



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

MEET OUR TEACHERS

By Sharon Simmons, outreach coordinator

This month, we're highlighting the dedicated teachers in the St. Stephen family –



the ones who make a living by teaching at Killearn Lakes, DeSoto Trail, Hawks Rise and Oak Ridge. From left in this photo, taken just before school commenced last year: Jen Reece, Andrea Notley, Colleen Holdcraft and Donna Schiffer. July's Noisy Offering will go to purchase gift cards for them to use while setting up their classrooms for the 2024-25 school year. (Photo by Colin Hackley)

Born into a family of teachers, Jen Reece grew up in Urbandale, Iowa. She attended Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa, an ELCA college that offered a dual major in music education and music therapy. After graduation, she did an internship in Tallahassee in 2001, sponsored through the National Music Therapy Organization. She and husband Chris returned in 2003, when she joined the faculty of Gretchen Everhart School working in music therapy and education. In 2010 Jen earned her master's in special education with a concentration in autism. In 2014 she began teaching a special education class of elementary- and middle-school-age children. In 2023 she earned her educational specialist degree in curriculum and instruction with a concentration in special education and autism. This fall, Jen will join the faculty of Hawks Rise Elementary. The Reeces love St. Stephen, where Jen has used her beautiful voice singing duets with Chris or just singing during the liturgy.

Andrea Notley, a native of North Dakota, did her undergraduate work at Mayville State University, graduating in 1995. She taught in North Dakota until 1998, when she and her family moved to Tallahassee. She taught in a preschool until 2002, when she joined the faculty at Desoto Trail Elementary School. Andrea works with preschool-age children and says this age group is special because "they are excited about everything they learn. It is energizing." Andrea joined St. Stephen in 2004 and loves the family feeling and fellowship, along with community projects with which she can be involved. She serves on the Outreach Committee and coordinates St. Stephen's participation in the ECHO backpack project and the Christmas Connection. She was previously the education director.

Born in Florida, Colleen Holdcraft began her journey to teaching by earning her A.A. at St. Petersburg Junior College and B.S. in elementary education at Florida State. She started teaching in Marietta, Georgia, where she taught kindergarten, first grade and third grade. Her return to Tallahassee found her working in a third-grade class at Hartsfield Elementary in 2019, and when COVID arrived she transitioned to an online video class, teaching English to Chinese students. She returned to kindergarten at Killearn Lakes Elementary in 2021. Colleen says she likes 5-year-olds because of their "carefree, innocent love of learning." She especially loves working with the parents of her students and honors the responsibility of building trust with her students. Colleen is also known around St. Stephen as a lector, choir member, dancer and assisting minister.

Donna Schiffer, born and raised in a military family, traveled a lot as a child. Born in California, she traveled to many duty stations in the U.S. and around the world before the family settled in Jacksonville, where she started high school. She attended FSU and earned a B.S. and M.S. in special education. Her teaching career began in Flagler County, but she missed Tallahassee and returned to teach in Gadsden County for six years and 31 years in Leon County, all of them at Oak Ridge Elementary School. Her classes comprise third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students in a self-contained full-time class. Her students have a variety of exceptional needs, but Donna relishes the opportunity to help her students grow academically and prepare them for the next academic step. She loves providing mentorship to students but also recognizing parental needs. She joined St. Stephen in 2016 and loves the small, intimate church. She is very grateful for this “nurturing, accepting faith community.”

POLITICS AND RELIGION: A BIT OF PASTOR’S SERMON

... Today’s readings [including the one about the beheading of John the Baptizer] are about prophets and a holy inheritance that the followers of Jesus are promised to receive, but they’re really about us. Will we listen to the lessons learned or continue to tread down those paths that lead to disgusting behavior?

Am I making a political statement? :-) It’s hard not to when you try to preach truth, but one must be wary in the merging of politics and religion – because then we start to think that our problems are solved with the posting of the Ten Commandments in classrooms or mandatory prayer in schools. Those mandates are paths that lead to misery and cruelty because religion is not immune to greed or temptations that come from unchecked power.

The mixing of politics and religion will never lead people to actions of the heart....



BEFORE YOU GO...

- For June, we received \$20,295 in unrestricted giving and had expenses of \$23,267.21, so we had to dip into the Gap Fund for **\$2,972.21**.
- Our congregational meeting is set for Aug. 11. Watch for further details.
- There probably won’t be a newsletter 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

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
Astrid van der Mark - 08/02
Doug Mann - 08/06
Sharon Simmons - 08/09
Caroline Collins - 08/14



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:

10 a.m. - Sew for Hope meets in FH

This Sunday:

9 a.m. - Book study
10 a.m. - Worship, Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
4 p.m. - Congolese Christian worship in FH



Monday, July 22:

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

Wednesday, July 23:

5 p.m. - TIMA 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>.

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The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor

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