

January 26, 2023



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



This was one of the ways Ruth decorated for Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday in 2018.

SO MUCH GOING ON THIS SUNDAY

Our annual Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday returns this weekend – so prepare for inspiring worship, a thought-provoking guest speaker and even our first potluck of the year. Margaret Bowers says that St. Stephen will provide chicken tenders, Morningstar Farms Grillers (veggie burgers), buns, dessert and drinks for the potluck. So please bring whatever side dishes you can to fill out the meal.

Organizer Dave Suhrweir's flyer below provides all the pertinent details. Dave has been sharing the flyer throughout the community, so we might have a number of visitors Sunday. Here's a suggestion we haven't made since the pre-COVID era: If you're able-bodied, please consider parking up the hill at the office complex on Pineview Drive, so there's more St. Stephen parking available for guests.

One more thing: Last week's Noisy Offering went toward the **OUTLaw** student group for which this Sunday's guest speaker is faculty advisor. In case that offering caught you off guard, or you'd like to donate more, feel free to make an additional contribution this Sunday. Dave's flyer contains the relevant information. (So far, the total donated is \$288.)

Many thanks to Dave, who always makes the last Sunday in January special.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church

Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday, January 29, 2023

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 10:00 a.m.

Guest Speaker following the service (approximately 11:15 a.m.)

Luncheon in the fellowship hall to follow (near noontime)

All are welcome. All activities are free.

**Speaker: Professor, Robert Atkinson,
Florida State University College of Law**

*"The Legality and Justice of Same-Sex Marriage:
Listening to Dr. Martin Luther and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr."*



➡ To participate virtually, visit <https://www.facebook.com/ststephentallahassee/>
Videos of the service and presentation will be available on that Facebook page for later viewing.

Professor Atkinson is 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.

Free-will-donations may be made to the OUTLaw organization.



- Donation jar in the sanctuary and fellowship hall on January 29th
- Check delivered or mailed, payable to "St. Stephen Lutheran Church." Please designate for "OUTLaw."
- Venmo app: @stephen-saint payable to "St. Stephen Lutheran Church." Please designate for "OUTLaw."

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, 2198 N. Meridian Road, Tallahassee, FL 32303
(one block south of John Knox Road) 850-385-2728

<http://www.ststephenlutherantally.com>

<http://www.reconcilingworks.org>



St. Stephen Lutheran Church (ELCA) is a Reconciling in Christ congregation that explicitly welcomes people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. St. Stephen is equally committed to anti-racism. We welcome people without regard to race, ethnicity, age, family status, economic status, or differing abilities.

A FRUITFUL SUNDAY

Here are a few highlights from last Sunday’s congregational meeting:

- We approved a budget! It’s actually slightly smaller than last year’s – in part because Pastor Tom’s seminary loan was forgiven, so we don’t need to make payments on that anymore.
- Our office manager and our music director are both getting raises.
- Our office manager will be assisting the treasurer with the bookkeeping part of our financial ministry. Being treasurer is a big responsibility, especially for people who have “real jobs.” As Treasurer Jen Dritt said at the meeting: “I’m so relieved that Lori is going to be helping me.”
- We’ve started a capital campaign for a good-as-new baby grand piano. (*See more below.*)
- We finished 2022 in the black. In fact, if you average out our past five years, we’ve ended up about \$13,000 in the black annually.
- We received about \$30,000 more in financial pledges this year than last year – actually, more than we’ve received in years.
- We increased the amount we budgeted for maintenance and repairs, so we can continue the timely upkeep of our valuable buildings.
- We should see our new sign out front by April.
- The Hingsts are replacing the fogged glass in the columbarium and installing a new steel-and-glass door there.
- We’ll be rescheduling a discussion on the use of “catholic” in our creeds.
- No doubt everyone left the meeting with even higher opinions of Music Director Katharine Gossman, Office Manager Lori Zengel, Treasurer Jen Dritt, President Denise Bookwalter, the rest of the Church Council and Pastor Tom. (And Paul van der Mark, the sprinting handheld-mike guy.)



‘PEACE AND JUSTICE ENDOWMENT’ vs. ‘JUSTICE AND MERCY FUND’

Some confusion arose at Sunday’s meeting over these two efforts with similar names but quite different missions. (And it’s inviting us to rename the Justice and Mercy Fund to help in future communications.)

For now, think of the pastor’s Justice and Mercy Fund as monetary gifts set aside for Pastor Tom to use whenever a small-scale humanitarian need arises. It’s a discretionary fund. For example, if someone down on his luck comes to our door and asks for help with a car repair or needs a short stay at a motel, Pastor has funds on hand to give aid. Similarly, Pastor or Lori might reach into the safe box and hand over a couple of Publix/Walmart gift cards. Think of it as everyday charity.



The Peace and Justice Endowment Fund, however, is a different kind of fund. It was set up with a \$25,000 gift from Pastor Emeritus Emory and Ann Hingst. As with any endowment, their donation (as well as whatever donations the rest of us contribute to it) is a legacy that will accumulate interest – and that interest will be spent on peace and justice projects. People or organizations may write grants to the Outreach Committee and receive financial aid relating to peace and justice initiatives.

