

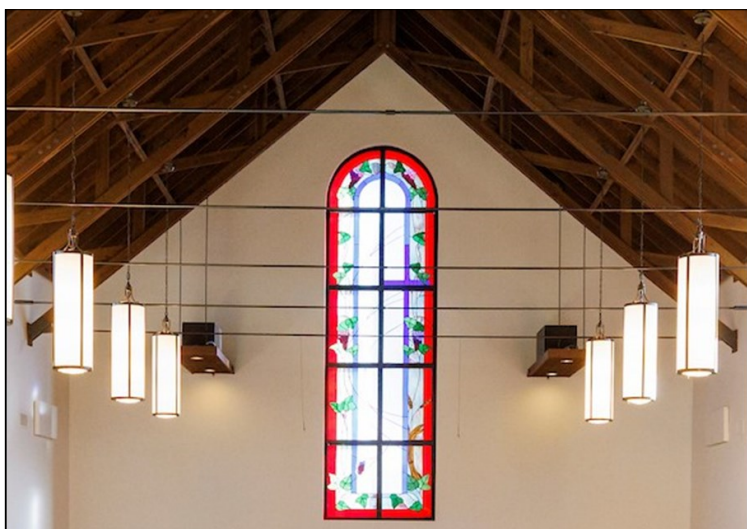


# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

### BACK TO THE SANCTUARY

This is it, friends: our first Sunday back in the newly rejuvenated sanctuary! What a special day it will be.



Not only is it a homecoming of sorts, but also it's a "Welcome Back" day for Pastor Tom, who missed the past two Sundays during his close encounter with COVID. It'll be so good to have him back behind the altar.

Also, it's our annual Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday. (See the details below.) "The worship will be shortened a bit to give our keynote speaker plenty of time to tell her story and allow for questions and answers," Pastor Tom said. "Thank you, David Suhrweir, for coordinating another great event. We look forward to celebrating God's inclusive love for all people." (Detail from a Colin Hackley photo)

## 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>

# MANY THANKS

By Pastor Tom

My “unplanned vacation” did not include a beach or a mountain retreat. I did, however, receive much-needed rest and time for recovery. I have many people to thank for the roles they played during my absence:

- Val Sullivan, for her guidance and expertise on quarantine safety.
- Susan Hehn (*pictured here*), for her care in leading the Children’s Time.
- Beth Alexander, for doing the extra work of welcoming at the start of the service and her behind-the-scenes handling of all the unexpected events.
- Ron Hartung and Jen Dritt, for taking the risk of reading my sermons.
- Lori Zengel, for her work and stability in managing the office and all its surprises.
- David Butler, for overseeing the contractors in the sanctuary and coordinating the Saturday workday.
- Everyone who worked on the move (*including the four gents in the photo wrestling with our 20-foot-tall ladder, and a bunch of volunteers washing and vacuuming the pews and chairs*).
- Paul van der Mark, for covering the extra livestream shift for Jonas.
- Karl Barton, for his sound work and expertise.



To all of you who called or sent texts, notes, flowers and balloons, thank you. I’m very thankful to be your pastor.

# GRATEFUL FOR OUR LEADERS

By Pastor Tom

With joy at last Sunday’s congregational meeting, we received unanimous votes for Denise Bookwalter and Audrey Post as the newest members of the Church Council. Denise will serve as president of the congregation and Audrey as representative for communications. Both bring experience and the calm presence required to keep St. Stephen moving in the right direction: serving God and caring for people. Thank you, Val Sullivan and Paul van der Mark, for your service on Council.

So this is the new Council lineup.

- President: Denise Bookwalter (*pictured here*)
- Buildings & Grounds: David Butler
- Care & Hospitality: Margaret Bowers
- Communications: Audrey Post
- Education & Discipleship: Rita Ford
- Mutual Ministry: Jennifer Buchanan
- Outreach: Sharon Simmons
- Treasurer: Jennifer Dritt
- Worship & Music: Beth Alexander
- Youth member: (*vacant*)



## ALSO AT THE MEETING...

- The congregation enthusiastically approved a 2022 budget that includes a 7-percent raise for Pastor Tom.
- “We’re in good standing,” Treasurer Jen Dritt said in describing St. Stephen’s financial condition. She didn’t have yearend statements to hand out, she said, because she’s still waiting for a few items so she can close the books on 2021. (You’ll receive a copy of that yearend breakdown soon.)
- We also learned that a piece of Pastor Tom’s compensation goes toward paying off his seminary loan – and that any of us can make donations specifically for that purpose.
- With gratitude, we approved a new endowment set up by an unnamed St. Stephen couple. The interest it generates will go toward peace and justice initiatives in our community. In the coming year, a committee of St. Stephen members will be formed to oversee that spending.
- We also heartily approved Sue Canning, Mark Canning and Jonas Holdcraft as our Synod Assembly delegates.



