



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

### NOISY OFFERING IS THIS SUNDAY

Thanks to Outreach Coordinator Sharon Simmons, we're devoting this month's Noisy Offering to the St. Stephen people who teach in our community. This Sunday! That's the day. Because I get forgetful on Sunday mornings, I just now wrote a check (I know – not noisy – sorry) and stuck it in my wallet. I guarantee I'll forget all about it until I'm sitting in church Sunday and Pastor speaks the words "Noisy Offering." I'll momentarily panic but then, feeling pretty darn smart, reach into my back pocket. You probably have a better plan. You're so clever, you Lutherans.



Here's a list of the teachers who will put our Noisy Offerings to good use:

- Terri Schmitt, Nims Middle
- Donna Schiffer, Oak Ridge Elementary
- Jen Reece, Gretchen Everhart School
- Andrea Notley, DeSoto Trail Elementary
- Colleen Holdcraft, Killearn Lakes Elementary

### BACKPACK DONORS, IT'S DEADLINE TIME



In addition to Noisy Offering Day, this Sunday is also ECHO Backpack Day. Remember? If you're one of the people who got a student-in-need's info from Andrea, you agreed to buy a new backpack, stuff it with two new back-to-school outfits plus socks and undies, and bring it to church by July 23. Make sure to mark the backpack with your name OR the number of the unidentified child you adopted. See Andrea if you have questions.

### GET SET FOR OUR OPEN FORUM

There's still time to complete the three homework questions in preparation for our Open Forum meeting July 30. "I've received some feedback about the question asking to rank characteristics found in healthy churches," Pastor Tom said. "This question is not asking you to rank where you think St. Stephen is, but to rank which ones would be most important to you in any healthy congregation – on a scale of 1-9."

Please pay close attention to Pastor Tom's last sentence! While Pastor was on vacation, your newsletter editor interpreted that question incorrectly – and might have influenced you to do the same. Your editor has submitted a new reply to the question! You might want to as well. Here are the nine characteristics we were asked to rank:

- \*Anyone can serve.
- \*Conflicts get resolved.
- \*Leaders are not controlling.
- \*No one is told how to vote.
- \*People belong to a community.
- \*People can be their true selves.
- \*People find Jesus.
- \*There's limited drama.
- \*There's passionate ministry.



Now, here are the two previous questions we also were asked to consider:

- "What is the primary thing that inspired you to become a member here?"
- "What do you dream about for the future of St. Stephen?"

“These results will be shared at the meeting on the 30th,” Pastor Tom said, “and will help guide us in fruitful conversation about future decisions and ministries.” You may drop off your responses in the box in the narthex this Sunday, or email them to Lori in the church office.

## CONNECTING WITH NEW REFUGEE FAMILIES

*By Sharon Simmons, outreach coordinator*

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU, wonderful members of St. Stephen, for your generous gifts of housewares and volunteer time for the recent World Refugee Day event. Your gifts were gratefully received by over 200 client families. Over 100 community volunteers showed up to organize and welcome some of Tallahassee’s newest residents. Included from St. Stephen (in addition to me) were Pastor Tom, Caroline and Keith Collins, Barb Ehlmann, Barb Sullivan, Terri Schmitt, Beth Alexander, Erik Robinson and Ron Hartung, who enlisted help from his brother-in-law Mark Heidorn (a Grace member). Each of us contributed to the success of the event through our prayers, our donations and our gifts of time.



The Tallahassee Refugee Connection Committee held a debriefing session last week. I’ve been asked to join this group and am looking forward to participating. Let me share some of the needs and general information with you.

IRC has received 16 families in the last 30 days, so there’s a list of additional items that will be crucial in furnishing new homes for them. New is nice; gently used items are fine, but they’ve got to be clean. Immediate needs are:

- A couch (no sofa beds).
- Metal bed frames.
- Silverware
- Plates.
- A sewing machine.
- Pots and pans.
- One large pot (8-10 quarts).
- One large frying pan (12 inches).
- Twin sheets and blankets.
- Queen sheets.
- Towels (kitchen and bath).



We’ll continue to collect cleaning supplies and toiletries in the fellowship hall, but if you have any of the other items, let me know and I’ll arrange for a pickup.

If you want to donate small items that are not on the requested list, you can take them to the IRC office (1310 Cross Creek Circle, Suite A) and drop them in the Goodwill donation boxes outside. Goodwill gives IRC vouchers to give to clients, to get items they need that have not been donated.

In addition to household items, IRC is looking for volunteers to:



- Be youth mentors.
- Be English tutors.
- Transport families to the DMV and the bank.
- Help train folks to ride the bus in town. If any of these activities speak to your heart, call IRC (850-391-9610) to begin the vetting process. You must have a background check to participate.

