



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



ANOTHER YEAR OF PSALMS AND SAND

Same beach, same church, same photographer, same Spirit, slightly different faces from years past. This is a glimpse of the open-air worship service that our St. Stephen campers took part in last Saturday evening. (Photo by Colin Hackley)

THE LASTING IMPACT OF OUR RETREAT

By Sallie Robinson

For me, our April 11 spiritual retreat was quite a bit like being in the Garden of Eden – the slight difference being that we were in the gardens of Goodwood Museum and Gardens rather than the true Eden.

The Carriage House had been transformed by a small committee of dedicated church members. The tables were beautifully decorated with lovely gold table runners, small living succulent plants, votive candles and polished stones to ground us to nature and the earth. The day was made possible by an anonymous donor whom we thank for giving us this wonderful, thought-provoking day.

Jacqueline Bussie, an award-winning Christian author, was the keynote speaker for the day. Her recent book “Love Without Limits” was the basis for both her morning and afternoon talks and inspired us all to hang onto hope in our most difficult times. Ms. Bussie was interesting and uplifting as she told us about personal tragedies in her life and her struggles to get through them.

Ms. Bussie had given us her recipe for hope. During our group reflection time, she challenged us to write our own. Here’s my hope recipe:

- 16 cups tears
 - 2 cups anger
 - 3 pounds therapy
 - 3 cups grit in my craw (from my grandmother’s words of advice to me many years ago)
 - 3 tablespoons lament
 - 1 cup remembrances
 - 2 smiles from people who love me
- Bake at 500° for 3 hours until all anger is baked out of it!**

Many things that Ms. Bussie said really spoke to me. Here are a few of them:

- “Hope is a GPS – we can all find our way home.”
- “Lend hope to others!”
- “Human love is tiny. Following Jesus is huge.”
- “Love wins always!”

This church retreat was absolutely wonderful. If you were able to go, you know what I'm talking about. All our needs were met with plenty of coffee, breakfast and lunch catered by Uptown Cafe, fellowship and, most of all, hope and love. If you missed this day in Eden, get Ms. Bussie's book, read it and open your heart to love!

(Pictured here are retreat participants Anita Sawh, Linda Eshleman, Sandy Lamb-Daniels, Lawana Lamb-Daniels and Andrea Notley. Photo by Rudy Hehn.)



EVERYTHING SHE HAD

By Erik Robinson (Sallie's husband)

I had already read Jacqueline Bussie's book "Love Without Limits" and was anxious to hear what she had to say about it. Ms. Bussie did not preach about her book but told us about some of the hardest times in her life, where she was only able to hold onto hope due to the help and love from friends – so many of whom she didn't even know she had!

Holding onto hope when we hit rock bottom, when we feel (and rightly so)



that our world has been shattered and will never be the same, is only possible when we can stay open to receiving love and support from others and from God. Ms. Bussie said that while holding onto hope is vital, it is important for us to share that

hope with others. She gave us her formula for hope and invited us to think in advance about what and how and whom we would need to support us in the face of life's hardest times.

Ms. Bussie shared her feelings about the generous responses she had received after her husband's death. She sold everything she had and started traveling around the country, sharing her books and sharing about the help she had received after her husband suddenly died. I had never heard anybody say that they had sold *everything they had*. That statement surprised me, and it made me pay closer attention to the message she was giving. Every time

she gave one of these workshops, she was sharing her hope with us and with others. She encouraged us to share our hope and to love without exception. I was very grateful that I was able to meet her. It was an uplifting afternoon! *(Photo of retreaters Monty Mortensen and Patrick Kennell by Rudy Hehn)*

‘CHAT PACKS’

One of the getting-to-know-you exercises at the retreat involved “Chat Packs.” You’d reach in, pull out a card and have to respond to it in front of everyone. And if you were Pastor Tom, you had to respond to every card that was drawn! Here are five prompts, along with Pastor Tom’s replies.

