



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

OUTREACH UPDATES

By Sharon Simmons, outreach chief

BACKPACKS: It's time to get those backpacks ready for local children to go back to school. See Andrea Notley about adopting a child. Or get together with a friend and adopt a child together. Or make a financial donation in your offering envelope or via Venmo. Be sure to designate it for "Backpacks."

WATER WORKS: July will be here in a few days, and that means Water Works! From July 1 to July 28, we'll be collecting cases of water, any size, to donate to the Kearney Center. This recurring initiative is a collaboration between St. Stephen and New Mt. Zion AME Church. Bring your case of water to the fellowship hall and place it on the designated pew. Last year we collected 15 cases. This year our target is 16. Yes, class, you'll earn another A.

NOISY OFFERING: June's Noisy Offering (this Sunday) will go to the Survive and Thrive Advocacy Center, whose programs Robin Hassler Thompson shared with us last Sunday. (See *details below*.) July's Noisy Offering will be collected throughout the month and will help offset our active-duty teachers' classroom costs at the beginning of the school year. You can include a monetary gift in your offering envelope, marked "July Noisy Offering," or send via Venmo – or just give it to me. Look for profiles of our teachers in an upcoming newsletter.

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE: The IRC urgently needs laundry detergent, shampoo, conditioner, body wash, toothbrushes, shaving cream, disposable razors, deodorant, diapers (especially sizes 2-5), wipes and sanitary pads. You'll find most of these items at a reasonable cost at Dollar Tree.

MANNA ON MERIDIAN: July is St. Stephen's month at Manna. We need YOU to volunteer during the week of July 15: Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. If you can help, contact our Manna coordinator, Dr. Cassandra White, or her helper, Caroline Collins. They'll give you instructions. You can support Manna in other ways by bringing T-shirts to church – so they can be repurposed into reusable bags to hold food. Or you can bring in food and place it in the wicker box in the narthex. Or you can make a financial donation in your envelope. So many ways to support our food-insecure neighbors.

KidSafe: If you ordered coffee during the recent KidSafe fundraiser, you can pick it up Sunday. See Barb Ehlmann.



You'll find most of these items at a reasonable cost at Dollar Tree.

FAMILY MEMBERS CAN BE HUMAN TRAFFICKERS

*By Robin Hassler Thompson, our guest speaker last Sunday
Reprinted from the Tallahassee Democrat, June 10, 2024*

Over 20 years ago, I worked with the FSU Center for the Advancement of Human Rights and helped create Florida's first strategic plans on human trafficking. We also started the first human trafficking working group in Florida that pulled together experts from around the state. At that time, we did not hear the phrases "parental" or "familial" trafficking very much at all.

Now, I'm the executive director of the Survive and Thrive Advocacy Center (STAC), a nonprofit that assists human trafficking survivors in Florida's Big Bend. Today, we see both parents and family members trafficking their relatives far too often. In fact, one study estimated that 41% of child trafficking (for both sex and labor) is carried out by family members or caregivers. Examples include a parent who is addicted and "gives" their child to a sex trafficker in exchange for drugs, sexually abuses their children live online for profit, or makes the child work in the fields or else suffer extreme physical violence if they don't comply.



Sex and labor trafficking are here in the capital region, and not just in large metropolitan areas, as highlighted by Sheriff Walt McNeil's recent announcement of the arrests of 13 men accused of trying to solicit sex from minors online. One of these men thought he was talking to an 11-year-old's parent. Being clear-eyed and informed about familial trafficking and its increasing prevalence is a vital first step to stopping sex and labor trafficking.

Minors are protected under both Florida and federal anti-trafficking laws, and anyone under the age of 18 who is induced to perform a commercial sex act in exchange for anything of value is a victim of trafficking. The trafficker can be anyone: a parent, a boyfriend or girlfriend, or someone pretending to be a friend or helper.

Sex and labor traffickers are almost always known by the victim; rarely are they strangers who kidnap, abduct, drug or lure adult and minor victims into trafficking, as many believe. Traffickers invest weeks, months and even years grooming their intended victims. While abduction by strangers does happen, it is so much rarer. Of the more than 200 trafficking victims STAC has assisted since its inception over almost 10 years ago, none have been victims of a "snatch and grab" or kidnapping.

It is also important to note that boys as well as girls are sex- and labor-trafficked, and that traffickers can be male or female. For example, a mother sexually exploiting her male children online counters the common myth that it is only men who traffic and that the victims are always attractive or "exotic" young girls.

