



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



### **BLOOMS AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE**

*Pastor Tom invited us Zoom Lutherans to drive through the church grounds and see how things look. Well, look at this! It's our annual explosion of azalea magic.*

*Office Manager Lori Zengel captured it in this photo Tuesday morning. God bless Mother Nature and our St. Stephen gardeners.*

## AS HOLY WEEK APPROACHES

- **PALMS:** The palms for Palm Sunday – which is this Sunday – are ready for pickup in this lowly bucket under the big oak tree in front of our church, just like last year.



- **MAUNDY THURSDAY:** From noon to 1 p.m. on Maundy Thursday (April 1, one week from today), 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 Zoom, have your bread and wine/grape juice elements ready for worship.

- **A LITERAL WALK WITH JESUS:** Walking with Jesus is what we're called to do this and every Easter season. This year we'll really be able to walk with Jesus on his way to the cross by following numbered ribbons with readings from the Gospel of John. This walk with Jesus will be available on Maundy Thursday during drive-through communion until the Saturday before Easter and will allow you to socially distance at stages around the St. Stephen property. God's blessings on your contemplative walk with Jesus. Feel free to take home one of the crosses you'll find at the last reading.



*(Beth Alexander says that Sharon Simmons did the bulk of the organizing and thinking for the walk with Jesus – and that Sharon, Terri Schmitt and Beth met to review the details. Also, Lori put the finishing touches on the printouts.)*

## CITRUS BEAUTY

*So far today, this newsletter has brought you azaleas and palms – and now you’re beholding St. Stephen’s own tangerine tree.*

*As you can see, it’s in bloom. Since the bloom season is limited, Karen Olson thought we ought to photograph it fast and publish it for you. (Photo by Lori Zengel)*



## MEMBER UPDATE: JEN DRITT

*We’ve been asking our members to update us on how they’ve been doing throughout this weird pandemic year. This week we got hold of the very busy Jennifer Dritt, St. Stephen’s treasurer. You’ll appreciate her eloquent notes.*

A year ago, the note on the whiteboard on a co-worker’s office door read, “C’ya in a few weeks.” Sometime last summer, on one of her infrequent trips to the office when no one else would be there, she changed it to “C’ya in a few months.” Now it reads, “Who knows when?”

Look, I’m a serious introvert, but I would give just about anything to see our St. Stephen church family again. All of us. In worship. In person. Sooner rather than later, please. Nevertheless, I’m doing well. I think. And, of course, Amanda, who once joked that the perfect job for her was drawbridge operator, is doing spectacularly. She says working from home has been a “peak experience.” One LONG peak experience. No valleys.



What’s made this year far less difficult for me than it could have been are the at-least-weekly socially-distanced outdoor get-togethers with two friends, accompanied by pepperoni and black-olive pizza from Dave’s Pizza Garage; Sunday worship via Facebook; fairly regular, not-socially-distanced visits with my sister and brother-in-law, who were diagnosed with COVID four days after one ill-advised December dinner gathering and have since recovered, thank God; playing Scrabble intermittently, all day long, every day, with Amanda, regardless of the number of hours between turns; daily prayer and meditation; reading “The House in the Cerulean Sea” by T.J. Klune; the love of Her Royal Rye-ness, our now 2-year-old mini Australian Shepherd; semi-regular Zoom conversations with an old friend; and, of course, God’s grace and the grace offered by friends and family.



Oh, wait, projects. Starting and completing projects has also helped. We built a shed in our backyard. It was intended to make it possible to put our cars in the garage. Now Amanda wants to sit in it. Quietly, of course. With Rye.

You should know that I don’t know why ANYONE would use the Official Scrabble Dictionary when this household owns the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. You should also know that I miss you.

## JANET'S GRAPEFRUIT HARVEST

Every so often, people with fruit trees or produce gardens get that desperate look – the kind Peter had when Jesus loaded up his fishing nets so abundantly that poor Peter thought his boat was about to capsize. Janet Barber is a fisher of grapefruit. That is, she has a grapefruit tree, and she had to have it pruned. Translation: About 150 grapefruit had suddenly been separated from their tree, and they wouldn't last forever, and Janet can eat only so much grapefruit.



