



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

“Out of the depths, I cry to you O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.” (Psalm 130:1)

Pastor Tom leads us in prayer: “We pray for the people of Ukraine. We pray for strength and resilience to overcome aggressors. Lord God, let not war rage. Frustrate the wicked and the forces that invade. Lead them to lay down their weapons. Open the eyes of the Russian military to disobey unjust commands and cease deadly violence upon innocent people and a sovereign nation. Lead President Putin to repentance and allow the Russian military to return to their homes and families. In this time of uncertainty, Lord, we call on your redemption and intercession. AMEN!”



Here's a sight we've all been missing: Pastor Tom sitting down in person with some of his favorite little Lutherans. This welcome moment arose during Sunday's liturgy. The kids, from left, are Elliot Reece, Graham Reece, Ceilia Greeley and Violet Greeley. (Photo by Colin Hackley)

CHAIRS, DOLLARS, JUSTICE AND MERCY

By Pastor Tom

CHAIRS: Sunday's Church Council vote was unanimous! Based on the congregation's feedback, council members approved the Jericho chair for the seating upgrade our worship space needs. The Jericho has slightly less cushion on the seat and sits a little lower than the original chair we considered. Also, based on feedback, we decided that 20 of our 120 new chairs will have armrests. Every new chair will have a hymnal holder under the seat. The total cost is less than first anticipated: \$8,054, or an average of \$67.12 apiece. The order will take 18-20 weeks, so there's plenty of time to raise the money. Please



help us reach the goal. Whether you can donate or not, there'll always be a comfy seat for you at St. Stephen.

DOLLARS: From now on, the first newsletter of each month will include a financial snapshot of St. Stephen. It'll show what we've spent (based on our budgeted expenses) and what we've received (based on our weekly offerings). This month-to-month financial report will help guide us in consistent stewardship and, with God's help, will lead us to grow into mature givers.

JUSTICE AND MERCY: Some of you may have seen David K. around Lake Ella, Midtown and St. Stephen. He's a homeless man who has come for help. He's even attended a couple Bible Study classes. Last Friday he came by the church office, wet from the rain and missing one of his water shoes. When David Butler asked where his other shoe was, David K. pulled off his sock to reveal a very swollen big toe with a 3-inch slice. Thank God, it was no longer bleeding and showed no signs of infection. I rushed out to Walmart while David washed up. Using Justice and Mercy Fund dollars that you've donated, I was able to buy him new shoes, socks and a hooded sweatshirt. We also provided some food and a place to find solace. I cannot say it enough: Thank you for your gifts to support Justice and Mercy. St. Stephen ministers to "the least of these" and glimpses Christ in the action of service.

FLOWER POWER

Jake Hartung is in the first week of his new role on the FSU campus. After 12 years with the planting crew, he's now officially described as an "Arboriculture Design Specialist." Translation: He's in charge of designing every single flower garden and container on campus. He also helps run FSU's greenhouse and supervises 10 employees (expected to increase to 15). This is a landscape designer who likes to get his hands dirty, so he'll still be planting as well as designing. Oh, he's also now in charge of the gardens at the FSU president's house. President McCullough, by the way, will be inaugurated in Ruby Diamond Concert Hall tomorrow. Guess who's in charge of beautifying the stage? Congratulations, Jake.



ON LOVING YOUR ENEMIES: EXCERPT FROM SUNDAY'S SERMON

"... I know – it's hard to keep listening to Jesus. He makes us kick and squirm and try to reinterpret his words to mean something else. Something less.... We want a nice, safe, easy religion that doesn't include loving enemies. But it's messy to take on the ethic of imitating Jesus. Love has a way of making life sloppy. We will make enemies when we take his Sermon on the Plain seriously because it doesn't allow us to stay silent. It moves us into action and keeps us from going about in life making nice.

"There is a key verse in the midst of this difficult teaching, however. And this is where I will close. The very last one we read in the Gospel today: 'Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.' When we embody God's mercy – as best we can, because we can never do mercy as well as God – but when we embody that kind of mercy for those we call enemy ... watch out! Light will dawn on this weary world."



SIDE BY SIDE

Nathan Basford sent in this photo of himself with Don Dowd. He also sent this text:

“This picture says a lot. Forty-two years walking side by side. One not leading, one not following. Respecting each other, and always looking out for each other. We are on a journey, and side by side we will experience it together.”

HAIKU CORNER



UNDAUNTED BY WINTER

How in the world did
'pansy' come to mean 'weakling'?
These wee blooms are tough.

WHEN YOUR MASK CAME OFF

Sorry for staring,
but this is not at all what
I thought you'd look like.



BEHIND LEX LUTHERAN'S MASK

You can't see it, but
my beard is rainbow-colored.
I've pierced my nose, too.

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	Rev. Ham Hamilton

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

MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- 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 or call 850-385-2728.



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

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 with communion, Transfiguration of our Lord Sunday

Wednesday, March 2:

Noon—1 p.m. - Ash dispensation in parking lot

6 p.m. - Ash Wednesday service with communion



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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