. Our contributions in September were only \$19,130. That is our lowest amount of giving this year and our second worst in the last two years. Expenses remained stable, but we were \$6,500 in the hole for the month. That exhausted almost all of our surplus from the previous eight months of this year, and we are no longer covering our \$8,000 deficit from 2025. Please consider if your support of St. Stephen is where you want it to be and help us end this year in a healthy position.

PEACEFUL PROTEST ONCE MORE

By Pastor Tom

This Saturday, from 10 a.m. to noon, we have an opportunity to stand up for democracy at the Historic Capitol Building along North Monroe Street. If you plan to be there, I would like us to meet up and rally together, if possible. Let’s try to meet at 10:30 in front of the courthouse. I’d love to get a picture of us all together and share the experience of peaceful protest, the freedom to gather, and our stand for the balance of power our nation needs.



REST IN PEACE, MRS. BERTOLAMI

Pastor Tom sent this email just as the last newsletter was being published
It is with a heavy heart that I share the news that Margaret Bertolami died late Sunday night (Sept. 29). Mark was with her, and she passed quietly and peacefully under the care of Hospice. Please join me in praying for Mark and Elizabeth during this difficult time. We rejoice knowing she’s in victory with Christ Jesus and is no longer restricted in body.



AUTHOR, AUTHOR

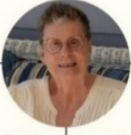
Some of you have bought copies of Ruth Hartung’s book, “Longest Pet in the Neighborhood,” for yourselves or maybe your grandchildren. Yes, it’s a kids’ book about a more-than-6-foot-tall pet boa constrictor.

Two Saturdays from now, she’ll be reading her book to young readers up in Thomasville at The Bookshelf; leading them in snake-inspired activities; and signing copies of her book. If you’re in the neighborhood, swing on by.

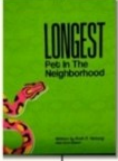
Oh, and her more-than-6-foot-tall husband will also be there to sign copies of his book, “The Man in the Red Flannel Shirt.”

Ruth Hartung Story Time & Author Signing

SATURDAY, OCT 24
11 A.M. - 1:30 P.M.



RUTH HARTUNG



THE BOOKSHELF
126 S. BROAD ST
THOMASVILLE, GA

Tallahassee author **Ruth Hartung** will read to your kids at Story Time at 11 and sign copies of her children's picture book, *The Longest Pet in the Neighborhood*. This story invites curious young readers to explore the world of a pet snake, instilling a sense of wonder and newfound appreciation for the animal kingdom.

QUILT RAFFLE WILL FUND DEPORTATION DEFENSE

Passed along by Caroline Collins

The Grateful Threads, the sewing group of United Church in Tallahassee, is auctioning off another of its quilts. This year, 100% of the proceeds will go to Tallahassee’s Family and Immigration Rights Center (FIRC), the only local organization providing free or low-cost deportation defense services. The king-size quilt, named “Blessings in Bloom,” measures 101” x 102” and



features heirloom-quality, 100%-cotton designer fabrics by Kaffe Fassett. A suggested donation is \$5 for 1 ticket or \$20 for five, with every penny going to the Family and Immigration Rights Center.

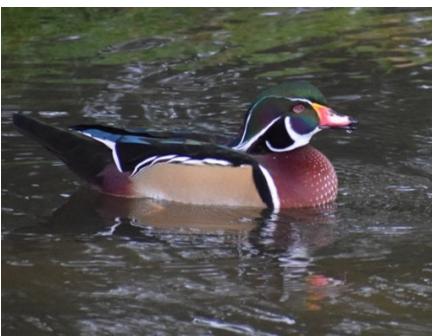
The quilt drawing is scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 7, at 1:30 p.m. at the UCT Artisan Market 2026. You don’t need to be present to win. Tickets are available online (<https://www.uctonline.org/quilt>) by following the directions in the comments. You can also get them in person at the Artisan Market on Nov. 7.

SPEAKING OF QUILTS...

We’ve been asked to let you know that the Friendship Star Quilters are having their 2026 Quilt Show on Nov. 6 (10 a.m.-6 p.m.) and Nov. 7 (10 a.m.-4 p.m.) at the Tallahassee Elks Lodge, 276 N. Magnolia Drive. You’ll find quilts, vendors, boutique, baskets, a peddlers table, a “scrap splash” and more. Visit the Friendship Star Quilters on Facebook. For more information, email friendshipstarquiltersfl@gmail.com.

SURPRISE

By Susan Hehn



Recently, when I was walking around Cherokee Lake in Thomasville (we have a city park next to the rose garden), I took this photo of a beautiful wood duck.

