



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

NEW MEMBERS, ASHES, VIGIL AND MORE

By Pastor Tom

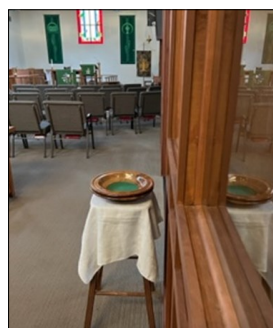
WELCOME: With joy we announce that on Transfiguration Sunday (Feb. 19) we'll welcome new members into St. Stephen. Get ready to welcome the Allen family, Jim and Lynn Gunderson, Susan and Rudy Hehn, and Greta Scavone! You'll read more about them, and see their photos, in next week's newsletter. *(Yes, the Hehns have been with us for three years. But now they're making it official!)*

DUST AND ASHES: Ash Wednesday is Feb. 22. I'll be in the parking lot from noon to 12:45 p.m. for prayer and imposition of ashes. At 6 p.m. we'll worship in person and celebrate Holy Communion.



REMEMBERING PARKLAND: Tuesday, Feb. 14, will mark the five-year anniversary of the massacre at Marjory

Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland. I invite you to a prayer vigil that evening to commemorate the victims of that horrific shooting and show solidarity with the survivors. The vigil will begin at 7 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church. We hope this gathering will set the tone for our Tallahassee interfaith community. The next day, we'll meet at Bethel Missionary Baptist at 11 a.m. and march to the Capitol to protest the direction of the Legislature's super-majority. May we stand united against all gun violence.



STATIONARY COLLECTION PLATE: Tithing is a part of worship, but with COVID we changed the custom of passing the plate. For the entire service, the collection plate has been available for you to put in your offering. We've decided to continue that practice – so everyone can be thoroughly inspired by the choir anthem without the distraction of passing the plate.

'SO MUCH TIME, SO LITTLE TALENT'

That's one of the immortal lines from *The Amazing Zing*, a regular performer in St. Stephen's Mardi Gras Talent Show. This year's show is scheduled for Feb. 19, after the liturgy (and after a break of 15 minutes while the lion tamers and tightrope walkers get set up).

Be prepared for singing, dancing, magic, laughter, tears and even visits from Chuck Berry and Frank Sinatra. Can't have a show without an audience, so please come fill our church with joyful applause. *(We won't stream the show, but a recording of it will be available for viewing later.)*



GREETINGS, ST. STEPHEN CAMPERS

By Mark Greeley

St. Stephen’s annual camping trip is happening! We have six sites already booked at the St. George Island State Park for the weekend of April 21. This trip is two nights with a mix of novice and expert campers. We have communal meals, hiking, and beach and nature activities throughout the day, capped off with a worship service Saturday night.

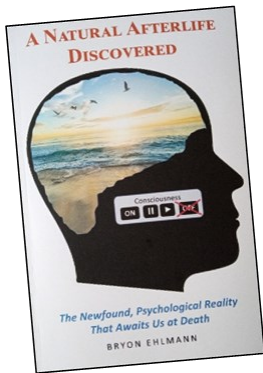
Our sites should hold 15-25 people, so all who are interested should feel welcome. The sites have power, water, bath houses, and walking access to both the bay and the Gulf. Lots of people in the congregation have braved this trip before and can give you any other details you need about the sites.

Whether you’re thinking one night, three nights or just a day trip, we have room for all of those options. Also, there’s a wealth of camping gear in the congregation for anyone who may need a loaner tent or sleeping bag. Contact me (markhoffmangreeley@gmail.com) or Colin (colin@colinhackley.com) with questions. Looking forward to sharing this great experience in April!



AFTER DEATH ... WHAT?

No one could accuse St. Stephen member Bryon Ehlmann of thinking small. For example, when you or I wake from a dream, we probably roll over and go back to sleep. But after one particular dream, Bryon wondered: “Suppose I had never woken up? Though others would know, how would I ever know it was over?” Thus began his 10-year journey to his newly published book, “A Natural Afterlife Discovered: The Newfound, Psychological Reality That Awaits Us at Death.” Here’s an excerpt from Bryon’s brief overview:



“For centuries humans have considered just two main possibilities for what awaits us at death: 1) a ‘nothingness’ like that of our before-life (i.e., the period before life) or 2) some supernatural afterlife. These possibilities summarize the orthodoxy concerning death. They have been the only positions available in an age-old public debate and a personal private one. But finally, a new reality about death has been discovered. Perhaps, however, I should say ‘uncovered’ because I feel this reality was just waiting for someone to lift the heavy blanket of orthodoxy to uncover it.

“The reality is that when you die, assuming no supernatural afterlife, things will not be, from your perspective, as they were before you were born. Instead, you will be timelessly, though imperceptibly so, and eternally, though deceptively so, paused in the last conscious moment of your final experience.”

