

February 17, 2022



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



*Winter may have taken its toll on our lawns and many of our tender plants, but there are still flashes of February color in our yards – thank God!*

## THIS LITTLE FUND DOES IMPORTANT WORK

*By Pastor Tom*

Every once in a while, you'll hear me refer to St. Stephen's Justice and Mercy Fund. We use it to financially help people during times of need. Let me give you some recent examples of people we were able to serve through that fund.

January and February have been particularly busy with requests for help. In one case, we assisted a woman with two children in need of shelter. They were on their way to Jacksonville, and she needed lodging for three nights while her car was being repaired. The Justice and Mercy Fund also provided her with a Visa travel card to help her and her children get settled. She called me a few days later to let me know she'd gotten there and been offered a job. Thanks be to God! Another time, we assisted two women and a young girl with two nights' lodging while their admission into the Chelsea House of Tallahassee could be completed. Both women were fleeing abusive relationships.

This fund's balance ebbs and flows. Lately, it has dropped from \$1,045 to \$331. If you can, please designate a donation to the Justice and Mercy Fund – so we'll be prepared to help the next person God sends our way.

*We also need more gift cards from Walmart and Publix. \$10 or \$20 cards are very helpful to give away when people arrive needing gas or food. Thank you in advance for the joy these cards can bring to those who are hungry or homeless.*



# THE GREAT CHAIR CHOICE

By Pastor Tom



The two chairs in the narthex are being tested out, and reports so far are good! This Sunday we hope to have the Church Council decide which chair we'll choose and move to begin raising money. We're looking to buy 100 regular chairs, plus 20 with armrests. Of course, we'll continue to have the option of pews for those who prefer them. The average cost per chair is \$74.13 – which includes a metal rack for hymnals below the seat.

## PAPA GABE

St. Stephen has a special place in its heart for the kids who grew up in our midst. One of our favorites was Gabe Larson, son of Sandy and Tim – who, among his many other talents, was one of the best soloists we've ever had. About six years ago Gabe and his wife, Veronica, moved away. Now they've just had a little baby with a very big name: Zolena Elizabeth Hnatiuk-Larson. "She's beautiful," said Grandma Sandy, "and they are all doing great." (By the way, "Hnatiuk" is pronounced Nat-ee-yuke.)



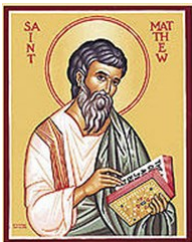
They live in Bradenton, where Gabe does IT work from home. Sandy and Tim made it down there the day Zoëy was born. These grandparents have been doing a lot of traveling lately – but mostly not the joyful kind. "Tim's brother in Arkansas passed away on Jan. 27," Sandy said. "He had a big heart. We had driven there several times before he died – he lived on his own, and we didn't want him to be alone at the end. We stayed for a week after his passing. I'm the executrix of his estate, so we'll need to go back a bunch more times. So many things to do. We're getting to know the roads there really well."

Best wishes to all of the Larsons.

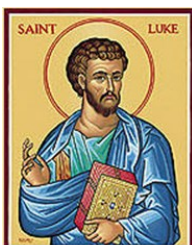
## EXCERPTS FROM SUNDAY'S SERMON

*It was chock-full of insights to savor. Here are four passages.*

### Matthew vs. Luke:



"Matthew wrote for a mostly Jewish audience aware that all important events involving God happened on a mountain, ... closer to God. Luke, on the other hand, writes to a Greek audience.... Luke's Gospel is a down-to-earth one that comes to the ears of those who are poor, those who suffer disease and are displaced or rejected outsiders, beggars, women, children, the lost and the drunken. Luke communicates God's love to these especially.



'Blessed are the poor,' in Luke. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' in Matthew. In Luke, 'Blessed are the hungry,' the empty-belly hungry right now. In Matthew, 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.' Now, I am not seeking to prove one Gospel better than the other, but merely [to point out] the way two witnesses tell the account about Jesus with different eyes and ... different audiences ... with different ears to hear. We can thank God to have both accounts...."