- “Name a guilty pleasure.”
Pastor’s response: “Cutwater. [It’s a canned cocktail.] Colleen and I split one while preparing dinner. Our favorite is Pina Colada.”
- “What is your favorite half hour of the day?” Pastor Tom: “Getting ready for bed at night. I love sleeping.”
- “Who was your favorite teacher/professor?” Pastor Tom: “Dr. Carlson from Gettysburg Seminary. He was my professor of Greek, the Gospels, the Epistles and Revelation.”



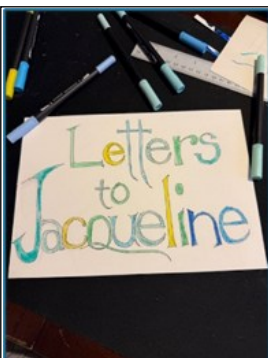
- “Who preached your favorite sermon or delivered your favorite speech?” Pastor Tom: “Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. We listened to parts of his speeches while driving to see the crowd at the last No Kings Rally. An emotional time to bring my mom in the car with us and cheer and honk in support of people who were there lining Monroe Street.”

“Who is your favorite person to be goofy with?” Pastor Tom: “Colleen, of course!” *(Photo of Pastor Tom at Goodwood by Sallie Robinson)*

A FEW MORE VERBAL SNAPSHOTS

Assorted quotes from our weekend with Jacqueline Bussie:

- “Chin up. Shoulders back. You got this.”
- “Have compassion for everyone you meet, even if they don’t want it.”
- “What if we treated ourselves and others as if we were really miracles?”
- “Hope is a lot more like kale than Skittles.”
- “Scars mean we survived.”
- “It doesn’t matter who started it. All that matters is: Who’s going to end it?”
- “Use your finger for mending, not blaming.”



HAVE A MESSAGE FOR JACQUELINE?

Want to send a note, letter, poem, picture or even hope recipe to retreat speaker Jacqueline Bussie? Thanks to Monty Mortensen, there’s a basket in the church office where we’re collecting items to send to her home – where she’ll find them when she returns there next month. The last day to turn in anything is May 3. Questions? Ask Monty.

CONFIRMATION FOR BIGGER KIDS

By Pastor Tom

Long ago, confirmation classes might have been filled with memorization and strict rules. Thankfully, our church has moved away from that understanding and is now focused on lessons that include Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation, Law and Gospel, biblical interpretations and much more. These topics, grounded in relationship-building, make confirmation (dare I say) fun.



Dave Suhrweir, St. Stephen's longtime confirmation teacher, creates his own lesson plans that bring out humor in learning and personal storytelling from participants. If you've wanted to refresh your understandings of Lutheran history and theology, Dave and I would like to invite you to join us for the Confirmation for Adults class. Whether you're taking it as a refresher or as a first-timer, you're welcome to participate. Please see Dave or me for more details.

ME? BLOW LEAVES? WHY NOT?

Rob Schiffer invites all eager would-be leaf-blowers to let him know they're interested, so he can set up a rotation. That will probably involve showing up at church late on a Saturday afternoon, very early on a Sunday morning or (if the weather forecast permits) late on a Friday. Please follow up with Rob ASAP. (P.S.: The church's leaf blower is on the fritz, so you'll need to bring your own.)



MAKING ROOM: AN EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

The student came to the master potter to ask what the secret was to creating the perfect vase. The master took a lump of clay and began to knead it at length. The student watched carefully, taking note of the master's hands as they worked the clay on the wheel. The student watched, thinking that the secret lay in the outer form and in the elegance of the vase's curves.

But when the vase was finished, the master said, "The secret is not in the clay that's finished, but in the emptiness created. Without the emptiness, it would be a block of earth. The same is true with life. When we are filled with too much, have accumulated too much, are carrying too much, one day we wake up with a strange sensation of reaching a limit where nothing else can be received."