Children and those trafficked by family members in particular face great challenges coming forward to get help. They are often economically dependent on that person who is trafficking them and are loyal to the family structure. They may not even know they are being trafficked. The impact of familial trafficking is severe and complex as the victim often has suffered from years of prior abuse and neglect, and other trauma.

Knowing the truth about what human trafficking looks like helps all of us to be there for survivors so they can be empowered and receive the relief they're entitled to. The survivor often is on a long road as they move forward, especially when the perpetrator is a family member, and we all have a role. Like most sex and labor trafficking, familial trafficking can happen in plain view and is far more common than many of us can ever imagine.

Robin Hassler Thompson is executive director of the Survive and Thrive Advocacy Center (STAC), a local nonprofit agency founded to support survivors of sex and labor trafficking and educate the community about human trafficking. For more information, visit <https://surviveandthriveadvocacy.org/> or call 850-597-2080.

SEE WHAT'S COMING UP

By Margaret Bowers, our director of fun stuff



Hospitality will have no events in July. We'll resume in August with the Back-To-School Backpack Drive and the Stovers' new-member reception.



OWLs (Older Wiser Lutherans) will resume in August with a luncheon at 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 13, in the fellowship hall. It's a "Bring Your Own Lunch" event where we'll plan future luncheon events.

Our participation in listening to (and dancing to) Tallahassee Swing at the American Legion Hall will resume Tuesday, Aug. 20. FREE dance lessons begin at 6:30 p.m., and the band starts at 7:30 p.m. Admission is \$10. *No need to RSVP – because we'll be there!*



We're getting quotes on creating our very own St. Stephen cookbook, called "Seasoned With Love." Gather up your best recipes ever. Look for more information to come.

'THE DEAREST MAN'

Part of the joy of reading other people's obituaries – even those written about people you never knew – is the opportunity to see how loved ones find words to describe each other. Last week, my sister Pam's husband died in Seattle. You never met him, but see if you can glimpse him – or someone like him – in her lovely words: "There are so many pictures we don't have of him; Bob, invisible but inevitable, behind the sound board, the light board, setting up music stands, microphones, rooms full of school computers, routers, Smart Boards. Bob anonymously writing auction software and making it work with an all-volunteer force. Bob schlepping handbells hither and yon. I think his co-workers thought of him as steady and unflappable, very hard-working and also creative. We just thought of him as the dearest man in the world."



BEFORE YOU GO...

- Ruth Hartung is learning the patterns of chemotherapy, the good days and bad, as so many of you have learned over the years. Along the way she's getting a boost from the prayers and other messages from the people of St. Stephen. She thanks you!
- If you're thinking of having someone else in your family write the obituary for your partner, or for yourself, make sure you've taken the time to write down the main points you want the obit to emphasize. Milestones, achievements, relationships, specific job titles, whatever. In the best of cases, obits are poetic – but beneath that poetry is a foundation of facts. Make sure to gather those facts while the guest of honor is still around.
- The newsletter will be on break next week.



- If you have an anniversary, birthday, special memory or special St. Stephen person or program you'd like to honor, celebrate by sponsoring the altar flowers for our service. Sign up on the flower chart, out by the nametags, or ask Lori to sign you up. Include the \$40 with your regular offering. And then take the flowers home!

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS



Sandy Davis - 06/28
Sarah Barton - 07/03
Loraine Sundberg - 07/03
Karl Barton - 07/04
Tom Buchanan - 07/13
Jonas Holdcraft - 07/15
Margaret Bowers - 07/19
Corine Brathwaite - 07/19
Emily Ruddell - 07/20
Michael Robinson - 07/25
Bert Sundberg - 07/25
Kirsten Ebbesen - 07/26
Ben Claussen - 07/29

COMING UP

Today:

Noon - Al-Anon meets in fellowship hall (FH)
7 p.m. - AA meets in FH

This Friday:

9:30 a.m. - TOPS meets in FH

This Saturday:

1:30 p.m. - Al-Anon District meeting in FH

This Sunday:

9 a.m. - Book study
10 a.m. - Worship, Sixth Sunday after Pentecost
11:30 a.m. - Council meeting
4 p.m. - Congolese Christian worship in FH
7 p.m. - Mickee Faust meets in FH



Monday, July 1:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in FH
7 p.m. - TIMA meets in FH

Tuesday, July 2:

7 p.m. - Mickee Faust meets in FH

Wednesday, July 3:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in FH
7 p.m. - Mickee Faust meets in FH



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