



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



In this week's newsletter, we give thanks for the magic of livestreamed services.

We bid farewell to a "St. Stephen kid" who's all grown up.

We get an update from two of our favorite Vals.

We get an eyeful of pink from this hibiscus, in a member's garden.

And more!

THEY'LL ARRIVE BEARING GIFTS

When our representatives Pastor Tom, Beth Alexander, Colleen Holdcraft, Jonas Holdcraft and "registered visitor" Rita Ford travel to the Synod Assembly this week, they'll take a carload of donations with them. "A heartfelt thank-you to the members and friends of St. Stephen for the many generous gifts to the Harbor House of Central Florida," said Sharon Simmons, outreach coordinator. Assembly participants routinely bring items for families in need, and Harbor House is this year's designated recipient. "Two large tubs filled to overflowing, along with four strollers. What a blessing YOU are to our community and those around the state. God bless you and keep our delegation safe as they travel."



OUR MAN BEHIND THE VIDEO CAMERA

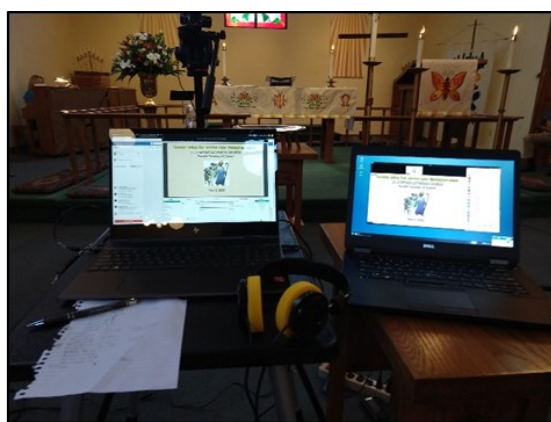
Used to be, if you missed church, you were out of luck. These days, all you need to do is visit our Facebook page and – presto – relive every second of the liturgy. For that high-tech convenience, we thank the pandemic (grudgingly); Paul van der Mark, the IT expert who pioneered our online worship experience; and the remarkable high-school kid who's following in Paul's footsteps.

For nearly three years now, Jonas Holdcraft has been our livestreamer-in-chief. In this photo by Colin Hackley, you see him in the rear of the sanctuary, keeping an eye on the pastor, the computer, the sound box and the video camera – and on his current trainee, his mom, Colleen. His dad, Pastor Tom, originally recruited him for the role. Paul taught him the ropes. And now Jonas is ready to teach others.

“Jonas has been doing an excellent job with St. Stephen's online presence: setting up the camera and laptop, ensuring the audio is good, streaming to Facebook, and much more,” Paul said.

When we interviewed Jonas after the service last Sunday, St.

Stephen's wi-fi was out. “So things were easier,” he said. “Basically, all we were doing was recording the service, rather than livestreaming it. Later on, we'll post it on our Facebook page so people can watch it.” That's not ideal, he said, because some people who sought it out at 10 a.m. on Sunday won't come back. Even when the wi-fi is working, the process is less taxing now than it was at the



beginning. *[This photo shows Paul's elaborate setup in 2020.]* Previously, we were inserting hymn lyrics in the livestream,” Jonas said. “These days, we're not.” Certainly the audience is smaller than it once was. Three years ago, dozens of households were worshipping online. Now, typically four or five tune in live – and maybe 20-some tune in later. Still, for those folks, online worship is a lifesaver. That's

why St. Stephen has continued it past the pandemic, and why Jonas' work is so valuable.

Val Sullivan and Val Kibler hugely appreciate Jonas' commitment. “Because of my lung disease, we avoid most indoor crowds and worship from home,” Val S. said. “I wait for the video to begin each Sunday, and we look for all of our friends in the pews and walking up and down the aisles – until the exact moment that the service starts, as St. Stephenites have always done. We're able to hear everything well, including the ‘new to us’ piano that Katharine plays so well. Other than being in our PJ's, we feel as though we are back in row 4 with the Hartungs. Each reading and each sermon is thought-provoking, and each hymn is soothing. Thank you, Jonas!”

Particularly at the beginning for Jonas, things could get pretty nerve-wracking at the back of the church. “A couple of times I got really nervous and wasn't sure what to do,” he said. Of course, he couldn't just holler, “Hey, Dad, stop the liturgy! I need to ask you something!” But it's all worked out. Most of us don't even remember that a camera is running during the service. “Sometimes people stand in front of the camera and block the picture. Or,” Jonas said with a chuckle, “they duck as they approach the camera – not realizing that you can still see the top of their head.”

Jonas will be entering 11th grade at Lincoln this fall. At the moment, he's not thinking that an IT career is what he's heading for. “I'm interested in the sciences, philosophy and writing,” he said, though he's not sure exactly what he'll wind up pursuing. Same with college: He likes UF, but everything is up in the air.

Meantime, like clockwork, he's back in the sanctuary week after week – and, to be honest, most of us take him for granted. “Jonas can use some assistance,” Paul said. “If you have an affinity with social media, want to learn about streaming video and want to help the church, we need you! Don't hesitate to get in touch with Lori.”

BREAKING NEWS: To make the stream even better, St. Stephen is switching internet providers. Today, a Metronet technician will install a fiber line in Pastor Tom's office. Lori and Paul will assist with the installation and make sure that the transition from Comcast to Metronet will be smooth and not noticeable for the rest of us. We thank them!

SPEAKING OF THE VALS...

During our conversation with Val Sullivan, we asked for an update on her health and their life together. (That's Val S. on the right and Val. K on the left.)



We are doing well. I retired early from Encompass, and Val K. is preparing for retirement in the next year. Besides trips to Shands for my docs, we are trying to get to the beach as much as possible and take several road trips around Florida and the Southeast. I have something called severe Pulmonary Hypertension but am fortunate that one of the best PH programs in the country is at Shands, so I feel as though I'm in good hands. (Along with the incredible care I get from the incomparable Val K.) I am on oxygen and IV medication 24/7, so don't be surprised by tubes if you see me. When Kib is not busy working or caretaking, she continues to power-walk, collect old cameras, thrift and tend our beautiful yard. We miss you all and hope to return in person sometime in the near future.

GODSPEED, ERIN

By Sharon Simmons, outreach coordinator

In an era when many young people are growing up and moving away from their hometowns and congregations, Erin Kenney has proved to be the exception. Erin and brother Nathan, children of longtime member Kris Knab, were raised in Tallahassee and St. Stephen. While Nathan now lives and works in New York City, Erin has followed in her late mom's footsteps, working for the Florida Legislature and becoming a steadfast and active member at St. Stephen on the Outreach Committee. *[The photo below shows Erin, front left, during her youth-group days.]*



While COVID was still raging and the congregation exclusively worshipped online, Erin stepped up to become Andrea Notley's second-in-command for the back-to-school and Christmas Giving Tree initiatives. Pockets filled with St. Stephen sponsors' donations, she braved in-person shopping to provide appropriate items for the children. She helped pack and organize the items. Erin has been a wonderful addition to Outreach, providing energy and a young perspective.

At the end of the month she'll be moving to Washington, D.C., to explore career opportunities and to be closer to family. This Sunday will be her last official worship service with us. We'll miss her, but we'll send her off with our love and best wishes. Go with God, Erin, but don't forget the home folks who love you.



AND NOW, A NOTE FROM ERIN

I'm excited for the new adventure and the opportunity to explore such a historic city. With my background in art history, I can't wait to visit all of the free museums! As exciting as this opportunity is, there are a lot of things I will miss about Tallahassee, especially my St. Stephen community. It's the church I grew up in. It's where I met two of my best friends – Rebecca Holcombe (née Williams) and Summer Deal (née Shepherd). *[They're also in that photo above.]* It's where I felt comforted and supported after my mom passed away. But most of all, I know it's a place that will always feel like home. I will miss you all greatly. Thank you for being such a wonderful part of my life in Tallahassee.

COMING UP

- June 18: Father's Day Breakfast, for all the menfolk of St. Stephen.
- June 24: IRC "rummage sale" event.
- July 30: Congregational meeting and Open Forum.
- Oct. 29: Bishop Suarez visits us on Reformation Sunday.



IF GOD WERE A PLUMBER...



You heard we were having plumbing work done at church, remember? Well, here's the evidence. Pastor Tom took these photos Tuesday afternoon. In next week's newsletter, we'll fill you in on what was accomplished. Pray that there are no unpleasant subterranean surprises.



GETTING READY FOR THE IRC 'RUMMAGE SALE'

As you might recall, June 24 is when our friends at the International Rescue Committee are inviting the area's newest refugee-residents to select items they can use to make their new homes more comfortable and welcoming. St. Stephen is among the many congregations and organizations helping to get ready – by



donating "rummage sale" treasures such as housewares, linens (kitchen, bath, bedroom), dishes, pots and pans, blenders, toaster ovens, clock radios, glassware, cutlery, vases, sewing machines, fabric or lamps. **NO FURNITURE**, please.

"Thank you to those who have already donated and stored sale items for the World Refugee Day event in the Ruth Room," said

Sharon Simmons, who wants us to keep up the good work. "We also need help on June 24. First, we need to load up those items in the Ruth Room and drive them to ECHO at 548 E. Bradford Road, starting around 7:30 a.m. At ECHO, from 8 to 10 a.m., we need 4-6 people who can help set out items on designated tables. At the end of the day, we need help packing up any remaining items and taking them to Goodwill. If you can help with any of those activities, for any amount of time, please let me know as soon as possible: 850-445-1888 or sharonteacher49@yahoo.com."



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Susan Hehn—06/11
 Billie Oates - 06/14
 Tim Larson - 06/16
 Martin Guttenplan - 06/19
 Ruth Hartung - 06/23
 Steve Kunst - 06/23
 Sandy Davis - 06/28

OUR FOOD-PANTRY WORKDAY

By Sharon Simmons (again!)

Last Saturday, an intrepid band of Outreach Committee members gathered at the food pantry in the Seminole Manor neighborhood to build handrails and to demonstrate their pruning and gardening skills. Some of you will remember that we learned about this community effort via a Ministry Minute with the testimony of Adrian Fogelin – and we donated money through that month’s Noisy Offering.

Saturday’s work crew comprised Pastor Tom, Caroline and Keith Collins, Terri Schmitt, Janet Barber, St. Stephen friend Francisco “Chico” Alvarado and me. After just two hours, the handrails had been built and a mountain of limbs, leaves and debris had been placed by the road. Community neighbors stopped by to admire the work crew and their efforts. We’re so grateful to Karen Olson for sharing this initiative with the St. Stephen community. Be sure to check out this photo and admire Pastor Tom’s efforts to get even closer to God.



MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES



- Beware! Several of our members have received bogus emails from someone pretending to be “Rev Tom Holdcraft” requesting gift cards. As Office Manager Lori reminded us this week, if the church ever needs gift cards, she asks for them through the newsletter. Don’t be misled!
- Don’t forget St. Stephen’s night on the town, coming up next Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. We’re going to the American Legion Hall on Lake Ella to hear the Tallahassee Swing Band. Let Margaret Bowers, our designated seeker of fun, know if you’re planning to attend.
- On June 25, we’ll be welcoming Loraine and Bert Sundberg as members. You’ll read more about them in an upcoming newsletter.
- 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>.



IN THE WEEK AHEAD

This Sunday:

9 a.m. - Book study

10 a.m. - Worship, Second Sunday after Pentecost

Tuesday, June 13:

7:30 p.m. - Tallahassee Swing Band at American Legion Hall



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>.

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The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor