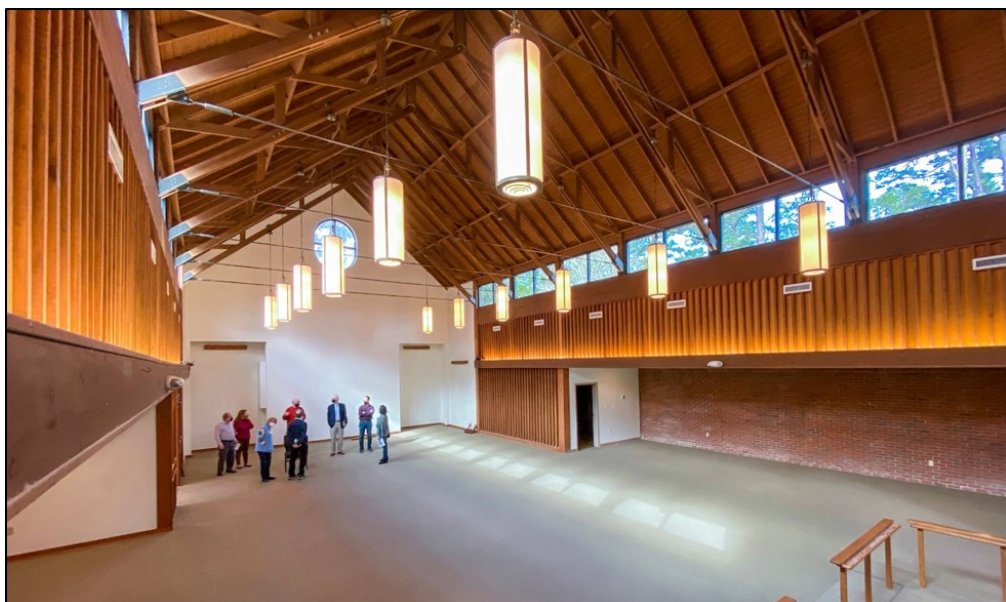




ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



BREAKING NEWS!

This morning, Pastor Tom still tested positive for COVID. Sigh. So some weekend plans are changing, but others are not. Please read carefully. The workday set to begin at 8 a.m. Saturday will go on! We'll be moving everything back into the sanctuary EXCEPT the altar and the piano – because we'll be worshipping one last time in the fellowship hall. None of us would want to worship in the "new" sanctuary without our pastor to lead us. Besides, there's still a bit of wiring to do for the sound system. The liturgy will be led by lay members of St. Stephen, similarly to last Sunday. So we'll look forward to worshipping in the sanctuary NEXT Sunday, Jan. 30, when we'll also be celebrating Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday. Thank you for your patience. (Photo by Colin Hackley)

SEE YOU AT THE MEETING SUNDAY

Although the plans for this Sunday's liturgy have changed, the semiannual congregational meeting will go on! Either later today or tomorrow, St. Stephen members will receive a meeting agenda; 2021 reports from Church Council committees; and the proposed congregational budget for 2022. So you'll have time to do your homework, in preparation for Sunday's budget vote.



You'll also be voting to fill the seats of outgoing Church Council members. One person has stepped up to serve as the communications chair, to replace Paul van der Mark. We also have one person who's in final discernment about the role of president, since Val Sullivan's term is ending. Plus, we'll vote on Synod Assembly representatives.

One more thing: Val says another item of business revolves around the establishment of an endowment fund (and a charter committee to monitor this endowment) for St. Stephen's outreach ministry.

The meeting is set to begin right after Sunday's liturgy. You may attend in person or via Zoom. Office Manager Lori Zengel will send out the link. (Reminder: Anyone may attend, but only St. Stephen members may vote.)

When you get a chance, please thank Val, Paul and all the people who've served on the Church Council in the past few years. Being a Council member is rewarding but time-consuming work. During a pandemic, coupled with a failing building, it must be extra challenging. Thank God for our leaders, past and future.

CHECKING IN WITH PASTOR TOM

So what does a pastor do when he tests positive for COVID and is quarantined with mild symptoms? Pastor Tom has kept working, as you might imagine. Wednesday, he sent us this photo from home.



“This is Olive, our cat,” he said by email. “She is helping me write my sermon for this Sunday. As you can see, I am still under ‘house arrest.’ Today is quarantine day No. 6. Please pray for a negative test result when I go [Thursday] morning to FAMU’s testing facility.” Well, that part didn’t go the way we had hoped....

While he was at his desk, Pastor also crunched some numbers from our recent Capital Campaign. He happily reported that a total of 38 households had made donations to the sanctuary renovation project. Here’s a breakdown.

Amount	Households
\$1 - \$500	16
\$501-\$1,000	6
\$1,001 - \$5,000	10
\$5,001 - \$10,000	2
\$10,001 -	4

HAVE A SEAT

Although the heavy lifting is nearly over in the sanctuary, there still are (and always will be, right?) a few smaller things to consider. For example, the chairs. They’re not awful, but they’re showing their age.

So the remodeling team ordered this sample chair for us to view – and test-drive – during this Sunday’s congregational meeting. Church Council member David Butler says the chairs will be coming from a company that specializes in church furnishings. The idea is that each of us could, in effect, buy our own chairs – or buy extra chairs to benefit those who can’t afford the expense. They wouldn’t be this color. You’ll be able to see a fabric sample at Sunday’s meeting.



OUR SANCTUARY’S STORY

Without question, seeing the improvements to our sanctuary is thrilling. After all, it’s our worship home! A fair number of us at St. Stephen still remember life before this sanctuary – and the occasionally bumpy road from then to now.