**'Blessed' vs. 'respectable':**

“**[Jesus] did not say being poor is blessed or being hungry is blessed or weeping or being hated is blessed. But the *people* who are poor, the hungry ones, those who are grief-stricken, and the ones who are persecuted are blessed. The truth is ‘blessed’ isn’t a good translation for the word ‘ma-kar-e-a.’ Jesus was turning his listeners, and us, to see that the poor, hungry, weeping and hated are, in truth, respectable. They are the worthy ones to be looked up to. Not the rich, the full of stomach, the laughing, the ones that everyone speaks well of. Now, that’s an upside-down message, isn’t it? Even in our society we look up to the ones Jesus tells us NOT to look up to, and we look down on the ones he makes known to be, in truth, respectable. Jesus’ teaching leaves us shaken because there is real power behind his words, and they flip us into experiencing a new way for us to relate to one another in the human community. This hard-hitting Gospel lesson is good for the hurting, but it is tough news for those who are not. Yet here we are, working to wrap our minds around it, because each of us knows that at various times of our lives we have belonged to each category.”**

**'Woe' vs. 'whoa':**

“**When I hear the word ‘woe,’ I often think of ‘Woe is me!’ – as if I am cursed or doomed. But that is not the best way to translate the Greek here. The Greek word ‘oy’ here is more like the word ‘whoa,’ like the word we say when riding horses: ‘Whoa, Bessie! Look out!’ Jesus expressed ‘oy’ to the rich, the ones full of food, the laughing, those whom everyone speaks well of.... ‘Look out! Because bad news might be on the way.’ It’s Jesus’ way of telling us that we are in danger of idolatry when we rely on those things to fulfill us. So, the epiphany for us to hear today is that Jesus gave us a new world view, reminding us whom we ought to be looking up to and what we need to be looking out for – and to be cautious of. The message today is truly Gospel for all ears ... even if one is in the ‘Look out!’ category, because there’s still time to change our ways....”**

**The ways we worship:**

“**To be real community means that we can now begin to come together. If you are vaccinated and wear masks and practice distancing, come back to in-person worship. I get it – it is nice to stay in jammies and worship from home ... but it is hurting the church community and damaging the quality of worship by distancing ourselves from one another in harmful ways. But we also want to honor those who are not ready or those who have fragile immune systems or other health risks. We want to keep the livestreaming going for you because we are all in different places of response to the pandemic and how we are willing to risk return. Regardless, know this: You are respectable and worth being looked up to ... especially the poor, hungry, grieving and persecuted ... especially you! God delights in you!”**



Photo by Colin Hackley

**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/VCeYsiF5bLpu02KgS3q-zrQ6hbHFHcimGoWdM7PSYpYII6z6Ev2GFtOI3SZWI\\_Wh.jTurePeZ9f\\_YQWI8](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/VCeYsiF5bLpu02KgS3q-zrQ6hbHFHcimGoWdM7PSYpYII6z6Ev2GFtOI3SZWI_Wh.jTurePeZ9f_YQWI8)

## HAIKU CORNER



**LET'S ALL GO TO THE LOBBY**  
St. Stephen's "lobby"  
used to be "lounge" – which sounded  
too much like Vegas.

### **GROCERY MYSTERY**

Never expected  
to see empty shelves where the  
saltines used to be.



**PONYTAIL TIME?**  
It's time to take bets  
on when Pastor Tom will get  
another haircut.

## 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>

## MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Longtime member Martha Marky says hi. "I miss all my St. Stephen friends," she said when we checked in on her this week. "I have been following the service on Facebook on Sunday mornings. That has been a real treat. I've had health issues for the past year and a half but am doing better now. One of these days I hope to be able to come back for a regular service. Peace and love to all."
- Pastor Tom thanks everyone who gave to the Victory Institute in honor of our latest Ministry of Reconciliation keynote speaker, Zoe Williams. We collected \$456 for that important nonprofit.
- 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

- 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
- Robin Oliveri - 03/05
- Linda Fevrier - 03/09
- Victor Muchuruza - 03/13
- Chris Gossman - 03/19
- Stephanie Leitch - 03/27



## UPCOMING DATES

### This Sunday:

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

11:15 a.m. - Council meeting

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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