



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

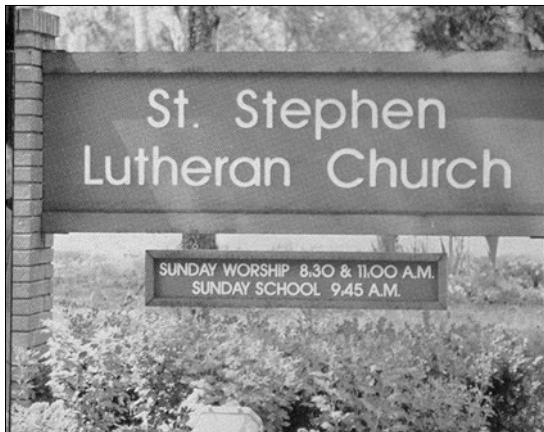
## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



## BEHOLD OUR NEW SIGN, TALLAHASSEE

In June 1986, Palmer and Evelyn Wee announced at a congregational meeting that they were arranging for the construction of a new, brick “St. Stephen Lutheran Church” sign out by Meridian Road. That sign, pictured at right, served us well – until a car smashed into it a few years ago. Thus began its slow, sad decline.

Now, for the first time in 37 years, St. Stephen has a shiny new sign out by Meridian. Nothing flashy. No digital messages. Just a good, solid, colorful welcome to all. We think Palmer and Evelyn would approve. *(Photo of new sign by Lori Zengel)*



## PREPARE FOR THE NOISY OFFERING

Last Sunday’s Ministry Minute message came from Karen Duncan, community engagement program officer at Tallahassee’s International Rescue Committee office. She’s so passionate about the work the IRC does that a couple of times she seemed close to tears. If you’re moved by her powerful testimony, excerpted below, write a big check and bring it to church this Sunday for the Noisy Offering (or mail it in to the office). Every dime of that collection will go toward the IRC.



## 'THEY HAVE A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE'

*By Karen Duncan, Tallahassee IRC*

My journey with the IRC started as a volunteer. I was in a church meeting much like this and the person speaking challenged us. It was during the Syrian crisis, and he said, "We need to do more. We need to do things for the refugees." And I thought, "Well, I live in Tallahassee, Florida. There's not going to be refugees in this small town." But then I thought, "What can it hurt? I'm going to Google it."



So I Googled "refugees in Tallahassee, Florida," and the International Rescue Committee came up. This office had just opened up a few months before. And so I hounded them. They were a small office, only two employees at the time. And I said, "I want to help." So they allowed me to start sorting donations.

And then they said, "Well, we'd really love it if you could help us set up an apartment. There's a new family coming from the Democratic Republic of Congo." Before the family even arrives, we receive information about them. We know how many people are in the family, what their ages are, what languages they speak. And so, knowing that, we can set up a home for them, so that the minute they get off the plane, the uncertainty can be a little less. They have a safe place to live. That involves stocking the cupboards with plates and cups and making their beds and putting things in their linen closet and making sure there's food for them. So when they wake up in the morning after a very long flight from whatever country they're coming from, they have something to eat. I was able to do that, and it was so fun. I thought, "The minute they open that cabinet, they'll know that they are loved and they are welcome."

As I gained the trust of the people working at the IRC, they said, "There's a woman who's arrived. She's pregnant, she has three small children, and her husband wasn't able to come." I have three small kids, and I thought this would be so fun. So, I met Amnazo. I was able to take her to her prenatal appointments. She didn't speak any English. Communication was tricky! I had to use Google Translate. She would just kind of smile and laugh, and then I realized, "Oh, she can't read or write in her own language." Luckily, Google Translate has a voice option. So we were able to kind of communicate. I was able to see her through the birth of her son Daniel. Amnazo taught me more than I could have ever done to help her. She taught me about resilience and courage and peace.

I loved your sermon today about opening doors. I know that Tallahassee is a community that opens its doors. A refugee is someone who's outside of his or her country and can't return because of the fear of persecution because of their religion, their political beliefs and other circumstances. At the IRC we help them find a place to live, find a job, enroll their kids in school. And the ways the community can help us in this work are so many. Help us with donations. Help us drive people to appointments. Help us advocate for them in the political realm. We're so grateful for all that you've done, and we hope that you continue to support refugees in your community.