Then there's no room in us for the truly meaningful and important things. This story from Taoist teacher Chen Li speaks to what happens to us when we are overwhelmed, or too full, and when our expectations are crushed.



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Russell Reardon - 4/26
Colleen Holdcraft - 4/29
Sarah Bacani - 4/29
Julia Bonfanti - 5/3
Emily Jennings - 5/7
Eva Mustian - 5/8
Claire Claussen 5/9
Eunice Muchuruza 5/16
Jennifer Slusarz 5/20
Jennifer Dritt 5/21

BEFORE YOU GO...

- Sunday's Noisy Offering will go toward Unity in the Community, which offers scholarships to Rickards High grads going to FSU, FAMU or TSC.



- Pastor Jenn of Grace Lutheran reports that Sharon Oeltjen, who many years ago was an active member of St. Stephen, died Tuesday in her home, surrounded by her family after a cancer diagnosis a couple of years ago. "There are currently no plans for a service," Pastor Jenn wrote, "but we do ask that you please keep her husband, Jarret, children Sarah, Justin and Joshua, her eight grandchildren, and all who loved her, in your prayers."



- Jordi Banitt says her final master's recital is at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in Lindsay Recital Hall, at the FSU College of Music Kuersteiner Building. "I'd love to invite my friends at St. Stephen to hear a program with a variety of flute music!" she says. "See you soon!"
- Pastor Tom says at least one St. Stephen worshipper who's not an official member of the congregation is ready to become one. How about you? If you'd like to join as well, let our pastor know.
- Last week's newsletter promised you a closer look at one of the four agencies that received checks from our Peace & Justice Endowment Fund. Well, can you wait one more week for that? Thanks so much.
- One of my favorite messages from Pastor Tom is the one he sometimes delivers to our guests just before Holy Communion. He plays the perfect host. He understands that they might be thinking, "Am I allowed to take communion here? Do I dare? Some churches have strict rules." His message, delivered with a smile, is: Welcome to the table. It's not our house, he says; it's Jesus' house, and Jesus never turned down a meal with anyone.
- 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!
- And pictured here is the newsletter editor's latest suggestion, in case the Church Council ever decides to provide him with a company car. The text reads: "It's amazing how just looking at the '55 Ford gives so many people that wonderful feeling." Why, it's the same thing we say about our Altar Guild, isn't it? See you Sunday.

Behind the wheel of the new Ford, you become a new man. For under your foot lies response as eager and alive, you almost believe it's clairvoyant! This is Ford's Trigger-Torque power . . . and it replies to your driving demands with split-second agility. There's safety in power like this . . . to whizz you out of traffic snarls . . . and to pass you ahead when passing is called for. Three new stout-hearted engines to choose from. And at least a score of other new engineering features. Reading about it is nowhere near the fun of driving the new Ford. So why not visit your dealer today?

It's amazing how just looking at the '55 Ford gives so many people that wonderful feeling. Why not? There's "Thunderbird" written in almost every line . . . from the hooded headlights to the flat rear deck. Inside, you'll see new exciting color harmonies in durable fabrics. All in all, there isn't a more pleasing car in sight.

Treat yourself to a Trigger-Torque. That Drive is a new '55 Ford

SERVING THIS SUNDAY

Pastor Tom Holdcraft, Preaching and Presiding; Audrey Post, Assisting Minister; Rita Ford, Cup Minister; Ceilia/Mark Greeley, Lector; Caroline Collins and Sandy Lamb-Daniels, Tech Team; Beth Alexander and Rita Ford, Altar Guild; Marilyn Larson and Janet Barber, Counters; Colin Hackley and Bob Eshleman, Ushers; Denise Bookwalter, Announcements

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, Fourth Sunday of Easter

Monday, April 27:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

Tuesday, April 28:

5 p.m. - NA meets in HH

Wednesday, April 29:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

7 p.m. - Choir rehearsal

Thursday, April 30:

10 a.m. - Bible study

peace



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