In months and years to come, we’ll continue to get updates on both – and be encouraged to contribute to both as part of our ministry to the community.

A BIT OF PIANO CONTEXT

For many years, the people associated with worship and music here have been saying that we need a piano that’s good enough – as in-house flute professor Karl Barton explains it – to honor the artistry of our pianist. As Karl noted during Sunday’s meeting, Katharine is talented enough to make even a crummy piano



sound good. But she deserves so much better. In addition, Karl said, a refurbished piano should continue to perform, with regular maintenance, for another 30-40 years.

Most of us don’t have a piano. And most of us have never thought about spending \$25,000 on one. So Karl put it in context for us non-musicians. He explained that the flute he plays so skillfully each Sunday cost roughly \$15,000. And, well, a piano is a much more complicated instrument. Why a baby grand? Its size, he said, does wonders for the sound – a sound that our humble upright piano can only dream of. Yes, having a baby grand will involve a bit of furniture rearrangement, but Karl and Pastor said that shouldn’t be a problem.

After Karl’s encouragement, the congregation voted overwhelmingly in favor of the Council’s proposal to begin a \$25,000 capital campaign for a high-quality refurbished baby grand piano for our sanctuary. Now you can make your donation labeled “Piano”! As Pastor Tom said, we all came together to raise the money for our recent sanctuary upgrade – so we can certainly pay for this piano.

AND NOW, A MESSAGE TO THE ALMIGHTY

Dear God: We’re so grateful for the abundance of riches you shower on us here at St. Stephen. Thanks to you, we have *everything we need!* Almost. We do have a chronic shortage of worship assistants, Altar Guild members and counters. The lovely people who serve say it’s so fulfilling, but they need reinforcements.



Worship Team

Yes, God, we know that a newsletter is not the most effective way to recruit people. The best way is face-to-face. But maybe if we plant this seed here today, you can follow up with one of your famous nudges. Burning bush, maybe? Voice from the heavens? “Go see Beth Alexander,” you could intone in that rumbling whisper of yours. “She needs you!”

Can’t wait to see what you come up with. Talk to you later. Thanks.

YOU STILL HAVE TIME, TNT FANS

Did you forget last Sunday to bring in your TNT (toilet paper and toiletries) items for the Kearney Center? Good news! The old deadline of Friday has been moved to this Sunday. So you have a couple of days to stock up on those items and bring them with you to church this Sunday. Outreach Coordinator Sharon Simmons reminds us that our contributions will be combined with those from New Mount Zion AME Church and be taken to the Kearney Center on Monday. She appreciates your help.



MEMBERSHIP, ANYONE?

By Pastor Tom

In the next few weeks, we'll welcome a few new members to St. Stephen. We're looking for a Sunday that will work for everyone taking part in a new-member ceremony during worship. If you're interested in joining St. Stephen, please see me.



HOPEFUL NEWS ABOUT LSSNF

By Caroline Collins

Lutheran Social Services of North Florida (lssnf.org) is in the running for a \$20K+ grant from the local chapter of 100 Women Who Care (100WWC). Dottie

Hinkle and our own Barbara Ehlmann are preparing a premium pitch to present in competition with two other deserving nonprofits at the chapter's first meeting of 2023, to be held at 5 p.m. Feb. 2 at Saint Paul's United Methodist Church.



At that meeting, the August and November 2022 winners will also explain how they used their grant funds for the benefit of their constituents. Gwen Cochran Virostek will speak on behalf of Capital City Youth Services, and Leah Costigan on behalf of the International Rescue Committee.

Please wish us luck. Better yet, consider joining Barbara and me as a brand-new member of 100WWC, and then you can hear presentations and place your vote. Visit their website for more information: <https://www.100wwctlh.org/>

'THE POWER OF GOD': EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

... You see, we can read Paul's appeal to come together and think that "coming together" is the goal. But coming together is not the goal. The goal is to follow the foolishness of the cross because that's the power of God ... that's what Paul is talking about. The goal is to witness the way new communities are formed as we bear witness to Christ. We'll practice this profound act with dialogue, forgiveness, trust and an expression that gives the benefit of the doubt to other members of the Body of Christ. Beloved, you are enough.

COMING UP

- 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

- 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



Gladys Kane - 01/28
Jennifer Buchanan - 01/29
Warren Schave - 01/31
Jayden Schiffer - 01/31
Gabbi Oates - 02/02
Barb ODonnell - 02/05
Chris Reece - 02/15
Patrick Kennell - 02/18
Lisa Medley - 02/25
Jackie Mustian - 02/25
Judi Duffy - 02/27
Jerry Rumph - 02/28
Rob Schiffer - 02/28

UPCOMING DATES

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. - Guest lecture followed by lunch

Wednesday, Feb. 01:

7 p.m. - Choir practice



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
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The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor

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