



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



## GRACE, PEACE AND FORGIVENESS

*By Denise Bookwalter*

*[Since Denise is St. Stephen's brand-new president, we asked her to write something so you could get to know her better in this role.]*

This past Sunday, we brought the family back to church. We've been attending virtually over these many months of the pandemic, listening in from our living room while drinking coffee and watching the girls play their games as they, too, listened. We've missed the in-person worship we took for granted before the pandemic. We've missed seeing our church friends and family and hearing their stories of joy and hardship.

Some members are unable to be in our physical space, so our technology has provided them an opportunity to still feel part of our community – and that's good, too. But as I sat with my immediate family surrounded by my church family, I couldn't help but reflect on the bigger meaning of the return to our worship space. It provides us with a physical reminder of our community. It's not primarily about the space we worship in. It's about the people, and the work that we do together. The pandemic has damaged all of us, but it also has helped us to see more clearly what's important and how we want to live our lives. As we slowly return to being together, or continue to worship virtually because we cannot gather physically, I hope that we can reflect on our church community and our mission of grace, peace and forgiveness.



I thank you all for putting your confidence in me to lead the Church Council. The council is full of amazing, hard-working people, and I hope to lend the leadership that's required. I will do my best. I look forward to gathering and talking with each of you either in person or virtually, and lending what talents I have to our church. *(Top photo by Colin Hackley)*

## 'GOD'S LOVE SHOWED ON YOUR FACES'

Part of what made Sunday's rededication of our sanctuary special was the dance performed by Rita Ford and Colleen Holdcraft. Some of us view dance as a baffling foreign language. But what Rita and Colleen created to accompany



"How Great Thou Art" was crystal-clear and holy.

What do *they* get out of sacred dance? How much preparation does it take? How long have they been at this?

"I can't say when I started dancing," Rita said, "but I always love to dance and sing. At home, especially on the weekends, I have my music on with my Swiffer and I dance around the house. My poor husband has to deal with that."

Colleen started taking ballet lessons at age 5 and continued through high school. "Rita and I like to rehearse once a week for an hour or so," she said. "But, honestly, sometimes we lose track of time – especially in the early planning stages of a dance."

Colleen added: "I admire Rita's passion for Christ and dancing." And Rita said: "Colleen is so full of energy and grace that I know is from God. We do work well together."

"It has become an outlet as well as a ministry for me," Colleen said. "Before performing, I feel both nervous and excited. The music is so powerful and full of meaning that it's such a rush and an exhilaration to be moving to it. When it's over, my heart is beating from the exercise as well as the overwhelming feeling of the Holy Spirit empowering us." Watching online Sunday morning, Sharon Simmons called it a "stunningly uplifting performance. God's love showed on your faces."



Both dancers are grateful for the congregation's support, and for the opportunity. Said

Rita: "I feel God is indeed using Colleen and me in this way." (Photo by Colin Hackley)

## WE'RE THINKING OF YOU, GORDON

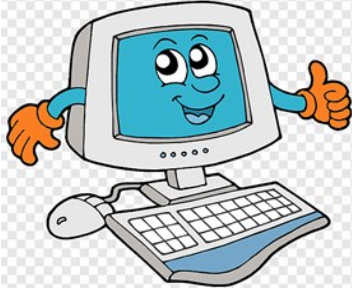
We learned this week that Gordon Fleischer, everyone's favorite short-order cook, is undergoing treatment. "About 6 weeks ago I found out that I have throat cancer," Gordon said in a note to the church office. "The VA is working hard to get it fixed." Pastor Tom is reaching out to him and said yesterday that Gordon is in good spirits. "I have missed everybody," Gordon said. "Bless you all." We bet Gordon would love to receive a bunch of cards from his St. Stephen friends. Look up his contact information in our online church directory. (If you're not familiar with that, contact Lori. Her info is at the bottom of the newsletter.) God be with you, Gordon.



# REACHING OUT TO THE COMMUNITY

By Sharon Simmons, outreach coordinator

Praise God from whom all blessings flow ... and they flow generously from



St. Stephen members. The Syrian family we've told you about has received a computer for the school-aged boys to work on their English, thanks to our members and the Muslim community. Additionally, they've received pots and pans, books and school supplies. Ongoing needs are size-4 diapers, gently used board games and toys for the 2½-year-old (also a boy).