Wood ducks aren’t commonly seen in the city, but this one joined the other ducks as if it were part of the family.

I love being able to drive five minutes from my house to enjoy our beautiful world and get some exercise to boot!

After my talk [on the assigned topic of “Why Christianity?”] the students who were still conscious asked good questions.

“What about evangelism? Isn’t getting people saved the purpose of Christianity?” I tried to suggest that it’s God who saves, not us, and evangelism is about sharing good news, not scaring the hell out of people. But before people can hear the good news of Jesus Christ, they have to see that good news alive in us. Certain approaches to evangelism repel more people than they attract.

“What about other religions? Isn’t it presumptuous for Christians to claim that Jesus is the only way to God?” I trust that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, I told them. But I don’t control how the Triune God works in the world, and I don’t possess the truth that sets me free. Too often we Christians behave as though we owned the truth. In fact, the Truth who is Christ owns us. We don’t have to bring Christ to people of other faiths. Christ is already there.

Or, to put it another way, the Triune God is free to work in sovereign love and grace -- in your life and in mine, in the life of this community, even in communities of other faiths. Paul readily admits to the Philippians that he does not own Christ. Neither do we.

Today is World Communion Sunday. Every time we come to this Table to renew the Covenant sealed in this bread and wine, we are reminded that God's love and justice are for all people in all cultures. The church does not own Christ. The church is Christ's body in the world, called to live the good news we have received as a gift.

“Why Christianity?” It’s an interesting question, but not a burning one. I’d say the burning question is, “Why aren’t Christians more like Christ?” Come to his Table. Chew on that.

A photograph of three people standing in front of a large, circular seal of the North Carolina District Court. The seal features an eagle with spread wings and the text "NORTH CAROLINA DISTRICT COURT". On the left is an older woman with short white hair, wearing a black long-sleeved top. In the center is a younger woman with dark hair, wearing a black short-sleeved top and green earrings, holding a framed certificate. On the right is a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a grey polo shirt. The certificate held by the woman in the center is for "JENNIFER L. HARRIS" and is dated "JANUARY 1, 2018".

- Margaret's daughter-in-law, Marianna, formerly a Hungarian citizen, recently became a United States citizen! Margaret says it was a moving ceremony.
- If you need any offering envelopes, please let Office Manager Rita know. You may notice that the printed dates on them have been blocked out. We're doing

that intentionally so we can make full use of our current supply and avoid wasting them.

- The Outreach Committee is collecting men's and women's socks for residents at Kearney Center. There's a designated tub in Hingst Hall for them. This annual sock initiative is held in conjunction with our New Mt. Zion outreach partners.
- Reminder: Lutheran Disaster Response shares God's hope, healing and renewal with people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the U.S. and around the world. If you're able to give, visit www.elca.org. Or call 800-638-3522.
- And pictured here is the newsletter editor's latest suggestion, in case the Church Council votes to provide him with a company car. It's a 1927 Buick. The ad copy refers to the engine's instant response in time of need. What better description could a churchgoer ask for? (And check out all those snappy straw hats.) God, watch over us as we drive through life.



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, Twenty first Sunday after Pentecost

11:30 a.m. - Church council meeting

Monday, October 19:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

Tuesday, October 20:

6 p.m. - NA meets in HH

Wednesday, October 21:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

6 p.m. - Confirmation for adults

7 p.m. - Choir rehearsal

Thursday, October 22:

10 a.m. - Bible study

SERVING THIS SUNDAY

Pastor Tom Holdcraft, Preaching and Presiding; **Jen Dritt**, Assisting Minister; **Beth Alexander**, Cup Minister; **Jennifer Slusarz**, Lector; **Rudy Hehn**, Cantor; **Emery Oates and Caroline Collins**, Tech Team; **Sandy Lamb-Daniels and Lawana Lamb-Daniels**, Altar Guild; **Loraine Sundberg and Marilyn Larson**, Counters; **Jan Harrison and Ann DelRossi**, Ushers; **Denise Bookwalter**, Announcements.

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Isabel Barton - 10/19

Val Kibler - 10/20

Dave Suhrweir - 10/21

Jim Sampson - 10/22

Audrey Post - 10/24

Barbara Ehlmann - 10/25

Graham Reece - 10/26

Anita Sawh - 10/26

Bern Mustian - 10/30

Emily Stover - 11/02

Jen Reece - 11/02

Paul van der Mark - 11/06

Barbara Sullivan - 11/07

Hector Quinones - 11/07



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

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

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, ELCA