To learn more, visit <https://www.rescue.org/united-states/tallahassee-fl>, check the display that's (usually) in the narthex, or ask Sharon Simmons for Karen's contact information. (Photos by Sharon)



## CLERGY FEND OFF UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

By Karen E. Olson (Excerpt from the Oct. 13, 1991, edition of the Tallahassee Democrat)

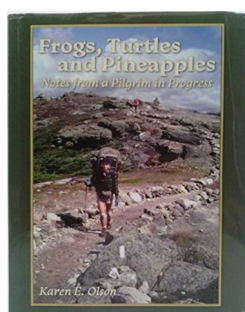
Let's face it, everybody wants God for a pastor – or at least a credible stand-in for Superman. Yet everybody has vastly different expectations about just what that might entail – especially when you get down to the nitty-gritty details of dress, hospital visitation and treatment of stray cats.

Multiply the wish list by the number of people in a congregation and, as one Tallahassee retreat leader put it, you'll have enough ammunition to scare anybody away from a seminary. Early on, clergy learn that they can't be all things to all people – but people will expect it anyway.

“People expect you to be a marriage counselor and an excellent preacher and a teacher and a problem-solver,” said Father Mike Tugwell, a priest at the Co-Cathedral of St. Thomas More. “You're expected to run a parish, and know the ins and outs of financing, and be perfect in visiting people in the hospital – to know how to deal with death and dying.”

By its very nature, the job description is fraught with paradox. How do you develop a deep personal spirituality and scholarly insight, while remaining on call 24 hours a day? How do you combine fearless prophecy with gentle reassurance? Keen business skills with ideals of selfless sacrifice? You can't, Tugwell said: “You just bring who you are to the job, and do the best that you can.”

You'll find this and more of Karen's stories in the book “Frogs, Turtles and Pineapples: Notes From a Pilgrim in Progress,” available at church or from Karen.



## SPEECHLESS: EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

... I remember having [an] important teaching slap me in the face in seminary. I had just finished an internship experience at a large Lutheran Church in an affluent suburb of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Trinity Lutheran has it all. Multi-pastoral leadership and an organized office staff, including an office manager! They have a talented praise band, three services on Sunday, one on Saturday night, and a prayer service on Fridays. Large youth group and huge Tuesday-morning Bible study with food and fellowship. No doubt that God is active there!

So, I'm back on campus after the internship there and talking to a professor about the “tragedies” of small Lutheran congregations that are struggling, and sometimes they're like only a block away from each other. “Why don't they merge?” I judged, thinking that they could be stronger by joining together. I had all their problems figured out!

Then this professor gently, but firmly, raised his voice to me and said, “Who are you to say God isn't in the small congregations that you feel are so broken?” [Pastor Tom showed us his reaction: wide-eyed, open-mouthed and utterly silent.] I think that was all I could do! [He showed us again.]



Even in fear, even in small churches, even in simple rooms ... the Risen Christ can be present – and do miraculous things....

## COMING UP

- Tonight: “An Evening in Tuscany,” dinner/cooking class/fundraiser for Kidsafe (of Lutheran Social Services of North Florida), 6:30 p.m., Aprons Cooking School, Publix, 3521 Thomasville Road. This is just a reminder for those of you who bought your tickets.
- April 21: Camping trip
- April 23: Kickin' It for Autism, 2-4 p.m., FSU Soccer Complex, <https://FSUCARD.com>
- May 28: Pentecost (choir's last anthem until after summer)
- July 30: Congregational meeting
- Oct. 29: Bishop Suarez visits us on Reformation Sunday

## MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- We could use more Publix or gas gift cards, for our Justice and Mercy Fund – which assists people in need who show up at church. (Place them in the offering plate, or send them to Lori in the church office. You can also make a monetary donation to Justice and Mercy instead.)
- Do you have an anniversary, birthday or special memory you'd like to honor? Celebrate the occasion by sponsoring the flowers for our service. Sign up on the flower chart in the narthex. The cost is \$35, which you can place in the offering plate.
- Have any questions for our Church Council members? They're listed on our website, <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/about-us>.
- 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

Russell Reardon - 04/26  
Colleen Holdcraft - 04/29  
Julia Bonfanti - 05/03  
Emily Jennings - 05/07  
Eva Mustian - 05/08  
Claire Claussen - 05/09  
Eunice Muchuruza - 05/16  
Jennifer Dritt - 05/21  
Paxton Oates - 05/23  
Sandy Larson - 05/24  
Jake Hartung - 05/25  
Blake Simmons - 05/25



## IN THE WEEK AHEAD

**Sunday, April 23:**

**9a.m.** - Book study

**9:30 a.m.** - Choir practice

**10 a.m.** - Worship, Third Sunday of Easter (*Noisy offering*)

**Wednesday, April 26**

**7 p.m.** - Choir practice



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