



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

STARTING SUNDAY: ONLINE WORSHIP


Dear St. Stephen,

The people of this congregation remain united and diligent in these trying times of self-quarantine. As most already know, this Sunday we will not hold public worship. Like most other churches, we believe that the risk is too great and the health of God's people too important for large gatherings. Lori and I are still keeping hours in the church. If you have any need to talk or require assistance, please don't hesitate to call us.

This Sunday, and probably the next few, St. Stephen will offer online worship services. This is new for us and will be awkward at times. Awkward or not, it's ultimately important for us all to share in worship by spirit since we can't meet physically. There'll be two platforms to connect with us on your smartphone or computer.



The first is the easier one: Facebook. If you have a Facebook account, simply go to the St. Stephen Facebook page* (<https://www.facebook.com/ststephentallahassee/>) a little before 10 a.m. Sunday and tap the screen when we go live at 10. Thank you, Sue Williams, for leading this recording!

For those who don't have (or don't want) Facebook, I'll be connected to a video conference tool called Zoom. To connect to Zoom, first go to the App Store, or wherever you download your apps, and download it for free. On Friday, we'll email a link to you.  On the link will be a password you'll need to connect to our "meeting." It's best to download the app early and sign in five minutes ahead of our start time.

You'll recognize the service, but we've scaled it down to last around 30 minutes. We'll project the words from the bulletin and lyrics for the hymns. Katharine will lead us with piano, and Isabel will lead us with voice. I'll turn off your microphone, so sing out and make a joyful noise in your holy space! No one on our end will be able to hear you.

If all of this sounds too daunting, then rest assured that God needs no special app to be with you. I encourage you to light a candle (to signify Christ's presence) and meditate through the bulletin that we'll send out Friday. You are not lost in darkness. You are bathed in the Light of Christ and sanctified – blessedly protected – by the Holy Spirit.

May Christ shine in our lives.

Pastor Tom

**If you are reading this from the email blast, there is a live link to the Facebook page at the top of the email.*



WORSHIP AMID THE PINES

By Jake Hartung (Photos by Colin Hackley, above, and Cheryl Stuart, below)

How many people can say that they attended last Sunday morning's worship on the front lawn? Ten or 20, maybe? No, it was actually 40 people who joined together outside our church.



What was the most meaningful part of the outdoor worship? Could it be Pastor Tom singing "Lord prepare me to be a sanctuary," assisted by nature's own choir? Northern cardinals and Carolina wrens were singing with mighty voices, but not covering the soft tapping of the downy woodpecker on the pine trees. The portable microphone was a godsend; who knew how much constant traffic noise flows up and down Meridian Road? And let's not forget the airplanes flying over at the most inopportune times.

Katharine's playing was terribly missed, but we had a new musical quartet on the "stage": Karl Barton on flute, Jonas Holdcraft on violin, Tom Buchanan on trumpet and Eric McClanahan on trombone.

A few other changes: no communion, no choir singing, no separate time for sharing of the peace, and self-service offering while you're on your way out.

Worship this Sunday will look different but will be just as meaningful, for the Spirit is alive and well!



A SLICE OF LAST SUNDAY'S SERMON

"...[B]eing in the wilderness is paralyzing. It is a day-by-day existence without any promise of next week or even tomorrow. [What is the wilderness?] The wilderness is faithfully standing by as your loved one breathes their last breath. The wilderness is losing the career you'd anticipated to carry you to retirement. The wilderness is being rejected because of who you are or the color of your skin or the size of your bank account. These wildernesses make the ones like building restructuring and renovation seem rather small, but make no mistake – these can be wilderness experiences, too. Times when we might also wonder, 'What is God up to? How will God save us?' Trust in leaders may falter and quarreling rule the day. Connect this stage of St. Stephen life to the coronavirus wilderness going on in the world, and we begin to notice there is a lot to be anxious about. Maybe even anxious enough to quarrel over bottles of sanitizer and toilet paper? As Christ followers we want to be aware of this inside of us. To remember to not use words that tear down and hurt but words that lift up and affirm"

MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- **POSTPONING 'MATILDA':** Barbara Ehlmann reports: "Due to the COVID-19 situation, Lutheran Social Services of North Florida is postponing our 'Matilda' performance. We are in touch with Young Actors Theatre and may reschedule at a later date. We appreciate the support of our churches, our sponsors and ticketholders and hope that you understand our decision. Please continue your support, especially during this time of uncertainty. We will keep you informed of any further changes."
- **CONSIDER THE AZALEAS, HOW THEY BLOOM:** One evening last week, while I was waiting for a meeting to start, the loveliest thing happened. A woman pulled into St. Stephen's parking lot, climbed out of her car, walked down toward Meridian, pulled out her phone and took a picture of our dazzling white azaleas. For her, we were in the right place, at the right time, with a message of beauty.
- **IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE LITURGY...:** If you have any thoughts or prayers you'd like to share in the newsletter, please email them to rrhartung1@gmail.com. This should be yet another memorable worship experience for St. Stephen.



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS:

Tenan DeWindt - 03/19
Nicholas Franklin - 03/19
Stephanie Leitch - 03/27
Davis Holdcraft - 04/01

UPCOMING DATES

This Sunday:

10 a.m. - Worship (online), Second Sunday in Lent



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>.

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