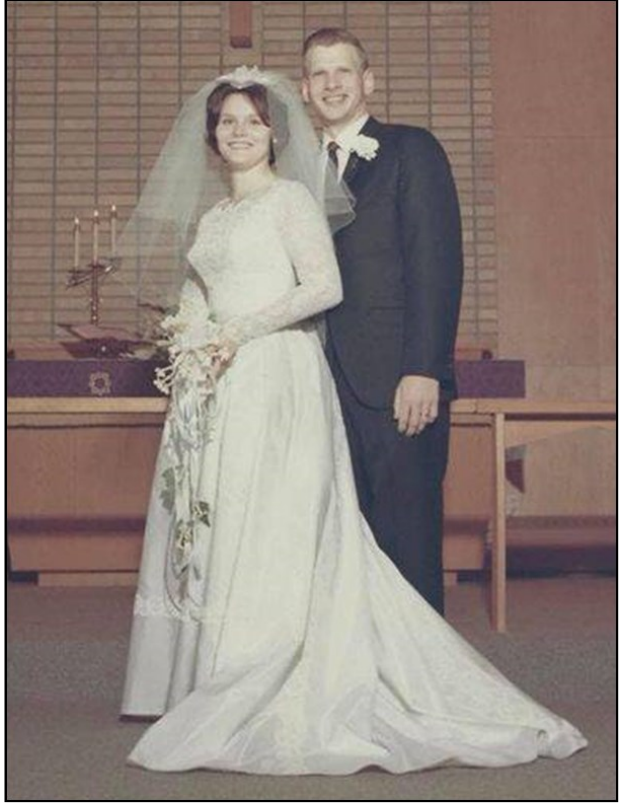




# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

*Do you recognize this lovely couple, on undoubtedly the happiest day of their life together? It was taken in 1968 and recently appeared on Facebook – when someone wanted to wish a happy 53<sup>rd</sup> anniversary to ... Linda and Bob Eshleman!*



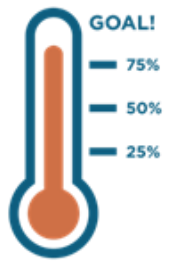
## UPDATES ON OUR BUILDINGS

By Pastor Tom

**DOORS:** The Building Design Team is ironing out the last few details with the architect before the next steps. The team recommends replacing all five doors to the sanctuary. Currently, three doors don't even close properly. Also, the team favors the aesthetics of upgraded doors.



**CAPITAL CAMPAIGN:** Financial gifts contributed toward the sanctuary repair and other renovations now total \$123,200. On top of that, another \$21,000 is pledged to be given. 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.



**PURIFIED AIR:** Seven months ago, thanks to a direct donation, St. Stephen asked Benson's Heating and Air to install four REME air-purifying systems into the units that serve the sanctuary, fellowship hall and office lobby. Here are some of the specific benefits from the units:



- Dual ionizers reduce airborne particulates (dust, dander, pollen, mold spores).
- They kill up to 99% of bacteria, mold and viruses.
- They reduce “sneeze germs” by 99% in the time it takes a sneeze to reach 3 feet.
- Zinc ions kill 99% of viruses on surfaces.



## AS HOLY WEEK APPROACHES

**PALMS:** We'll be getting the palms for Palm Sunday soon and plan to have them in a bucket outside for pickup (under the big oak tree), just like last year. We'll put them out starting Wednesday (March 24).

**MAUNDY THURSDAY:** From noon to 1 p.m. on Maundy Thursday (April 1), Pastor Tom will be in the church parking lot to offer drive-up prayer and communion. Please come by during that time for fellowship and prayer and to receive the sacrament. The Maundy Thursday service is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. and will also include the celebration of communion. If you wish to partake of the Meal via live stream, have your bread and wine/grape juice elements ready for worship.

## CASSANDRA'S WORLD

*Since most of us haven't seen each other for a year now, we've been trying to keep up a little bit through the newsletter. This week, we asked creative Cassandra White how things have been going for her. Here is her newsy update.*

I have been plugging away at my theatre studies dissertation during lockdown, with the help of my friendly four-foots Sylvina (cat) and Brekke (dog). I've also entered into some challenges to keep myself engaged. My favorite is the Pop Sugar Reading Challenge for 2021. This includes reading in such categories as:



a book by an indigenous author, a book about art or an artist, and a book set mostly or entirely outdoors. (My picks for those categories are a play by Larissa Fasthorse, "The Picture of Dorian Grey," and another play called "You on the Moors Now.") If you're interested in joining for yourself, simply Google the challenge name and year.



One project I'm hoping to work on this year is my first-ever quilt! My amazing and talented mother is advising me from a distance. The best news I've received recently is that both my mother and my brother (a nurse in the Twin Cities) have had their vaccines!!

I'm particularly thankful for technology for helping me stay in touch with my far-flung friend groups, especially when visits aren't a possibility and for my local support network. Brekke and I are both looking forward to entertaining again; Sylvina doesn't care as much as long as she gets her regular trips outside to observe her kingdom. The thing I miss most about St. Stephen is getting to sing in the choir and getting hugs from my Sunday School kiddos.

## INTERESTED IN EDUCATION?

By President Val Sullivan

Terri Schmitt's time on the Church Council as education and discipleship coordinator is up (thank you, Terri!), and we're looking for one or two members to take over that role. You can call Terri to get the specifics of the responsibilities and time commitment if you're interested.

