

January 19, 2023



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

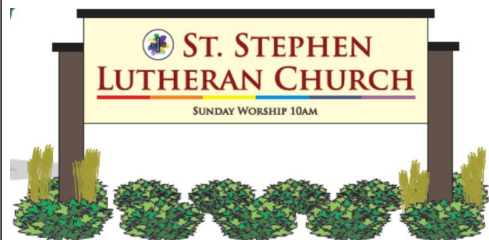


January must be a good time to be a houseplant. In fact, sometimes I envy mine. Here it sits, looking pretty on the kitchen table, warmed by the western sun, cozy during frosty nights. No worries about debt ceilings or COVID forecasts or general inhumanity. God, grant me the serenity of my houseplant. Oh, and keep me watered, please.

THIS SUNDAY, WE HAVE A LOT TO TALK ABOUT

Don't forget! Immediately after the liturgy this Sunday is our congregational meeting. Here are some of the main topics we'll be discussing.

- A review of the 2022 budget.
- A proposed 2023 budget that includes a salary increase for Office Manager Lori Zengel and Music Director/ Organist/Pianist Katharine Gossman.
- A capital campaign to raise as much as \$25,000 for a refurbished baby grand piano.
- What we think about the word "catholic" in our creeds, as previewed in earlier issues of the newsletter.



- The progress on a new St. Stephen sign for North Meridian Road.
- The latest news on our Peace and Justice Endowment Fund.
- Imminent improvements and repairs to our columbarium.

The congregational meeting is scheduled to begin shortly after the liturgy – roughly 11:30 a.m. For those who can't attend in person, Lori will send out a Zoom link.



THE LEGALITY AND JUSTICE OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE



St. Stephen’s annual “celebration of God’s inclusive love,” organized once again by Dave Suhrweir, is scheduled for Jan. 29. As always, Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday promises to be memorable – with worship, lunch and a compelling guest speaker.

“Listening to Dr. Martin Luther and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.” is the title of the keynote address. Professor Robert Atkinson, of FSU’s College of Law, will focus on the legality and justice of same-sex marriage. He’s the faculty advisor for the FSU law-student organization OUTLaw, which promotes education and discussion about legal issues facing the LGBTQ+ community, and advocates respect and equality for LGBTQ+ within the university setting and beyond. (This Sunday’s Noisy Offering will benefit OUTLaw. During next Sunday’s Ministry of Reconciliation event, there will be other opportunities to make free-will donations.)



The liturgy, of course, will begin at 10 a.m. in the sanctuary. Professor Atkinson will speak next. Then comes lunch in the fellowship hall. Next week’s newsletter will include a copy of a flyer Dave has created for the event, with more details. In the meantime, see Dave if you have any questions – and thank him for his many years of putting these meaningful programs together.

MEMORIES OF A FIRST DATE



Sometimes I forget to read the dedications for the altar flowers, but they’re usually heartwarming. Like this one from last Sunday: “Debee Meyer dedicates today’s altar flowers to the glory of God and in gratitude for the life of Steve Meyer. She is especially remembering 45 years ago when they had their first date on Friday the 13th and celebrated Steve’s birthday by watching Super Bowl XII on Sunday with their youth group from church.”

A MESSAGE OF HOPE

By Karen E. Olson (Excerpt from the Oct. 13, 2002, edition of the Tallahassee Democrat)

... [Tallahassee volunteer Kim Shields] has come to know addicts and ex-offenders, as well as middle-class families reeling from job loss or medical woes. She’s haunted by the memory of one 30-year-old homeless woman who tried so hard to make it on fast-food wages.

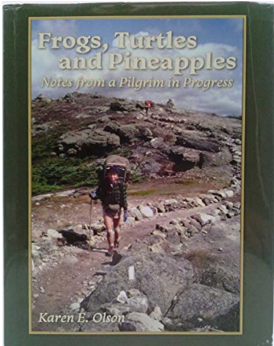
“She had just had a hysterectomy three weeks before. She was willing to go to work even though she wasn’t supposed to – anything to get money coming in. We tried to find her a place to stay.... It just seemed like everything was against her.”

Shields worked with that woman for four months before losing touch. “That was probably my first lesson in discouragement. I can plant that seed, but I can’t necessarily be there to see the harvest, the end of the picture.”

Sometimes, all she can offer is the message that somebody cares.

“I want to show them Jesus, really.... I know that, if God wasn’t in my life, I’d just go back to my old ways. I would just slip back into it. I think people need God – He is our saving hope. When you know God, you look at your problems differently.”

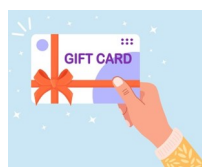
You’ll find this and more of Karen’s stories in the book “Frogs, Turtles and Pineapples: Notes From a Pilgrim in Progress,” available at church or from Karen.



REACHING OUT

Here's a reminder of items we're collecting for various community groups:

- Toilet paper and toiletries, for distribution at the Kearney Center. (Place them in the tub in the fellowship hall, through Jan. 27.)
- Cleaning supplies, for newcomers being assisted by the International Rescue Committee. (There's a tub in the fellowship hall for these, too.)
- T-shirts (size medium or larger), which Manna on Meridian will turn into reusable bags for food distribution. (Yep, put them in the fellowship hall.)
- Publix or gas gift cards, for our Justice and Mercy Fund – which assists people in need who show up at church. (Place them in the offering plate, or send them to Lori in the church office. You can also make a monetary donation to Justice and Mercy instead.)



TO WAIT WITH PATIENCE: EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

... The second point to understanding how to do God's will comes in our psalm [Psalm 40]. A song of deliverance and hope that includes waiting on the Lord with patience. Not a "twiddling of the thumbs" waiting, but the kind that moves us to depth. A depth of relationship with God and with each other and with other people. Even the ones we struggle to be around.

Ugh, I know – but Christ is manifest even in people I don't agree with....

COMING UP

- Jan. 29: Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday.
- Feb. 19: Mardi Gras Talent Show. (*Want to be part of it? Tell Lex Lutheran, rrhartung1@gmail.com.*)
- Feb. 22: Ash Wednesday.
- March 12: Spring forward. (Daylight time begins.)
- April 9: Easter!



MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES



- Noisy Offering! This Sunday! Write yourself a reminder. (Don't have the noisy kind of money around? We accept the quiet kind, too.)
- On many Sundays, visitors worship with us. We do our best to make them feel welcome. One simple way to do that is to tell them who we are – by wearing name tags. Those name tags also work wonders for those of us who are more forgetful than we once were – and who mysteriously draw a blank on familiar faces all the time.
- Do you have an anniversary, birthday or special memory you'd like to honor? Celebrate the occasion by sponsoring the flowers for our service. Sign up on the flower chart in the narthex. The cost is \$35, which you can place in the offering plate.
- Have any questions for our Church Council members? They're listed on our website, <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/about-us>.
- Have anything to add to a future newsletter? Email Lori at sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com or call 850-385-2728.



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS



Nathan Basford - 01/19
Myrna Dowdell - 01/21
Stephen Barton - 01/22
Denise Bookwalter - 01/22
Ann Hingst - 01/22
Sandy Ness - 01/24
Gladys Kane - 01/28
Jennifer Buchanan - 01/29
Warren Schave - 01/31
Jayden Schiffer - 01/31
Gabbi Oates - 02/02
Barb O'Donnell - 02/05
Chris Reece - 02/15

UPCOMING DATES

Sunday, Jan. 22:

9 a.m. - Book study
9:30 a.m. - Choir practice
10 a.m. - Worship with communion, Third Sunday after Epiphany
11:30 a.m. - Congregational meeting

Wednesday, Jan. 25:

7 p.m. - Choir practice

Sunday, Jan. 29:

9 a.m. - Book study
9:30 a.m. - Choir practice
10 a.m. - Worship, Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday
11:30 a.m. - Luncheon



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

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