



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



*Where are you right now?
 Floating through the blue
 between the plump clouds,
 or lost in the forest below?
 Or somewhere in between?
 What keeps us going is the
 knowledge that, wherever
 we are, God is there with us.
 And so is St. Stephen.
 (Photo taken by
 Jake Hartung on the
 Ochlockonee River)*

THIS NEW COMMITTEE IS REACHING OUT

By Sharon Simmons, St. Stephen outreach coordinator

God’s loving outreach to the world has been active at St. Stephen for years – especially through our work with ECHO backpacks, Leon County Schools’ Giving Tree and Manna on Meridian, a joint food ministry with other local congregations. These are continuing programs. The newly formed Outreach Committee – made up of Janet Barber, Caroline Collins, Barbara Ehlmann, Pastor Tom, Erin Kenney, Mike Martinez, Andrea Notley, Cassandra White and me – has begun identifying ways to expand the hand of God into other areas of our community.

Manna on Meridian needs help with collection and distribution of food bags. If this program speaks to your heart, please contact Mike (850-443-4498) so he can get you trained and on the schedule. COVID safety protocols are enforced at Faith Presbyterian, where Manna items are stored, so be sure you have your mask in place.



The Outreach Committee has researched and will implement continuous support of the Going Places Street Outreach Program and Drop-in Center, one of several programs operated by Capital City Youth Services. Going Places works with young people ages 11-21 who are LGBTQ+, homeless, runaways and/or sex-trafficked. Approximately 30% are living on the street, and CCYS staff members take them needed supplies. The Drop-in Center offers a safe space where the young people can study, shower, wash their clothes and have a snack. By next week, a plastic container labeled “Going Places” will be in the fellowship hall. When you drop off your Manna food or church offerings, please consider dropping off supplies for Going Places as well (see list below). Even though our congregation can’t gather yet, we can hold our community and especially our children in our hearts.



The committee is also trying to enlist other churches to work with us on the car-seat ministry of Lutheran Social Services of North Florida. Since COVID has forced LSSNF to scale back its fundraising efforts, it's looking for help in continuing this program that provides car seats free of charge to families in need.



We'll continue to support and promote the Justice and Mercy Initiative coordinated by Pastor Tom. Thanks to the support of St. Stephen members, we help local families meet crucial needs. Please remember to contribute when you can – whether through financial contributions, pledged giving or gift cards for gas or Publix.

REQUESTS FOR GOING PLACES AND DROP-IN CENTER

- Shampoo, conditioner, body wash (large or travel-size)
- Deodorant
- Feminine hygiene products
- Socks/underwear
- Backpack-friendly snacks such as chips, canned meat, granola bars, cookies, snack crackers
- Laundry soap (for Drop-in Center)
- Bottled water/Gatorade
- Trash bags
- Coffee/tea
- Creamer/sugar
- Warm clothing such as sweats, hats, gloves (Clothing needs will change with the weather)

PLEASE HELP FILL THIS CLOSET

By Terri Schmitt

Keller's Closet was started by a past deputy at Success Academy of Ghazvini



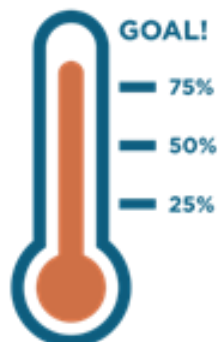
Learning Center, which is my school. There are many families who need financial assistance. I'm putting it out there that St. Stephen may help in some capacity. Keller's Closet was designed to help the students who don't have uniforms or access to certain hygiene items they may need.

Because of the pandemic, we can't have our yearly fundraiser basketball game, and supplies are extremely low. Due to the current funds dwindling, we'll be focusing on the new students who need uniforms. We're near the end of the third nine weeks and have given out more shirts, belts and pants than in previous years.

I'm told that any white collared shirts or blue pants or belts (no camo) of any sizes are needed. Checks may be written out to Success Academy, with "Keller's Closet" in the memo line.

HAVE YOU GIVEN TO THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN YET?

Since last week's newsletter, we've received \$200 more toward our Capital Campaign for the Sanctuary Project goal of \$175,000. So we're still just short of \$143,000, counting pledges. Thank you for your continued financial support. If you can make a gift of any amount, please be sure to designate it to the Capital Campaign for the Sanctuary Project.