# REWORDING OUR WELCOME MESSAGE

By Pastor Tom

Acting on a request from ReconcilingWorks, we're working to update our Welcome Statement. Please review, evaluate and pray about the proposed statement below. It has been approved by ReconcilingWorks, but the Church Council of St. Stephen plans to present it for a congregational vote at our June meeting. If you have any questions, ideas or concerns, please contact me or David Suhrweir. I wish to thank David, Sharon Simmons and the Church Council for their work in making clear our commitment to inclusivity and God's unconditional love for all creation.



**Current:** "St. Stephen Lutheran Church (ELCA) is a Reconciling in Christ congregation, which means we welcome and support all people regardless of their sexual orientation, their gender identity or that of their children, parents, siblings, or friends."

**Proposed:** "St. Stephen Lutheran Church (ELCA) is a Reconciling in Christ congregation that explicitly welcomes people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. St. Stephen is committed to anti-racism work and to welcome without regard to race, ethnicity, age, family status, economic status, and differing abilities."

# BRIDGES AND GATES

By State Sen. Loranne Ausley

*When Sharon Simmons read this anecdote that state Sen. Loranne Ausley posted on Facebook, it struck her as a perfect modern-day parable. We're reprinting it here with the senator's permission, along with a photo she took.*

These days I find myself inspired by simple things.....and this morning it was a gate.... When I can, I try to get my long run in on the Miccosukee Greenway on Sunday mornings. Back in September, I was running up the last hill about a mile from my car when I heard beautiful music coming from the outdoor church service at Testerina Primitive Baptist. I stopped and listened for a bit, and it was just what I needed to restore my soul.

A few weeks later, one of the parishioners caught my eye as I ran by and motioned me over to the fence line.... We spoke briefly, he recognized me and invited me to join their service. I ran back to my car and drove around to the church entrance on Miccosukee Road and participated in my first non-virtual church service in months (in my running clothes!), and once again it was just what I needed.

So this morning, as I ran by the same spot, I heard the familiar joyful sound of music, but instead of a fence line with grownup vegetation, there is a freshly mowed path to A GATE! Somehow this strikes me as such a symbolic gesture for the moment our nation is in right now. I have been talking about building bridges....but installing a gate might be more meaningful. Thanks, Testerina, for restoring my soul and sharing your faith and love with our entire community.



## TRUSTING: EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SUNDAY SERMON

"... Reread this gospel [John 3:14-21] and instead of using the word 'believe,' replace it with the word 'trust.' ... 'Whoever "trusts" in the Son of Man may have eternal life.' 'Everyone who "trusts" in Christ may not perish.' 'Those who "trust" in the Son are not condemned; those who do not "trust" are condemned already because they have not "trusted" in Jesus.'

"This conversion to 'trust' helps us to understand Jesus' words in John. That the words are NOT burdens put upon us to believe but matters of encouragement from Jesus to trust in him. To trust that through Christ, God has given a gift of love to the cosmos. It is the kind of trust that will change a person, not out of guilt or coercion – that's not real trust anyway – but trust because God's love, when trusted, has consequences. The consequences are positive ones when we throw off the familiar 'act' of believing.

"Believing is too comfortable. Trust, however, is more risky. For us to trust in God's love requires us to surrender and open ourselves to the kind of love that John's gospel celebrates. The kind of love that can even make it hard for us to trust in what Jesus is about to do. That such love will cause us to come to a crisis moment and realize that we have a mutual relationship that is at stake. To see that there is something wrong with us ... there is something wrong with the world ... and Jesus had to come to show us that 'God so loved the world....'"

## 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/j7J5mm9J3wdkYt1E69jgnqWqY3dqDBEgnht231HxVg0IT-whBxbJ7MAGyqiHqO7s.iOkI7TjUvYN6V3oM>

Access code is not needed.

## CONGREGATIONAL PICNIC

*It's an old-fashioned picnic  
"COVID STYLE"*

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Lawn  
On Sunday, April 11, at 11:30 a.m.

There is plenty of space for all to spread out for social distancing and still enjoy each other's company.

Everyone will bring their own food, drinks, blankets, chairs, masks and friends!

All are invited! Join us for distance-fellowship and loads of fun!

RSVP: Margaret:  
407-921-8671 or  
[ambowersfl@gmail.com](mailto:ambowersfl@gmail.com)



## MISC.

- Our prayers are with Pastor Warren Schave, a member and former interim pastor of St. Stephen. Pastor Schave's son, David, a Leon High graduate who lived in Thomasville, passed away Feb. 23. We mourn with you, Pastor. Pastor Warren's address is 1800 Hermitage Rd. #335, Tallahassee, 32308.
- Rich Ruddell, adult son of Emily Ruddell, was featured on the front page of Tuesday's *Tallahassee Democrat*. He's the owner of Tallahassee Rock Gym, which is getting a new location and a new name (Alchemy Climbing). Speaking of names ... some of us remember him as Richard, from back when he and brother Matt were part of our Sunday School.



- Would you like to dedicate one or more lilies for Easter? The cost is \$10 each, and we'll have the dedication list in the Easter bulletin. Email or call Lori to be included. The deadline is Sunday, March 28. Speaking of flowers...
- 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](mailto:sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com) or call 850-385-2728.

## UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Tenan DeWindt - 03/19  
Nicholas Franklin - 03/19  
Chris Gossman - 3/19  
Stephanie Leitch - 03/27  
Davis Holdcraft - 04/01  
Gordon Fleischer - 04/06  
Colin Hackley - 04/06  
Vicki Guttenplan - 04/07



## UPCOMING DATES

**This Sunday:**

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

**Wednesday, March 24:**

Noon - Bible study



If you have news or photos to share, please send them to Lori at [ststephentallahassee@embarqmail.com](mailto:ststephentallahassee@embarqmail.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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