



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

THE ONE AND ONLY OL' BILL TAYLOR



In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, one of the big names in stewardship was that of a retired letter carrier from a small congregation in little old Tallahassee. His name was William E. Taylor, but he came to be known as Ol' Bill.

With a booming voice, a rock-solid commitment to his faith, and unparalleled persistence, he covered thousands of miles traveling to congregations that needed to be reminded of the God-given resources they already had ... right in their own pockets. His volunteer work for the state and national church bodies, and for seminaries, is legendary.

Our brother Bill died Wednesday morning, at age 103.

"Ol' Bill was one of a kind," Ann and Pastor Emeritus Emory Hingst wrote. "He never met a stranger. He was gregarious, upbeat and optimistic, and we never heard him utter a disparaging word about anyone.

"In the realm of stewardship, he was king. He loved to try to persuade congregations to give a little more to the church every year. As he nudged the rest of us toward tithing our 10 percent, he gave 50 percent! For many years he worked tirelessly for the ELCA, driving up and down the East Coast giving talks on stewardship. Wherever he perceived a need he tried to fulfill it, endowing scholarships and programs along the way. His exuberance and love of life will be sorely missed."

For those who joined St. Stephen more recently, Ol' Bill was the gentleman seated at the far right end of the first row, in the shadow of the lectern. One of the bonuses for people who communed on that side of the sanctuary was that, as they returned to their seats, they could stop and shake hands with Ol' Bill – who was waiting with a big smile, whether he knew you or not.



Most men in their 90s or older have lost their vocal firepower, but not Ol' Bill. In his later years, he'd still grab the microphone on occasion – usually to remind us of the blessings of stewardship. Even then, you could catch glimpses of the fiery speaker he had been in his prime. Invariably he'd begin with a booming "My friends....!" And we'd all smile, knowing we were in the hands of a master. When some of us recorded a video interview with him in 1994, we titled it "The Supersalesman of Stewardship." Here are a few excerpts of Bill's wisdom:

- "Many times at Church Council, when they would talk and talk and talk, I would move that we do it! And I became known that way in the national church, as the guy who says, 'Let's do it!'"
- "In my life I feel like everything I've got is a gift from God. Every morning of my life I thank God for one more day. At night I thank him for that day. You may or may not know that over the years I got to where I give away half my income. And I've never done without a thing I really wanted. I've always got enough left. I've heard people say, 'You can't do that!' Well, how do you know if you never try?... In my view, it's amazing what a group of Lutherans can do if they make up their minds to do it."
- "What disappoints me the most ... is our paltry support of the church. My guess is that the membership of our churches give no more than 2 percent of their income to support the church. Maybe a little better than that, but.... I'm talking about churchwide. And I've been in many discussions with folks about what we could be if we gave even half a tithe. My heavens! A half a tithe would be double what we're doing. The only reason that we don't do the things that we want to do are the dollar bills.... I have said many a time that there's not a single thing that the church can do without a dollar bill."
- "I've had a wonderful life in the church. I doubt that any layman that you and I



could think of has ever had the fun I've had in church. I've loved it! I still do. I think if I got a call tomorrow to come someplace, I would try!"

In this photo, Janet Barber captured a moment of pure serenity as she, Pastor Tom, Judi Duffy and others visited Bill last month to sing Christmas carols. Look at his smile.

Bill's memorial service is scheduled for 10 a.m. Saturday here at St. Stephen. His beloved daughter-in-law Connie will be here with the family that Ol' Bill adored. What a celebration that will be. Thank God for the gift of Bill Taylor.

AN IMPORTANT MEETING THIS SUNDAY

By President Val Sullivan & Pastor Tom Holdcraft

This Sunday we will hold our semiannual congregational meeting. On the agenda is a vote on the 2020 operating budget passed by Council. There will be a brief report about Church Vitality. Members will vote to elect the next Serving Steward/Outreach position on Council. Finally, we will have time to answer questions about the constitutional changes that are recommended by our Florida-Bahamas Synod.

Please follow the link below for proposed changes. We hope you are looking forward to an informative and engaging meeting as we move into 2020. [Please note: If you're reading the email version of the newsletter, the link below won't work. Instead use the link provided at the top of this email]

[Amendments to the Model Constitution for Congregations 2019](#)

MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION SUNDAY RETURNS

One week from Sunday is our annual Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday (formerly known as RIC Sunday). Organized by Dave Suhrweir as a celebration of God's inclusive love, it comprises a special worship service at 10 a.m., a potluck lunch and a powerful guest speaker. This year, the speaker is state Rep. Shevrin Jones, who will speak on "Living Your Truth: The Life of a Pastor's Son." There will be a freewill offering for the Victory Institute, whose focus is "Elevating LGBTQ Leaders."



Look for more details next week on the potluck.

Meanwhile, Dave has a couple of suggestions:

- If you're able, please park at the office complex uphill from St. Stephen, to help make sure spaces are available for our guests. (That advice holds true for Ol' Bill's service this Saturday as well.)
- Consider wearing your St. Stephen T-shirt or polo shirt, to spread our message of "All Are Welcome." (Don't have one? Check with Margaret Bowers to see what sizes she still has, or bring your own shirt Sunday and she will embroider one for you.)

NOTES FROM PASTOR TOM

- Have you ever been to Synod Assembly? On June 5-7 the Florida-Bahamas Synod will gather as one church body. St. Stephen will send two adults, a young person (15-22) and me to vote on important issues of our synod. This is a workshop assembly, so there will be great areas to learn. A highlight is worship and fellowship! The assembly is at Caribe Royale in Orlando this year. If you have any questions and feel called to attend, please see Val Sullivan or me.
- St. Stephen is forming contemplative prayer teams. Our first group met Wednesday night for 30 minutes of quiet prayer and Scripture verse. If you'd like to be a part of a team of prayer warriors, please see me.



FROM MARIAN'S GRATEFUL FAMILY

Dear St. Stephen Friends,

Thanks to all of you for remembering my mom, Marian Knapp. My brother and I were pleased to see many of you (some old acquaintances, some new) at the Service of Remembrance. We are also grateful for the cards, prayers and gifts some of you sent. May you and St. Stephen be blessed in this new year.

Rick Knapp

ST. STEPHEN'S VALENTINE SOCIAL

By Terri Albrecht-Schmitt

Friday, Feb. 14, 6:15-8:15 p.m.: Decorate valentine cookies. Make paper valentines. Enjoy time with St. Stephen folks and bring your valentine! Bring a friend to share the love! (Eating of cookies will not be monitored.) Get to know your church family better or reacquaint yourself with your old pals. It's sure to be a sweet deal. Lots of cookie toppings and valentine-making supplies provided.

- Nonpareils? ✓
- Colored sugar? ✓
- Frosting? ✓
- Ink stamps? ✓
- Cardstock? ✓
- Glitter? ✓
- Stickers? ✓



All this and more! Let your inner sweetness out and share some love with us. All ages welcome. Contact me to RSVP: (850) 933-6173 or tjalbrechtschmitt@gmail.com. Dietary restrictions? We can accommodate you!!

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS:



Nathan Basford - 01/19
Myrna Dowdell - 01/21
Stephen Barton - 01/22
Denise Bookwalter - 01/22
Stephen Barton - 01/22
Rashida Martin - 01/24
Sandy Ness - 01/24
Gladys Kane - 01/28
Jennifer Buchanan - 01/29
Graham Hackley - 01/30
Collin Schiffer - 01/30
Jayden Schiffer - 01/31
Warren Schave - 01/31

UPCOMING DATES

This Saturday:

10 a.m. - Celebration of Life for Ol' Bill Taylor

This Sunday:

8:45 a.m. - Sunday Church School

9 a.m. - Adult Study

10 a.m. - Worship, Second Sunday after Epiphany

11:30 a.m. - Congregational meeting

Monday, Jan. 20:

The office will be closed in observance of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Tuesday, Jan. 21:

11:30 a.m. - OWLs Gathering at Panda Buffet

Wednesday, Jan. 22:

7 p.m. - Choir practice

Sunday, Jan. 26:

8:45 a.m. - Sunday Church School/Gardening Day

9 a.m. - Adult Study

10 a.m. - Worship, Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday

11:30 a.m. - Potluck

SERVING THIS SUNDAY:

Pastor Tom, Presiding, Preaching; **Barb O'Donnell**, Assisting Minister; **Rob Schiffer**, Cup Minister; **Sharon Simmons**, Welcoming; **Margaret Bowers & Eric McClanahan**, Greeters; **Mark Bertolami**, Lector; **Judi Duffy & Linda Eshleman**, Altar Guild; **Sandy Davis & Patricia Handschy**, Counters; **Val Sullivan**, Announcements



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

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

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The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor

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