CATCHING UP WITH THE NESSES

Each week, we try to update the congregation on a member or friend we might not have seen lately, given our COVID constraints. Usually the news is pretty good. But not always. Part of what our dear sister Sandy Ness told us the other day was: “The last several months have been rough for us.” And “Thanks for

thinking about us.” We won’t go into the details, but rest assured that Pastor Tom is reaching out to the Ness family. You can, too. Look them up in the church directory that Lori recently sent out – or, if you’ve misplaced it, ask Lori for their contact information. A card or note would be nice. And keep Sandy and Jerry in your prayers, OK?



SHIRTS FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Dave Suhrweir brought this to our attention.

Coming up March 31 is Transgender Day of Visibility. All proceeds from this fundraiser will go to support ReconcilingWorks, which strives to deepen and expand the welcome, inclusion, celebration and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ people in the Lutheran church and larger community. The fundraiser is selling shirts in unisex, women’s, youth and tank-top styles in a variety of colors, with the words “**I stand for Trans Rights**” and the Trans Pride flag colors in the shape of a heart. Here’s a link: <https://www.bonfire.com/i-stand-for-trans-rightsrwks/>



IN CASE YOU DIDN'T KNOW...

From the ReconcilingWorks website: LGBTQIA+ = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQIA+).

FAMILIAR NAMES

Dave Suhrweir also passed this item along. The following people were mentioned in a recent edition of the newsletter Takeaways From Tallahassee.

- Pastor Tom was quoted on legislation that would require Florida employers to provide paid family leave to employees: “Having to choose between your newborn and your paycheck is an impossible, immoral choice, but it’s reality for too many working families. It’s one that I have faced as well as many in the pews.” (Jon Harris Maurer, public policy director with Equality Florida, applauded Pastor Tom’s statement in an email to Cheryl Stuart and Dave. Maurer was our RIC Sunday keynote speaker in 2019.)



- State Sen. Shevrin Jones, our keynote speaker at last year’s RIC Sunday luncheon, is one of the legislators proposing to bar candidates from seeking office if they owe certain unpaid fines or are under the scope of the Commission on Ethics. “This bill is an important step in reforming a system that’s enabled special interests to game the system in their favor and further stack the deck against real people,” he said. Jones, whose district includes southeastern Broward County, is the first openly LGBT black person elected to the Florida Legislature.

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/YROccIkC7idql9yZH8kenhEXhAjjvrPxyVn3tf8viFGamMn3n4hFT-TH1gYDC1reN.YhwaD7bdPQOyQBoT>

The access code is **#6D+KJqi**

'IF YOU STICK YOUR NECK OUT': EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SUNDAY SERMON

"... This teaching [Mark 8:31-38] is what scholars call the Passion Prediction. This is the first time in Mark that Jesus makes such a teaching. But it is not good for business, Jesus. The disciples didn't want to hear this, and preachers do not want to deliver sermons on the topic of selflessness and discipleship, especially when it is connected to giving away the treasures we store up in our closets, bank vaults, and in our hearts.

"Yet, this is exactly what Jesus openly taught. Followers of Christ set their minds on divine things, not on human things. The hard truth is given — the road to messianic glory runs through Golgotha, and the disciples are following Jesus to a cross.

"In a moment we will sing 'I Want Jesus to Walk With Me,' but Jesus will not walk with us if we do not walk the path of the Way. If we are not on the pilgrim way, Jesus will not walk with thee. The truth is, what Jesus taught here is ... the reality that suffering will occur when one does the things that Jesus did.

"If you speak out against the empire, be ready for persecution. If you stand up for people that are cast out as second-class citizens by the government, you may be beaten down with a baton. If you stick your neck out to stop racism or demand common-sense gun legislation, the guillotine's gonna fall on you...."

MISC.

- Want to provide altar flowers? For a donation of \$35, you'll also get an invitation to be among the handful of people who worship in person with Pastor Tom in the sanctuary. Afterward, the flowers are yours to keep. See Lori's contact information below.
- Have anything to add to a future newsletter? Email Lori at sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com or call 850-385-2728.



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Robin Oliveri - 03/05
Linda Fevrier - 03/09
Victor Muchuruza - 03/13
T'moi DeWindt - 03/16
Tenan DeWindt - 03/19
Nicholas Franklin - 03/19
Stephanie Leitch - 03/27

UPCOMING DATES

This Sunday:

10 a.m. - Worship, Third Sunday in Lent

Wednesday, March 10:

Noon - Bible study



If you have news or photos to share, please send them to Lori at ststephentallahassee@embarqmail.com.

Don't forget our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/ststephentallahassee>.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, ELCA
2198 N. Meridian Road | Tallahassee, FL 32303

The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor