



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



This is the bright, white, cheery sight that greets the members of one St. Stephen household as they step onto their back porch. The vinca's yellow center adds just the right touch, as if our artistic God had picked up a watercolor brush to complete each one.

OUR 'BEAUTIFULLY BEATING HEART'

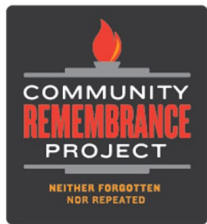
By Val Sullivan, congregation president

It's been 15 months since we've gathered as one within our St. Stephen sanctuary. Many have not been back to the church property since the beginning of the pandemic. Some worry that all works have come to a halt or at least slowed considerably. Rest assured that St. Stephen continues to function like a well-oiled machine – or, as those of us in health care would say, like a beautifully beating heart. For example:

- We continue to have an online liturgy that reaches 100-150 households each week.
- Our in-person worship service has increased to 30-40 participants per week.
- The Church Council meets regularly to ensure that church operations continue seamlessly.
- Bible study involves a steady number of congregants weekly, and the lesson is also offered online on demand.
- Our picnic was well attended, and we're looking forward to other similar activities.
- Our grounds have been transformed by the talented Emily Jennings and David Butler. There are now several quaint seating areas, plus gardens and, as always, a well-manicured entryway.



- **Our Manna on Meridian donations have remained steady.**
- **Donations to Going Places Outreach began earlier in the year, and the response from the congregation has been wonderful.**
- **Social justice, which is the lifeblood of St. Stephen, is flourishing. We're represented by Pastor Tom with the Capital Area Justice Ministry as well as the Community Remembrance Project. The Synod also asked Pastor Tom to represent our congregation on the Just Love Racial Justice Team.**
- **The financial stewardship of our congregation continues to be sound. Our giving has exceeded budget, and we've been able to pay for small projects throughout the year – including refurbishing the nursery and finally fixing the blinds in the fellowship hall.**
- **The funds toward the Capital Campaign for the repair of the sanctuary continue to grow.**
- **Speaking of the sanctuary repair ... At the semiannual congregational meeting July 18, the building committee should have the name of the general contractor that we'll use, as well as a timetable for when work will begin and possibly when it'll end.**



We continue to live out our mission statement, and our lifeblood continues to flow. I look forward to the day when once again we can exchange hugs while Sharing the Peace during our worship, and then break bread together at a potluck.

CHOOSING BACK-TO-SCHOOL OUTFITS

Soon school will begin again, after a long and disruptive COVID year. This year, as in years past, we St. Stephen people have a chance to help provide backpacks and new school clothes for kids who otherwise might not have them.

It's the ECHO Back-to-School Clothing Drive, and the St. Stephen coordinators are Andrea Notley and Erin Kenney. As most of you know, you can “adopt” one of the students that ECHO has included in this year's drive – which means you'll get the specifics of the student's age, grade and clothing sizes. So you buy a backpack and fill it with two school outfits, socks and underwear. (You don't get the student's name – just a number. Please be sure to put that number on a sticky note and attach it to the backpack when you bring it to church.) Deadline: July 25.



If you can't go out shopping, or if you're not good at picking out young people's clothes, you can still participate by making a donation. Just include it in your church offering, designating it for “ECHO backpacks.” (Those of you who use Venmo can donate, too.)

Want more information? Contact Andrea at Notley90@comcast.net or 850-443-5293. Contact Erin at erinkenney8@gmail.com or 850-459-7744.

AH, RETIREMENT

This is a big week for Sandy Davis: She's celebrating not just her birthday but also, at long last, her retirement.



“Except for the 18 months that I stayed home with Jennie when she was born, I have been working since graduating from high school,” Sandy said Tuesday. “That means from the age of 18 to today, I have been working almost 50 years. No wonder I am tired and ready to do other things. Hopefully, one of those things will be to worship in person again at St. Stephen.”

See you soon, Sandy, and congratulations.

SENT THAT PICTURE YET?

As you read last week, we're putting together a new, online, easily updated names-and-faces directory of St. Stephen people. Office Manager Lori Zengel wants you to send her a recent photo of you or your family. So far, she has received six pix. Don't be camera-shy, please! A photo directory is a Godsend for new people ... as well as those of us older folks who sometimes have a hard time connecting names and faces. Lori's contact info is at the bottom of this newsletter. Thank you.



MISC.

- Pastor Tom will be out of the office through next Tuesday. Pastor Jenn from Grace Lutheran Church is available to provide pastoral care for us during his absence. She may be reached at 570-764-5333 or pastor-jenn@rocketmail.com.
- Don't forget that Beth Alexander is looking for more worship assistants, particularly cup ministers. Susan Warren responded to last week's plea from Beth ... and, by golly, there Susan was at Sunday's service, helping to lead the liturgy. Let Beth know if you, too, are ready to serve in this way.
- The church office is running low on the gas cards and Walmart cards we hand out to visitors who need assistance. If you're able, please help us out by donating some. Probably the \$10 cards are the best. Thanks.
- 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 2021 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.

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS



Sarah Barton - 07/03
Karen Stuart - 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
Kirsten Ebbesen - 07/26
Ian Medley - 07/27
Benjamin Claussen - 07/29

UPCOMING DATES

This Sunday:
10 a.m. - Worship, Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Wednesday, July 7:
NO Bible study

Pastor Tom is on vacation through July 6.



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