Welcome to Bryon’s theory of a Natural Eternal Consciousness. His theory “may revolutionize thinking about death and existence after death,” states one reviewer on the back cover. “With each turn of the page, you will find a treasure trove of insights and inspiration. This outstanding book is expertly written, very easy to read, and enthusiastically recommended.” It’s available on Amazon – and also, no doubt, from Bryon. Give it a read.

KidSafe NEWS

Late last month, Caroline Collins informed us that KidSafe (the program of Lutheran Social Services of North Florida) was being considered for a grant by 100+ Women Who Care. Guess what? KidSafe is getting that grant – about \$20,000. “Several members of St. Stephen belong to that wonderful group and rejoiced with us at this award,” said Dottie Hinkle, executive director of LSSNF.



Last year, she said, KidSafe broke the record for providing safety seats to families in need – and it’s “on target to crush that record this year.” KidSafe used to be just one of several programs at LSSNF. These days, it’s the only program. So, Dottie said, “we changed our logo and have a ‘fictitious name’ that more clearly identifies what we do.” Pretty smart.

TIME TO EAT, OWLs

For lunch this month, the OWLs (Older, Wiser Lutherans) are flocking to the Panda Buffet at 3507 Thomasville Road. Please note: This month’s lunch is on a **Monday**, not a Tuesday. See you at 11:30 a.m. on Feb. 13.



CLASSY COLUMBARIUM

Remember that new door and new glass for the columbarium that you heard about at the congregational meeting last month? It’s already in, and it looks terrific. Thank you, donors Ann and Pastor Emeritus Emory Hingst.

(For newer members: Our columbarium holds the cremated remains of deceased members of St. Stephen. If you’d like to reserve a spot there for all eternity, see Pastor Tom.)

TIPS FOR HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS

As Pastor Tom mentioned Sunday, the Synod is providing a Healthy Congregations session for St. Stephen and Grace Lutheran on Saturday, March 4. As one former participant said, “It is one of the best tools available today for promoting effective congregation life and leadership.”

All members are welcome to attend – not just Church Council people. “It’s for anyone interested in learning about decision-making stereotypes and tools that promote good communication and conflict resolution,” Pastor Tom said. “I think our congregation sees the value in this kind of training not only in the church but also in professional and family relationships. So I hope to see other people there, not only Council. After all, the Council folks will come and go, so we want others ready to step in with healthy tools.” The session begins at 8:30 a.m. at Grace and continues until 4:30 p.m., though you’re not required to remain the entire time. Lunch is provided. For more information, see Pastor Tom.



TINY PINES

Over the years, some of our pine trees along Meridian Road have gone to tree heaven. As a result, an abundance of sunshine has been flooding one area – and, as you workday volunteers know, weeds and vines are thriving. Well, help is on the way. Jake Hartung recently picked out and planted three loblolly pines there. Yes, they're wimpy now, but one day they'll be shade machines. Take that, you weeds.

Speaking of our front yard, get your camera ready. Our long line of azaleas is ready to pop – barring a torrential rain.



EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

... Today, we hear Jesus' "I Have a Dream" speech. Where all people have rights and dignity in their own personhood. That "we refuse to believe that the bank of justice" and righteousness "is bankrupt." That we recognize, and speak aloud, the light of Christ in one another ... no matter the color of a person's skin or gender or economic status. That we behave as though "justice is a reality for all of God's children." And that we, a predominantly white congregation, "realize that our destiny is tied up with their destiny." That our persistence is to stand with others, partnering a peace that can never "be satisfied as long as people of different skin color receive unspeakable horrors of police brutality."

(Quotes taken from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech)

COMING UP



- Feb. 19: Mardi Gras Talent Show, after the liturgy. Sing brand-new songs about St. Stephen! See your friends perform onstage! Laugh out loud!
- Feb. 22: Ash Wednesday.
- March 4: Healthy Congregations session at Grace.
- March 11: Spring forward. (Daylight time begins.)
- April 9: Easter!

MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- January financial report: Giving totaled \$22,054. Expenses totaled \$14,120. So for the month, and for the year, we're \$7,934 in the black.
- 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

Chris Reece - 02/15
Patrick Kennell - 02/18
Tami Allen - 02/21
Lisa Medley - 02/25
Jackie Mustian - 02/25
Judi Duffy - 02/27
Jerry Rumph - 02/28
Rob Schiffer - 02/28

IN THE WEEK AHEAD

Sunday, Feb. 12:

9 a.m. - Book study

9:30 a.m. - Choir practice

10 a.m. - Worship with communion, Fifth Sunday after Epiphany



Monday, Feb. 13:

11:30 a.m. - OWLs gathering at Panda Express

Wednesday, Feb. 15:

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>.

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The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor

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