



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

A MASTER STORYTELLER

Part of what draws us to worship together is to hear stories – whether from the Bible, from our friends or from our visitors. Likewise, part of what makes our annual Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday so powerful is its stories, including those told by the guest speakers that Dave Suhrweir invites.

Last Sunday we heard the story of Shevrin Jones. He’s a state representative, a candidate for the state Senate, a FAMU grad, a former science teacher, a scholar on educational leadership, a persuasive speaker, a pastor’s son, a man of faith, a man of courage. He’s also a man who happens to be gay – and he told us the story of how long he resisted that truth. With tears streaming down his face, he told his story.



But the tears didn’t last, because he also wanted to fire us up. As he said, in the struggle for human rights and civil rights, sitting on the sidelines is not an option. And guess what? In the story right below this one, Cassandra White offers all of us an opportunity to get off the sidelines and pick up the phone.

A few more details from Sunday:

- The kids’ Noisy Offering, donation jar in the fellowship hall, and the congregation budget produced a total donation of \$584 to the LGBTQ Victory Institute, which works to increase the number of LGBTQ people in public office and to provide programming, service and other support to help ensure their success.
- Rep. Jones is running for the Florida Senate District 35. For more information, go to his website, <https://shevrinjones.com/meet-shevrin/>.
- Thanks to Pastor Tom, Dave, music director Katharine Gossman, potluck coordinator Margaret Bowers, chief decorator Ruth Hartung and ALL of the magnificent food providers for a memorable celebration.
- And thanks to Pastor Emeritus Emory Hingst, who worshiped with us Sunday. Before he retired in 1999, he gently but relentlessly led St. Stephen toward becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation. What a blessed difference that has made.

YOU, TOO, CAN BUG YOUR LAWMAKERS

By Cassandra White

(If you’re reading this on email, the links in this story won’t be active. For active links, read the newsletter from our website, linked at the top of this email.)

In the wake of our wonderful Ministry of Reconciliation service and Rep. Jones’ talk, I’m sharing some of the things I learned at Planned Parenthood’s “How to Annoy Your Legislators.” One easy way to get your opinion heard is to call the legislator’s office. To find out who your legislators are and to get their contact information, enter your address at this site: <https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/myrepresentative.aspx>

In the current legislative session, four very harmful bills would discriminate against and hurt LGBTQIA+ individuals. (One bill has already been taken care of.) I encourage you to join me in calling both your state representative and your state senator and asking them to vote against these bills. It’s generally easiest to address one issue per call. If you call after 5 p.m., you can leave a voice message. Equality Florida has a great write-up on each of these bills: <https://eqfl.org/press-release-slate-anti-lgbtq-bills-dominate-florida-legislative-session>

Here's a brief summary of each one ("HB" stands for House Bill, "SB for Senate Bill):

- HB 305/SB 1126 would ban local employment protections for people based on sexual orientation and gender identity. This would roll back protections already in place that cover 13 million Floridians.
- HB 1365/SB 1864 would make it a second-degree felony to perform gender-affirming surgery on minors even with parental consent.
- HB 537/SB 778 would allow the dangerous practice of conversion therapy even in places that have banned it as long as the "therapy" occurs in a home.



Now here's a sample script for calling about one of the bills. Use either the House or Senate bill number, depending on whether you're calling a representative or a senator:

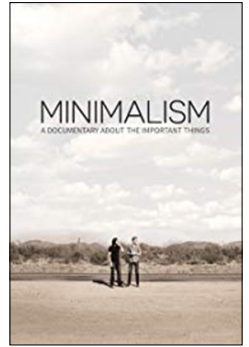
Hello, my name is _____. I'm very concerned about HB 305/SB 1126. Instead of moving to roll back protections for people based on sexual orientation and gender identity, we should be expanding them. I am asking Senator/Representative _____ to vote no on this bill and to commit to protecting the LGBTQIA+ community in Florida.

Finally, this is a link to the "How to Annoy Your Legislators" GoogleSlides presentation:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1NZ1QoOHY7rvSBIqowNer8uE_0DXRkskkMtAU39P6ins/edit?usp=sharing

NOTES FROM PASTOR TOM

- Our adult class will finish the video called "Minimalism" this Sunday. You may find it on Netflix if you wish to watch it and take part in our discussion for the next two weeks. During our time we'll discuss our Christian faith in connection with what we learned about being a minimalist. We meet in the fellowship hall with coffee at 8:45 a.m.
- Our first prayer team is full! We meet Wednesdays at 6 p.m. at church. If you wish to learn what we're doing, please see me.



HOSTED BY FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

TRUST WOMEN

Join us for a day-long conference about reproductive justice!

FEBRUARY 8, 2020 | 9 AM -4:30 PM

Guest speakers include:
Dr. Rebecca Todd Peters
Dr. A.D. Brickler
Laura Hernández

REGISTER NOW BY EMAILING
CHRISTY@OLDFIRSTCHURCH.ORG
LUNCH IS \$6, PLEASE NOTE ANY
DIETARY PREFERENCES

Trust
Women

A
PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN
ARGUMENT FOR
REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Rebecca Todd Peters

A SLICE OF LAST SUNDAY'S SERMON

... I wish that I could take the credit, but this Spirit [of reconciliation] has been in St. Stephen for many years before me. Before I came, the light of Christ's inclusive love was allowed to shine here. That's really the problem with many churches, ... those places where people and preachers stood in the way and blocked God's sunbursts of unity and love. And it is this blocking of God's love that has oppressed and afflicted people. It was this kind of blocking that turned people away and kept the church from being a universal body. The church became incomplete and divided, unable to withstand the tyrants of segregation and division.... But you are here ... and I am here. Together we stand in order to NOT block God's message of inclusive love....

MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES



- Terri Albrecht-Schmitt asks: "Need another reason to come to the St. Stephen Valentine Social, which you've been reading about the past few weeks? How about for the love of pizza? Yes, add dinner on to craft-making and cookie-baking. It's an irresistible, free deal. So gather up your posse, from St. Stephen or elsewhere, and mosey on over. Friday, Feb. 14, 6:15-8:15 p.m., fellowship hall. Questions? (850) 933-6173."

- Calling all tax preparers: Your St. Stephen annual statements will be in the narthex this Sunday for pickup.
- Yes, the rumors are true: The annual St. Stephen Mardi Gras Talent Show rides again! Date: Sunday, Feb. 23, right after a chili potluck, which is right after the liturgy. Questions? Feeling supremely talented? Call Lex Lutheran at 850-222-5656.



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS:



Graham Hackley - 01/30

Collin Schiffer - 01/30

Jayden Schiffer - 01/31

Warren Schave - 01/31

Gabbi Oates - 02/02

Barb ODonnell - 02/05

UPCOMING DATES

This Sunday:

8:45 a.m. - Sunday Church School and Adult Study

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

Wednesday, Feb. 5:

6 p.m. - Church Vitality Prayer Group

7 p.m. - Choir practice

SERVING THIS SUNDAY:

Pastor Tom, Presiding, Preaching; **Cheryl Stuart**, Assisting Minister; **Sandy Larson**, Cup Minister; **Rita Ford**, Welcoming; **Tim Larson**, Walkways; **Rita Ford & Nancy Staff**, Greeters; **Gladys Kane**, Lector; **Rita Ford & Susan Warren**, Altar Guild; **Janet Barber & Pepper Stewart**, 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