Her news was so urgent that it couldn't even wait for Thursday's newsletter. Janet asked Lori to send out an emergency email, inviting people to swing by the church (right outside the glass doors to the fellowship hall) and take as many grapefruit as they wanted. By Wednesday morning, most of those were gone and Janet was bringing in a couple more boxes. For you grapefruit fans, it's an irresistible offer.

## THE CANNING REPORT

How is jovial Mark Canning recovering from his recent quadruple bypass surgery? "He is gradually gaining strength and stamina," his wife, Sue, reported Wednesday. "He has been cleared to drive in town. No out-of-town trips or golf yet. Still no lifting anything heavier than a gallon of milk. It is hard to find the words to express how much everyone's cards, emails and calls have helped. It seemed like every time he would get discouraged, a card would arrive and raise his spirits." Just as Mark has raised our spirits for several decades now. Bless you, sir.

## 'THIS TENACIOUS AND PERSISTENT GOD': EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

*(Jeremiah 31: 31-34)*

"... I have come to find a fresh appreciation for this text from Jeremiah because I used to think that the writing of the covenant on the people's hearts was said and done in the past. But that is not so, is it? If the prophecy had been fulfilled, then there would be no need for rabbis, no need for pastors, no need for imams, no need for any religious teacher, because everyone would already know, it would be written on people's hearts, and there would be no need to teach about God.

"It wasn't fulfilled, because we still need them, yet we know what Jeremiah



meant with this promise of covenant written on people's hearts. We know the truth when we hear it, we know the gospel when it is professed, and we know that death is not the be-all end-all.

"All this really means is that the writing of the covenant on the hearts of human beings happened in the past, it happens in the present and it will need to continue to happen in the future. The promise that 'the days are surely coming' is still a look toward hope for us as we lean in to know this tenacious and persistent God who is coming, and we are left to learn to wait for it...."

## BY THEIR SHOES YOU WILL KNOW THEM

A friend sent me a fascinating news story on one of the new ways in which some pastors want their congregations to recognize their hipness and prosperity. The headline: "Preachers and their \$5,000 sneakers: Why one man started an Instagram account showing churches' wealth."

The Instagrammer is Ben Kirby, who also has a new book, "PreachersNsneakers: Authenticity in an Age of For-Profit Faith and (Wannabe) Celebrities." According to the story, Kirby "highlights a nationwide trend of pastors wearing oversized glasses, tight jeans and pricey kicks [that is, sneakers] who look like they belong at 'your local craft-cocktail watering hole instead of church. Gone are the days of a choir, suited up pastor and random people sitting in velvet chairs onstage. Now it's a U2 incarnate worship band, perfectly placed LED wash lights and a pastor [who is] motivating, edgy and might even let a cuss word slip if you're lucky."

Trying to remember the last time I'd seen Pastor Tom's shoes, I didn't recall thinking that they were worth thousands. But in an abundance of caution, as a deputized servant of St. Stephen, I asked him for photographic evidence of his newest footwear. Here are his shoes, which he picked out at Shoe Station. It's just another reminder that our pastor has his priorities straight, thank God.



Here's a link to that story: <https://>

[www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/preachers-and-their-5000-sneakers-why-one-man-started-an-instagram-account-showing-churches-wealth/](https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/preachers-and-their-5000-sneakers-why-one-man-started-an-instagram-account-showing-churches-wealth/)

## 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)



## 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/j/91234567890>

Access code: \*Bz&m3fD

## MISC.

- 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 this 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

Stephanie Leitch - 03/27  
Davis Holdcraft - 04/01  
Gordon Fleischer - 04/06  
Colin Hackley - 04/06  
Vicki Guttenplan - 04/07  
Beth Alexander - 04/11  
Elizabeth Halvorson - 04/15  
Ursula Morgan - 04/15

## UPCOMING DATES

### This Sunday:

10 a.m. - Worship (online), Sunday of the Passion/Palm Sunday

### Wednesday, March 24:

Noon - NO Bible study

### Thursday, April 1:

Noon - Drive-up prayer and communion

6 p.m. - Worship with communion (online), Maundy Thursday

### Friday, April 2:

6 p.m. - Worship (online), Good Friday



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