



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

SUNDAY IS TALENT-SHOW DAY

Across the ELCA, this Sunday is Transfiguration Sunday. Here at St. Stephen, it's also Mardi Gras Talent Show Sunday. As of last count, we're scheduled for singing by Susan & Rudy Hehn, Mark Canning, Vicki & Martin Guttenplan, Cassandra White, Pastor Tom, the choir and the entire audience. Also, dancing by Rita Ford – in a skit with Colleen Holdcraft and Jake Hartung, and in a waltz with Hector Quinones.

In addition, there will be a skit featuring Karl Barton, Tom Buchanan, Patrick Kennell and Jake that also features what could loosely be described as dancing. Plus a violin solo by Jonas Holdcraft. And a Chuck Berry song brought to life by Judi Duffy. Plus a song written by Sharon Simmons, and several written by your newsletter editor. All with piano accompaniment by Kirsten Ebbesen. Good heavens.

What you won't see, alas, is the inimitable act of The Amazing Zing. The creator of Zing, Dave Suhrweir, has tested positive for COVID. His doctor ordered him to stay home for a week. As of late Tuesday, Dave reported he was not feeling very sick. We hope that trend continues. The show must go on, but we'll miss you, Zing.

(The show will begin about 15 minutes after the liturgy ends. We won't stream it, but thanks to Paul van der Mark, a video of it will be available for viewing later.)

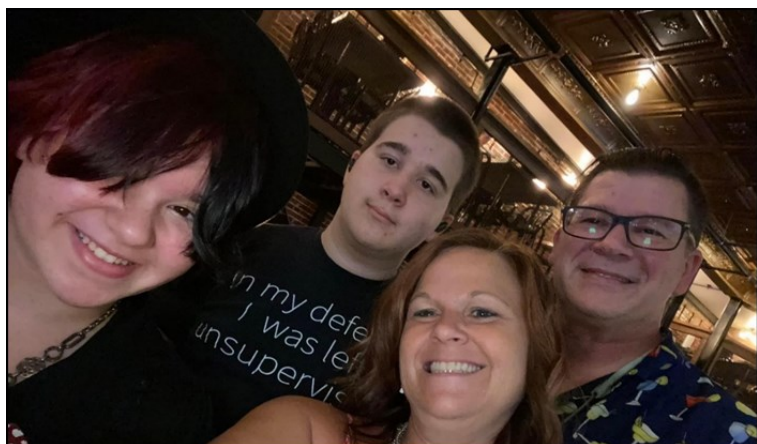


OUR NEW MEMBERS-TO-BE

This Sunday is a big day, even beyond Transfiguration and the talent show. We'll welcome several new members into St. Stephen. Get ready to meet the Allen family, Jim and Lynn Gunderson, Susan and Rudy Hehn, and Greta Scavone.

The Allens

Pictured here are Fred and Tami Allen, with son Colton, 16, and daughter Lila, 12. Fred's a manager at Georgia Pacific. Tami describes herself tongue-in-cheek as a "domestic engineer." She's the longtime Lutheran of the family. (Fred was raised Catholic.) "In Columbia, S.C., we attended Christus Victor Lutheran Church, and we are proud that all four of our children were baptized there,"



Tami wrote. "Our kids also attended Vacation Bible School and youth group." Speaking of the kids: Colton's a student at SAIL, and Lila's at Raa.

They have no shortage of interests. For Colton: writing stories, reading, playing music, singing, listening to music, cooking, digital art and learning. For his sister: “I like to draw, play online games with my friends, listening to music, swimming, watching TV and movies and hanging out with friends, reciting monologues and acting.” For their dad: hanging out, watching movies and working in the yard. And for Mom: “I enjoy working outside in our garden. It’s my personal therapy. I LOVE the beach; my biggest hobby there is snorkeling and looking for shells. Spending time with my family, cooking, watching movies and making memories is really my passion.”

How did they wind up here at St. Stephen? “We have tried a few churches in Tally,” Tami wrote, “but we never felt the connection. I found St. Stephen online and it was literally in the area where we live. Once we visited, we ALL felt an immediate comfort. The fellowship of the congregation feels like family. We are so happy to be here! It’s amazing how a visit turned into a second home for our family. We are eager to jump in and help wherever there is a need.”

The Gundersons



These are eventful times for Lynn and Jim Gunderson. About six months ago, these two retirees got married. And now, they’re joining St. Stephen.

Before retirement, Jim was a machinist and Lynn owned a septic service. Lynn summed up the post-retirement world like this: “This is a beautiful part of life.” She’s new to this part of the country, moving to

Tallahassee from Michigan just two years ago. Jim, on the other hand, has lived here 50 years.

Both of them like hunting and fishing. Jim also likes shooting, as well as coaching the Jr. Rifle Team. And Lynn enjoys painting.

In previous congregations, Jim helped with food distribution, and Lynn sat on the board and taught Sunday School. Both were raised Catholic. So, why St. Stephen? “We wanted to join a church together,” Lynn wrote, adding: “I felt a warm feeling when I walked in, and I love how small it is.” Not quite as small as it used to be, thanks to the arrival of the Gundersons and their fellow new members.

The Hehns

Some people are part of St. Stephen for years without actually becoming members. Take Susan and Rudy Hehn, for example. They’ve attended St. Stephen for four years and been active right from the start. Now they’re joining – because, Susan said, “St. Stephen has become a true church home for us.”

These two have church music in their blood. Both have strong voices and have given our choir a real boost. Before coming here, Susan was a preschool music teacher. Two of their kids are also heavily involved in church music.

“We live in Thomasville and raised our three children there,” Susan wrote. “Jonathan is a professional organist and liturgist at Notre Dame University. Brian is a church musician, liturgist and choir director in Baltimore and works for the Hymn Society as director of congregational song. Jezza lives in Atlanta and works in IT for WikiTribune. We have five grandchildren.”



Their church resume is jam-packed. Rudy was raised Catholic; Susan was raised Southern Baptist. Before discovering St. Stephen, they worshipped at First Presbyterian in Thomasville. Rudy was an elder, Susan was a deacon. Both were teachers: Rudy with adults, and Susan with children, including choir, handbells and ensembles.

We haven't even mentioned their careers. Before retirement, Rudy was a physician – as a family doc for 22 years and a hospitalist for 17. Besides teaching preschool music, Susan was a registered nurse. In addition to music, the interests they share are gardening, bird-watching and photography. Rudy also enjoys woodworking and golf. It's good to have them as official members.

Greta Scavone

Greta (whose official first name is Margaret, and who didn't have a photo available) has filled various roles in the medical field. Her hobbies and interests include reading books, cooking, movies, arts and crafts – and Christmas.

Greta followed a path to St. Stephen thanks to divine guidance and discernment, with an assist from our church website. Like many of us, she was raised Catholic. In her previous congregations, she has been involved in the parish council, the library committee and church cleaning, and has been an altar server and a lector. Now she's one of us.

"It is an honor and pleasure," she wrote, "for me to join the magnificent and lovely congregation at St. Stephen Lutheran Church."

The new-member Class of '23 is pretty impressive. And what a spiritual lift for us to know that, when they looked over our little congregation, they caught a glimpse of Christ.

THINGS THAT OUR NEIGHBORS NEED

By Sharon Simmons, outreach coordinator

A client with one of our partner outreach groups needs a single-burner new or gently used hot plate. If you have one, please let me know for pickup and delivery. *(For the rest of the requests below, put your items in the designated containers in the fellowship hall.)*

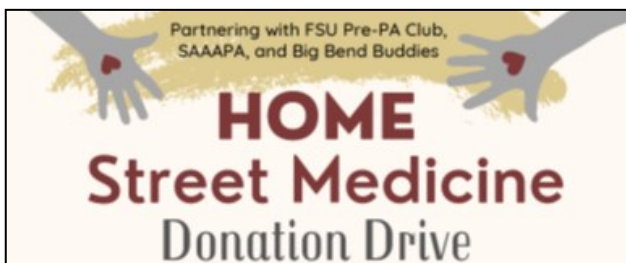


For the International Rescue Committee (IRC), we continue to collect household cleaning items and personal-care items, such as Mr. Clean (spray or liquid), toilet-bowl cleaner, laundry detergent, body wash (bar or liquid), body lotion, deodorant (men's or women's), shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste and maxi-pads.

Manna on Meridian continues to need T-shirts, size medium or larger, to convert into reusable food bags.

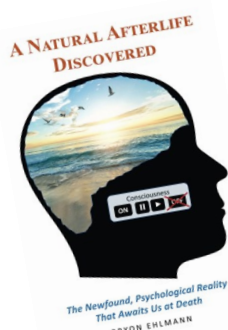
Don't forget backpack-ready snacks for the clients at the CCYS-Going Places program. (Drop off any of these items in the containers in the fellowship hall.)

A student group at the FSU College of Medicine is collecting items through March 15 "for our unsheltered neighbors in the Tallahassee area." Here's what they need: feminine-hygiene products; travel-size oral-hygiene products; long cotton socks; bug spray; first-aid items; sleeping bags; adult winter coats; and children's winter clothes.



‘A NATURAL AFTERLIFE’: POSTSCRIPT

Following up on the item in last week’s newsletter about his new book, “*A Natural Afterlife Discovered: The Newfound, Psychological Reality That Awaits Us at Death*,” Bryon Ehlmann invites you to read this quote from the book’s Amazon page:



There’s nothing supernatural about the “*Natural Afterlife Discovered*.” ... If the kind of Heaven you may envision isn’t there for you upon death, a timeless default one supported by human experiences and psychology (i.e., nature) may be. Moreover, it can be a heaven of ultimate happiness. It’s made possible by humankind’s *natural eternal consciousness (NEC)*. But who or what will determine the type of our eternal conscious experience “That Awaits Us at Death”? Will it be heavenly, hellish, or something else? Science provides no answer, so it’s a matter of belief, perhaps faith. This book is all about

the NEC theory and its significance.

In case you’re not an Amazon shopper: Bryon says his book is available locally at My Favorite Books, 1410 Market St.

EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM’S SERMON

... That’s always a good question to ask yourself when reading Scripture: How is what you’re reading liberating the world? Because it is not just about us – and we don’t have to have the Torah figured out. Jesus directs us to the liberating truth that the teaching is a pathway toward human flourishing. Not a tool to improve social status; not a list that will bring shallow promotions; not a chart list to check off; and not something we use to exclude or burden.

Instead, like what Deuteronomy said, the Torah is a pathway and a permission to “choose life.” To go into deeper relationship and hear Jesus’ call to higher standards... internal motivations... showing possibilities... and moving toward human flourishing for all people.


And to be thoughtful, living in humility and never rushing to judgment because we never know what sort of tragedy, grief, what sort of emergency, the other person is carrying.

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

- Ash Wednesday is next week. Pastor Tom will 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.
- 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. For more information, read the Feb. 9 newsletter on our website or contact Mark Greeley (markhoffmangreeley@gmail.com) or Colin Hackley (colin@colinhackley.com).
- 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

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

IN THE WEEK AHEAD

Sunday, Feb. 19:

- 9 a.m. - Book study
- 9:30 a.m. - Choir practice
- 10 a.m. - Worship, Transfiguration of our Lord Sunday

Wednesday, Feb. 22:

- 6 p.m. - Worship with communion, Ash Wednesday
- 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