



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



About the same time St. Stephen's azaleas were displaying their brilliant white last month, this firecracker of an azalea was showing off at Florida State. They call it a Florida flame azalea. Moses might have called it a burning bush. (Photo by Jake Hartung)

CRYING OUT TO GOD

On Friday, Pastor Tom and other civil-rights leaders from around Florida spoke on camera at a Florida Senate committee meeting on H.B. 1, often referred to as the "Anti-Protest Bill." Here is Pastor's one-minute speech.

In the Bible there are a whole bunch of examples of protesting, but the word "protest" is not written. Protest in the Bible is written as "crying out." Crying out to the people in power, crying out to oppressors, and crying out to God for help. Crying out is a theme that runs throughout the sacred text.

We do not want to squash an oppressed person's ability to cry out for justice. This bill does that. It tells the people who feel called to the moral duty of loving God and loving our neighbor to shut up and stay home because peaceful protesters may be scooped up in mass arrests. This bill will disproportionately affect people with black/brown skin and people in poverty.

This nation was built on everyday Americans crying out, and we still have profoundly serious justice and equality issues to make right in our society. This bill is un-American and goes against our Judeo-Christian values and ethics and puts a foot on the throats of people crying out.

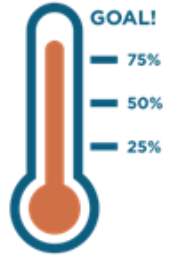
We should be standing for liberty, encouraging people to gather, and making this nation better by using our right to assemble and instruct our representatives. I urge you, please, vote "no" on House Bill 1.

(Nevertheless, the committee approved the bill, as did the House. Now it's in the Senate.)

UPDATES ON THE SANCTUARY PROJECT

By Pastor Tom

- This week, the engineer is scheduled to give us the updated blueprint drawing that specifies the metal bracket system installation more clearly for the general contractor. The architect has advised us not to reach out to contractors until we accept that drawing.
- Financial gifts contributed toward the sanctuary repair and other renovations now total \$120,800. On top of that, \$24,950 has been pledged.
- If you haven't had an opportunity to make a gift or pledge yet, please prayerfully consider doing so – and be sure to designate it to the Capital Campaign for the Sanctuary Project.



TERRI'S TERRIFIC

This Saturday, Terri Schmitt celebrates a milestone birthday. Because she just stepped down as our extremely active education coordinator, and because of this big birthday, and, frankly, because the past year has been pretty crummy for Terri, some of her fans wanted to pay special tribute to her here. Happy 50th!



“It’s hard to imagine that our energetic, thoughtful and hard-working education director [pictured here in 2017] has reached this milestone. I feel as if I’ve known Terri far longer than June 2015, when she joined St. Stephen. She immediately shared her love of animals with the congregation and the Sunday School children – first as a teacher and then as its education director. She recruited an eclectic group of teachers with wonderfully creative skills in music, dance and visual arts. Terri also made sure that all children, even visitors, were included in all Sunday

School activities. She had an impact on the congregation at large through the introduction of vegetarian/vegan food choices at our potlucks, and has made caring for our planet as well as her St. Stephen family a priority. God bless Terri on her 50th!” (Sharon Simmons)

“Thank you for all the Sunday School fun activities we did together, like the children’s Christmas play, gardening and more. The Christmas-cookies class was the BEST. Happy Birthday.” (Vivien Muchuruza)

“Thank you for all the activities you prepared for us, like the arts activities and the lesson about the OWL. What type of bird do you have at your house now? Those Christmas cookies we baked together at church were yummy. Thank you for loving us.” (Vince Muchuruza)



“Congrats on reaching the half-century club! Thank you for all the fun memories you created for children at St. Stephen. When I see pinwheels around, I think of your ‘Pinwheels for Peace.’ You make 50 look AMAZING.” (Eunice Muchuruza)

“I like working with Ms. Terri. She always is very informative, and we have fun in Sunday School and doing things outside. I hope she has a very Happy Birthday!” (Graham Reece)

“Ms. Terri is nice, and I hope she has a good birthday with lots of fun!” (Elliot Reece)

“Happy birthday, Ms. Terri! I hope a unicorn magically appears to bring you cake and a birthday present!” (*Vivi Halvorson*)

One more birthday wish, beginning with a little context. Back in the summer of 2018, when Pastor Tom and his family arrived, the gag that was trending in Astrid van der Mark’s third-grade classroom was to pin a “Kick me” sign on some unsuspecting classmate’s back. So at an open house to welcome the Holdcrafts, Astrid thought the perfect gift would be to secretly place a “Kick me” sign on Pastor Tom. What does that have to do with Terri? “I would like to praise Terri’s derring-do here,” says Astrid’s mom, Stephanie Leitch, who calls this one of Astrid’s favorite Terri moments. “This was a new pastor whose sense of humor might not have been sufficiently vetted at the scene of the crime. But Terri believed enough in the spirit of her Sunday-Schoolers to go through with it. Thank you for this, Terri.”

EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM’S SERMON ON FORGIVENESS

John 20:19-31



“...The theme for this 2nd Sunday of Easter is forgiveness. Forgiveness is embedded in Jesus’ final words from the cross, and in his appearance behind locked doors to ‘forgive the sins of any so that they are not retained.’ Then to Thomas for his unbelief. Forgiveness is the hallmark of what it means to be a follower of Jesus, and forgiveness recognizes that the Holy Spirit is at work in people we often do not expect....”

OUR FRIENDS AT EQUALITY FLORIDA

Over the years, largely through the guest speakers Dave Suhrweir has lined up for our annual RIC Sunday celebrations, St. Stephen has had a relationship with Equality Florida. Right now, there are a couple of timely ways you can keep up with and support Equality Florida.

- First, a virtual Tallahassee Gala is scheduled for 6-7 p.m. Saturday, April 24. It’ll livestream to Facebook and YouTube. Visit <https://www.eqfl.org/tallahassee-gala> for details. That link is also the best place to watch the livestream event.
- Also, Equality Florida has been chosen as a beneficiary of the 2021 Florida AIDS Walk, because of the work it does in Florida. The AIDS Healthcare Foundation will match all donations made to the team by May 31. Here’s a link to the Tallahassee Team Page: https://www.floridaaidswalk.org/site/TR/Walk/General?team_id=1515&pg=team&fr_id=1110. Or you can donate by check to: Florida AIDS Walk (Memo Note - Equality Florida Team Tallahassee), Equality Florida, P.O. Box 13184, St Petersburg, FL 33733.

Oh, one more thing: Equality Florida is searching for a North Florida development officer to lead its development efforts in Jacksonville, Panama City and Tallahassee. Interested? Apply at equalityflorida.org/careers.



**EQUALITY
FLORIDA**
ACTION, INC.

MISC.

- Sorry about that rained-out church picnic. Stay tuned for more details about the new date ... and the new weather report....



- The St. Stephen camping trip is 4/23-4/25. The spots are currently filled up for overnights, but we welcome anyone to come down to St. George Island State Park for a beach day with us on Saturday 4/24. We will have a short worship service at sundown to finish our day.
- 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

Elizabeth Halvorson - 04/15
Ursula Morgan - 04/15
Cassandra White - 04/16
Terri Schmitt - 04/17
Tyler Notley - 04/18
Simon Kennell - 04/20
Colleen Holdcraft - 04/29
Sarah Bacani - 04/29

UPCOMING DATES

This Sunday:

10 a.m. - Worship (online), Third Sunday of Easter

Wednesday, April 21:

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>.

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The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor

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