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) continues to collect items to help refugees from around the world – and has set up an Amazon wish list. No, you don't have to buy from Amazon. You may buy them elsewhere or even donate gently used items from the list instead. If you DO order from Amazon, you can have them delivered directly to IRC at 1310 Cross Creek Circle, Suite A, Tallahassee, FL 32310. If you buy items locally, you can mark them for IRC and leave them in the fellowship hall for me to deliver. If you'd rather deliver them yourself, email [Karen.Duncan@rescue.org](mailto:Karen.Duncan@rescue.org) to set up an appointment. Here's a link to the list: [https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2H4YP0WYFEBMZ?ref=wl\\_share](https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/2H4YP0WYFEBMZ?ref=wl_share)



We continue to support the Going Places Street Outreach Center with snacks, period supplies, socks, gloves, hats, long-sleeve shirts, sweatshirts, toiletries and detergent. Justin Barfield, from Capital City Youth Services, picked up last week's donation and was most appreciative.

Last thing: Pastor Tom got an update from Pastor Balde at Tallahassee's Haitian church on the efforts to provide affordable housing in Haiti. Because of unrest and violence, the building project is on hold. The 16 boxes of supplies gathered by St. Stephen have been shipped to the Haitian congregation's connections in Haiti. The leftover money was returned for future needs in the Haitian community.

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

"During the month of February join me as we celebrate the Black community and their contributions. We especially celebrate the leaders, past, present, and those that are upcoming. We will continue to strive to bring the words of Amos to reality: 'But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.' Our society will be so much richer when we are able to celebrate each other because we are all created in the image of God."

*Bishop Pedro Suarez*

In observance of and in solidarity with our Black siblings, the synod's Just Love team is holding three virtual Listening Sessions the following three Mondays this month. Please join us for a time of prayer, discussion and reflection on the Black experience.

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Just Love Listening Sessions

Monday, February 14, 6pm Rev. Dr. Kenneth Wheeler

Monday, February 21, 6 pm Rev. Vicki Hamilton

Monday, February 28, 6 pm TBA

Find links for each session on the synod website:  
<https://fbsynod.com>

## BIBLE STUDY DOESN'T FIT YOUR SCHEDULE?

For those who'd like to take part in the weekly Bible study but have a schedule conflict, here's a link to the recorded meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/>

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### *Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine* **COMMUNITY ROUNDS**

**Mental Health in Our Community:**  
Access, Quality and Resources across  
the Lifespan

February 16, 2022 | 12-1 p.m.

Register at  
[bit.ly/CommunityRounds\\_02\\_16\\_22](https://bit.ly/CommunityRounds_02_16_22)

*Open to anyone!*

Join Us  
**VIRTUALLY!**



**Courtney Atkins, M.A.**  
Executive Director  
Whole Child Leon



**Fran T. Close, Ph.D.**  
College of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Institute of Public Health  
Florida A&M University



**Nicole Everett, B.S.**  
Behavioral Health Community Navigator  
Community Health & Planning  
Florida Department of Health- Leon County



**Heather Flynn, Ph.D.**  
Behavioral Sciences & Social Medicine  
Florida State University College of Medicine



## MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Next time you come to church, pick up one of the pocket-size olive-wood crosses that a donor provided and that Pastor Tom is giving away. Then, wherever you are you can hold this little cross in your hand and pray. As Pastor Tom said, you can let the power of the cross pull you in – to remind you that you're a child of God, loved, forgiven and healed.
- Have you noticed that just about every photo that Colin takes of the sanctuary provides a glimpse of our gorgeous stained glass? Nice work, building and design committee.
- 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.
- Editor's note: Thirty years ago, in the old sanctuary next door, the lovely Ruth Dorsey became the even lovelier Ruth Hartung – and became a stepmother to that rosy-cheeked teenager on the right. Happy anniversary to us!





## UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

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  
Jan Harrison - 03/02  
Jim Christianson - 03/03

## UPCOMING DATES

**This Sunday:**

**10 a.m.** - Worship, Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

**Wednesday, February 16:**

**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

*Edited by Lex Lutheran. Designed by Lori Zengel, office manager, [sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com](mailto:sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com).  
Website: <http://www.ststephenlutherantally.com/>*

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