- April 1987: Among 45 responses to a survey gauging interest in constructing a new sanctuary, 19 favor enlarging the old one, 16 favor just repairing the old one, seven favor erecting a new one up on the hill (we used to own much more land up there), one favors selling everything and moving, and two need more information.
- November 1987: The Property Planning Committee becomes the Building Committee, charged with investigating options and recommending one.
- December 1989: After two years, the Building Committee recommends constructing a new sanctuary in front of the fellowship hall and remodeling the old building for classroom space.
- March 1991: The congregation votes to borrow \$330,000 to begin construction.

- **June 1991:** The congregation votes to postpone construction because of limited response to a survey on members' willingness to contribute.
- **June 1992:** The city issues initial approval of our building project.
- **October 1993:** Ground is broken.
- **April 1994:** Construction begins.
- **December 1994:** The congregation begins worshipping in the new sanctuary. The official dedication service, attended by the bishop, is Feb. 26, 1995. The furthest thing from anyone's mind is that, about 25 years later, something called "roof thrust" might become a problem.



EXCERPT FROM SUNDAY'S SERMON

"... 'The land of the free and the home of the brave' does not mean that people get to do whatever they want no matter who gets hurt or who gets punished.

"They don't get to do it just because they have a gun.

"Freedom (the real kind that Paul wrote about) means free in Christ, forgiven of sins and NOT bound to any political or social ideology. *This* freedom and *this* bravery mean we are bound to our neighbor in love and service, following the example of Jesus...."

Want to read Pastor Tom's sermons? Go to <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/>, look for the dropdown menu called "More," and click on "Sermons."

HAIKU CORNER

By Lex Lutheran



WORSHIPPING IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL

There's one thing I'll miss:
being able to sit close
to the musicians.

ARISE

Ah, it was so good
to hear Tom Buchanan's tunes
come to life again.



MASKS

Being a cantor
is tough anyway, but with
a mask on, too? Sheesh.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church

Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday

January 30, 2022

A Celebration of God's Inclusive Love

*Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
- 1 John 4:7*

Worship service 10 a.m., followed by video and guest speaker



Zoe Williams, Gender Chat Facilitator

"One Woman's Transition to Self-Acceptance"

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look upon his appearance or on the height of his stature . . . for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." - 1 Samuel 16:7

Free-will donations to Victory Institute may be given through the VENMO app @stephen-saint or by check payable to St. Stephen. Please note "for Victory Institute" on either method.

<https://victoryinstitute.org/>

Victory Institute is the only national organization dedicated to elevating openly LGBTQ leaders who can further equality at all levels of government. LGBTQ Victory Institute is a tax-exempt organization as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; EIN 52-1835268

All are welcome, but space is limited.

To reserve an in-person seat, call our church office M - F 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

To participate virtually, use this link <https://www.facebook.com/ststephentallahassee/>

Service begins at 10 a.m.



St. Stephen Lutheran Church

2198 N. Meridian Road

Tallahassee, Florida 32303

(one block south of John Knox Rd.)

(850) 385-2728

<http://www.ststephenlutherantally.com>

<http://www.reconcilingworks.org>

JUST THE FACTS ABOUT COVID

By Audrey Post

I've been working as a news and public affairs specialist at FSU's College of Medicine since early October - and I love it! I'm fortunate to be able to hear the latest news on COVID quickly because our faculty is heavily involved with the university's COVID response team. Dr. Daniel Van Durme is the team's medical director and sees every positive test result. Dr. Emily Pritchard is coordinating the contact tracing for those who test positive. FSU also sends out regular email updates to faculty, staff and students.

Recently Drs. Van Durme and Pritchard were part of a university-wide Zoom panel discussion that really helped me better understand why the CDC changed its quarantine recommendations, how the Omicron variant is different from the original and from the Delta variant, and what we need to do to protect ourselves.

The biggest takeaway was that cloth masks offer no protection against Omicron. Zero. The virus particles can pass right through them. Medical-grade masks, including N95 and KN95, are the best way to protect yourself. This virus continues to evolve and mutate. Fully vaccinated and "boostered" people are catching it - so glad you're feeling better, Pastor Tom! - so keeping the virus from getting to your nose and mouth is critical. Wear the right mask, and wear it properly.

Next week the public has an opportunity to listen to a panel discussion that will include Van Durme and Pritchard, as well as three members of the FAMU COVID response team: Dr. Temple Robinson, Tanya Tatum and Stephanie Colter. WFSU's Tom Flanigan is moderator. The discussion will be broadcast on Thursday, Jan. 27, at 11 a.m. on WFSU-FM's "Perspectives." Check it out for some straight talk.

With all the politics and posturing surrounding the pandemic response, it's great to have sources of information that avoid the drama and stick to the facts. Stay safe, everyone!



MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Here's a public-health reminder from Lori: You can order at-home tests via the U.S. Postal Service using the link below. They'll send four per address, starting at the end of January: <https://special.usps.com/testkits>



- Don't forget that the Outreach Committee is asking us to continue supporting the Kearney Center via New Bethel AME's TNT drive for toiletries and toilet paper. Please bring your items (bar soap, toothpaste, toilet paper, etc.) to the collection place outside the nursery by Thursday, Jan. 27.

- 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 2021 Flower Chart in the narthex. The cost is \$35, which you can place in the offering plate.
- Have anything to add to a future newsletter? Email Lori at sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com or call 850-385-2728.



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

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 ODonnell - 02/05



UPCOMING DATES

This Saturday:

8 a.m. - Sanctuary workday

This Sunday:

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

11:30 a.m. - Congregational meeting

Wednesday, January 26:

Noon - Bible study

Sunday, January 30:

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



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>.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, ELCA
2198 N. Meridian Road | Tallahassee, FL 32303

The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor