



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



And God said: “Let there be petunias! Pink-as-bubble-gum petunias!” And God saw that they were very good.

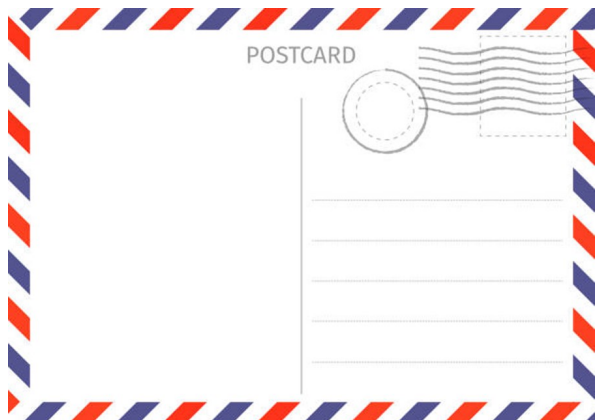
WHAT CAN WE DO? WE CAN WRITE LETTERS

By Pastor Tom

We find ourselves yet again with the cry of desperation: “How long, O Lord?” Our hearts are broken as senseless violence continues to grip our nation. With each new tragedy, even those targeting children and elders, Congress remains unwilling to unite for positive dialogue that could change the destructive path we’re on. But we need to remember that we are not powerless. We have a vote, and we have a voice. We have phones, paper and pens to give legislators our letters of support or calls to action. We have people power and a Spirit-led strength to “Do justice” and “Care for the least among us.” We will always pray, but more is required. Our lives and hope for the future depend on this call to civil action.

Join me after church this Sunday to write letters to U.S. Sens. Marco Rubio and Rick Scott, urging them to support sensible measures to help bring an end to mass shootings.

Last Sunday, we wrote postcards to local officials – as part of St. Stephen’s participation in the new Capital Area Justice Ministry. We encouraged Mayor John Dailey and the city commissioners to financially support a housing trust fund for families with very low incomes. Also, we thanked them for their commitment to investing \$5 million in efforts to interrupt gun violence in Tallahassee and their commitment to issue more civil citations instead of arresting young people for misdemeanors.



When a young person is arrested, it puts unnecessary stress on our jail system. More important, an arrest record – even for a petty misdemeanor – follows a person around, jeopardizing education and job opportunities later in life. Nearly half of young people arrested for misdemeanors could have received a citation instead. Do these citations work? Statistics show that only 6% of the young people who were issued one later re-entered the system as repeat offenders. That’s an encouraging alternative to arrests. And that’s why we wrote to State Attorney Jack Campbell, urging him to work with the Tallahassee Police Department and issue civil citations rather than automatically arresting young offenders for petty crimes.

If you missed our postcard workshop after church last Sunday, please send out a note or postcard now using the names and addresses below. Here are the names of the city officials we’re thanking for their pledge of support:

- Mayor John Dailey
- Commissioner Curtis Richardson
- Commissioner Jeremy Matlow
- Commissioner Jack Porter
- Commissioner Diane Williams-Cox

All of them are at 300 S. Adams St., Tallahassee, FL 32301.

Here’s the address of State Attorney Jack Campbell, whom we’re encouraging to support the use of civil citations rather than arrests for young people who’ve committed petty misdemeanors: 301 S. Monroe St., Suite #475, Tallahassee, FL 32301.

‘I FEEL VERY BLESSED’

It was about a year ago. The sun was going down. Before she could leave town for the church camping trip, Beth Alexander had a lot to get done – including mowing. So when a guy who lives around the corner walked up and started to chat, she was not especially friendly. He walked on. She mowed on. End of story.

Wait. No, it turns out the story was just beginning. Undeterred, this guy – named Dwight Polivka – later asked Beth out for coffee. In the year since, they’ve been seeing a lot of each other. One of their favorite places is the Bradfordville Blues Club. That’s where they were Saturday night when Dwight got down on one knee and asked Beth to marry him. We think you can figure out her answer.



Pastor Tom broke the news to St. Stephen during the announcements at the end of Sunday’s liturgy. Instant applause! Behind their masks, Beth and Dwight seemed to be beaming.



“Dwight is a nurse practitioner,” Beth said when we caught up with her Monday. “He is very kind, fun-loving, likes to hike and swim, and has a wonderful family in town. He also is a great dancer – and tolerates my dancing.”

They haven’t set a date for the wedding yet. Meanwhile, all of Beth’s church friends are eating up this good news. “It is wonderful to be part of St. Stephen, where we receive lots of support from one another,” she said Monday. “I felt the love yesterday!”

As some of you know, a little more than five years ago Beth became a widow. “I feel very blessed,” she says now, “as I had no plans for another relationship!” (Photo-illustration by Stephanie Leitch)

THE TRICKY WICK

All eyes were on the 8-year-old acolyte, but his eyes were only on the flame.



The candlelighter he was holding was taller than he is, and the candles he was approaching were pretty high. The last thing he wanted was for some devilish breeze to extinguish the flame, so his steps were slow and deliberate.

He made his way to the torches in front of the pulpit. Being an acolyte is no piece of cake. When you're at the foot of the candle and you have to reach way over your head, you can't exactly see the wick that you're trying to light. Our acolyte bravely persevered. As the seconds ticked by, though, the flame at the end of the candlelighter grew dimmer, and smaller, and died.

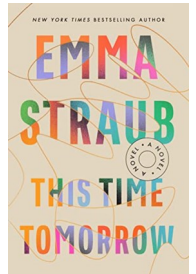
The only sound was Katharine Gossman's majestic prelude, "Rejoice" (the same tune as the hymn of the day, "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"). And the only thing our drama needed now was a savior.

Suddenly, out of the corner of our eyes we saw Beth Alexander walking swiftly toward the acolyte. In her hand was a smaller, less Lutheran-looking lighter – the kind you probably use to ignite your charcoal. Within seconds, the acolyte was back in business. He lit one torch, then the other. Then he climbed one step and approached the altar. He lifted the candlelighter into position and tried to find the wick. Then the unthinkable happened: The sacred flame went out again. Surely everyone in the room was thinking, "Come on, God, give this kid a break!" Beth, still nearby, was ready to light him up again. But the acolyte turned around and ignited his candlelighter from the torch he'd lit earlier. Clever.

He lit one altar candle, then the other, then extinguished his flame and hung up his candlelighter. As the prelude continued, relieved worshippers flashed silent thumbs-up gestures. Courageous acolyte Elliot Reece trotted back to his seat. Mission accomplished. Time for the liturgy to begin.

LOOKING BACK: EXCERPT FROM SUNDAY'S SERMON

"If you could be your 16-year-old self all over again, what would you change?" That question led the interview recently when NPR's Mary Louise Kelly spoke with author Emma Straub about her new book, 'This Time Tomorrow.' Emma wrote the book, which deals with time travel, during the pandemic lockdown of 2020. A time when she (like most of us) grieved not being able to go to her favorite public places because they were all closed for safety. On top of that grief, she was also dealing with having her father in the ICU and being unable to talk to him and share the things she'd wanted to share with him in case he died.



"So she wrote this book as a kind of therapy – to go back in time to when dwelling in large crowds didn't present COVID risks, and (more important) to have conversations with her father in their younger days.

"Beloved, I was ... moved to share this with you at the front end of today's sermon because when I consider ... what I'd change if I could go back to my 16-year-old self, I often think of fixing my career path, taking school more seriously, starting to save for retirement earlier, or the famous 'I wish I'd known then what I know now!'

"But ... those 'fixes' sounded pretty childish after hearing this interview. Emma nailed it when she said she [would want to] go back to the kitchen table and listen more and participate in the conversations more; to notice (and relish) 'Jeopardy!' on the TV in the background of family time; and to dwell on the moments that don't seem like much when you're growing up because you're 'living them every day, and [then you grow up and] you realize it's the everyday stuff you're going to miss.'...

"How much grace would we give ourselves if we recognized, like Emma, that we didn't need to change anything about our young selves? To know that we were the person we were supposed to be and on the step to becoming who we are...?"

GOD BLESS OUR GRADS



Jamie Alexandra Martinez graduated cum laude with a B.S. from the University of West Florida, say Nancy Staff and Mike Martinez. Jamie's major was biology.

Any more grads out there, St. Stephen? Please let Lori know so we can mention them in a future newsletter.

HAIKU CORNER

By Lex Lutheran



UNLESS THERE'S ANOTHER ENGAGEMENT...

Pastor's announcements
are all but certain to be
a letdown this week.

FIRST, THE BACKGROUND CHECK

Has anyone told
Dwight that the congregation
must approve suitors?



CHOREOGRAPHING THE SHARING OF THE PEACE



She planned a fist bump.
He'd rehearsed a forearm thrust.
Result: tangled limbs.

MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- The OWLs' next lunch outing is set for 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, June 14, at Panda Buffet, 3507 Thomasville Road. This will be the last one until the fall. RSVP to Margaret Bowers at ambowersfl@gmail.com or 407-921-8671.



- Noted young violinists Astrid van der Mark and Jonas Holdcraft recently played their Spring Recital at Christ Presbyterian Church. Astrid played Bouree by J.S. Bach; Jonas, the Rondo from Concerto No. 5 in D by F. Seitz.
- We were all pleased with Dylan, our substitute pianist several weeks ago. When Katharine passed along that news to Dylan, and asked whether he'd be available in the future, he replied: "Thank you for checking in! I had a wonderful time; the congregation was so lovely and welcoming. I would happily come back anytime!"
- Have any questions for our Church Council members? They're all listed on our website, <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/about-us>. Or you can ask Pastor Tom. Or, if you're bashful, you can ask me, your newsletter editor. I'll try to get an answer and, if appropriate, share it with everyone in the newsletter. Just send your letter to Lori, whose contact info is below.
- Have any classified ads you'd like to place in the newsletter, free? You know – items you'd like to give away or sell, items you'd like to acquire, that sort of thing. If so, send them to Lori. Her contact info is below.
- 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 2022 Flower Chart in the narthex. The cost is \$35, which you can place in the offering plate.
- Have anything to add to a future newsletter? Email Lori at sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com or call 850-385-2728.



REMEMBER THIS SONG?

WE ARE ST. STEPHEN

(Sung to the tune of "The Friendly Beasts," it was performed in the talent show in 1993 or so. Emory Hingst was our pastor, the sanctuary was off to a slow start and, yes, members of the congregation mowed our grass.)

We are St. Stephen, bustling and bold.
We built this place with mortar and mold.
Our pastor's almost 60 years old.
And our new building is on hold.

I am the pastor, vibrant and fit.
In Texas my sermons were a huge hit.
I speak in Greek for the fun of it.
I'm glad I'm not in that choir skit.

We are the Altar Guild, you see.
We polish, we scrub, we set up for free.
We wash little glasses endlessly.
You eat and run; we stay till 3.

We are the teachers, weary and worn.
We've been with your children since they were born.
They threw crayons at us Christmas morn.
We've had enough. You have been warned.

We are the youth group. Leave us alone.
We have our own room. Leave us alone.
Your ideas are boring. Leave us alone.
We're young; you're not. So leave us alone.

We are the mowers, dirty and tired.
Where's that lawn service that we hired?
We mow when we want, when we feel inspired.
Might mow, might not. What — like we'll be fired?

We are St. Stephen, wildly unique.
Our ducts, they slosh; our pews, they creak.
This song's gone on about a week.
Last verse! "Thanks be to God," we speak.

Say, you're quite a singer! To see more songs, visit
<https://ststephenlutherantally.com/songs-of-st-stephen> .



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

TJ Oliveri - 05/28
Pepper Stewart - 05/29
Bevin Reardon - 06/03
Billie Reardon - 06/03
Billy Oates - 06/14
Tim Larson - 06/16
Martin Guttenplan - 06/19
Ruth Hartung - 06/23
Steve Kunst - 06/23
Sandy Davis - 06/28

UPCOMING DATES

This Sunday, May 29:

9:00 a.m. - Book study

10 a.m. - Worship, Seventh Sunday of Easter

The office will be closed on Monday, May 30, for Memorial Day.



If you have news or photos to share,
please send them to Lori at
sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com.

Don't forget our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/ststephentallahassee>.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, ELCA
2198 N. Meridian Road | Tallahassee, FL 32303

The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor

*Edited by Lex Lutheran. Designed by Lori Zengel, office manager, sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com.
Website: <http://www.ststephenlutherantally.com/>*

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