- Val Sullivan spoke for all of us when she praised our “structurally sound and beautiful” worship space. And she thanked the building and design committee that wrestled with the million and one decisions involved. Denise Bookwalter, our newly elected president, led that committee – which consisted of Pastor Tom, David Butler, Mark

Bertolami, Ann Hingst, Jim Sampson, Margaret Bowers and Mark Greeley (aka Denise’s husband).

- “Thank you for the honor of serving as your president,” Val said in closing. Referring to her Council colleagues, she said, “What a strong group of people!”

## A LONG, LONG WAY FROM SYRIA

*By Sharon Simmons*

New residents in Tallahassee come via many roads – university students, job opportunities, being closer to family and, most recently, with the help of the International Rescue Committee. The IRC helps refugees not only from Afghanistan but also from other parts of the world.

Recently our education coordinator, Rita Ford, met a family here from Syria. In true teacher fashion, Rita and her family have taken these new residents under their wing. The family consists of Dad, Mom and three boys, ages 12, 10 and 2½.

The children won’t attend local schools until their English proficiency improves. Some specific items they need:

- Gently used books – picture, primary, board and early readers, graphic novels.
- Gently used or new workbooks or activity books for children. Dollar Tree has a good selection.
- Size 4 diapers.
- A computer so the boys can do online school in anticipation of learning English and going to a brick-and-mortar school. You can send a donation to church earmarked “Computer for Syrian family.”
- Gently used games or toys.
- Cleaning supplies and toiletries.





Bring your items to church in a bag marked with Rita's name and placed it in the kitchen and she will gladly deliver it.



One more thing from Outreach: We continue to collect items for the Going Places Street Outreach Center. Toiletries, snacks, warm shirts, pants and socks are needed – along with detergent, so clients living on the street can come to the center and wash their clothes. We truly make a difference in the lives of young people in our community.

## 'WITH HOPE AND ANTICIPATION': EXCERPT FROM PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

*(In case you didn't get to read it)*

... The worship community of St. Stephen has experienced disruption but NOT disintegration. For this, we can hold our heads up. We have continued to worship the One True God and have been good stewards with our resources. The Gospel is preached and the sacraments are administered faithfully. Through generous giving of time, talent and treasure we have been blessed to be on the verge of wrapping up a major capital campaign in the sanctuary. St. Stephen successfully gave 9% of her collections to the larger church. We met our obligations to the variety of nonprofit organizations that we support and lift up. We even took on a few new missions when other entities reached out for help. We have been open for the homeless visitors who have come to Bible study and to worship. These and others have sought emergency help ... with food and gas....



My prayer is that we will soon be able to be together in person. Such a day brings me joy to think about, but until it comes we will be faithful stewards and follow health guidelines while praising a God that never fails us. We look forward with hope and anticipation to what God has in store for the faithful and for the new relationships we will form in 2022!

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

### REUNITED WITH KATHARINE

The organ, cooped up for months in a dark hall, is back where it belongs.



### SUCH A CHALLENGE

God bless you parents of school-age kids during these COVID-crazy times.

### FROSTY NIGHTS

Twenty-two degrees this weekend. Brrr. Still, my sis got down to 3. Yeesh.



## MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Please keep Ruth Hartung in your prayers. Her big brother, Richard, died Wednesday in Rochester, New York.
- Last week, when she provided a COVID update, Audrey Post said she's working as a news and public affairs specialist at the FSU College of Medicine. In yesterday's *Tallahassee Democrat*, Audrey had a story about FSU med students conducting "Teddy Bear Clinics" to keep kids from fearing a trip to the doctor's office.
- 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 2022 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](mailto: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

**This Sunday:**

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

**Wednesday, February 2:**

Noon - Bible study



If you have news or photos to share, please send them to Lori at [sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com](mailto:sslc@ststephenlutherantally.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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