In September the IRC office will be moving from its Cross Creek location to new offices by the Florida Lottery building. The new space is under renovation. Because of your generosity, great things are happening in Tallahassee.

## MINISTRY OF SILLY HATS

Pastor Tom's message for the kids Sunday focused on the frolicsome side of God. From the Gospel lesson on sowing seeds, he told them, you might picture a God who painstakingly prepares each mound of black soil and inserts each tiny seed. And you might picture a God who's just as fussy when it comes to dispensing love. Not true, Pastor Tom exclaimed. He demonstrated as if he were a goofy gardener in a silly hat, flinging seeds all over the place. God loves us beyond measure, he assured the kids. "We thank you for reminding us," he prayed aloud to God, "to be ridiculous with our love." (Photo by quick-thinking Beth Alexander)



## 'SOMETIMES WE ARE HARD SOIL': EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

... In the parable of the sower, and in my experience, it doesn't help for the preacher to tell us that we need to be better soil. It may be true, but it never inspires. In the parable of the kayak [which Pastor Tom shared], it doesn't help for the preacher to tell us to be better paddlers. It might be true, but you might be struggling.



Sometimes we are cracked, rocky and hard soil. And sometimes we are tired paddlers, who forget to communicate, or drop the oar altogether and become unable to help ourselves or others. For these, we are reminded that there's a God who is abundant. There's a God who ... lavishly wastes good seed upon all varieties of soil. A God with currents that move us....

One of the problems with Christianity is that it is so easy to think God raised Jesus for a select few. There's no grace in that belief. God doesn't push us along or pour out forgiving grace because we deserve it. It's all done because this God can't stop loving humanity. No matter what we do, God can't stop loving the world.

And when we know this truth and experience it in our own lives, if we live it out every week at this table, where everyone is welcome and fed, then we experience grace, and with God's help we might even show grace to others. What a harvest that would be.

## MORE GOOD NEWS FROM KidSAFE

Here's a photo of our own Barb Ehlmann, president of KidSafe (aka Lutheran Social Services of North Florida), sent by Executive Director Dottie Hinkle. You'll



be proud of the work they're doing. Dottie writes: "Last week Barbara and I delivered two new infant car seats for tiny ones to the TMH Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, for the nurses and volunteer cuddlers to use to accustom the babies to a car seat. This is part of the process for giving the babies some experience with the world, since many of them have been in the NICU for several weeks with limited exposure to different situations. These seats were special orders for babies who weigh just 4 pounds and were an LSSNF donation to the wonderful work of the NICU team." That's Dottie on the right. In the middle is Monica Tucker, nurse manager, children's services. Monica is holding KidSafe's LOOK BEFORE YOU LOCK static cling to remind parents to always check the back seat – even if they're sure their child isn't there. Most hot-car deaths are unintentional, Dottie says, and result from memory failures. TMH will include those clings in their children's discharge packets.



## ‘CALL IT PATIENCE’

By Karen E. Olson (Excerpt from the May 3, 1987, Tallahassee Democrat)

[Editor’s note: As a newspaper reporter for many years, Karen focused primarily on the have-nots. This heartbreaking snippet, about the nearby town of Gretna, is from an award-winning project of hers.]

Maybe it was the spirit of Rosie Mabry that kept bringing us back to Gretna. You can’t miss her hodgepodge hovel of cardboard and tar paper, two blocks behind Town Hall. The back yard accommodates an abandoned outhouse, a rusty Pinto on blocks, a heap of jars, a roll of fencing and a display of Coca-Cola posters.

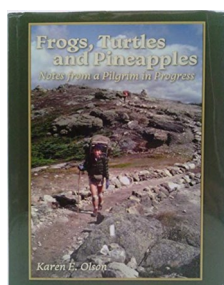
Sometime this spring, officials plan to replace the clutter with a new \$18,000 home for Mabry and her brother, who is blind. Until then, the 80-year-old woman keeps hobbling out on swollen feet to rake her fallen pecan leaves. Call it patience.

“I don’t know when they’re going to put a new house in,” she says, ever pleasant and ever placid. “It’s just like the preacher said, ‘You got to wait on the Lord.’”

... Dig hard enough, and you can probably find an echo of Gretna almost anywhere. But does that make the situation less newsworthy, or more so? Does that make us less willing to care, or more so?

What you find 30 miles west of Tallahassee is a place where the misery is concentrated to a point where it’s just too painful to ignore....

*You’ll find this and more of Karen’s stories in the book “Frogs, Turtles and Pineapples: Notes From a Pilgrim in Progress,” available at church or from Karen.*



## MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Here’s a breathless announcement from Andrea “Grams” Notley: “My son Nick and his beautiful wife just had a daughter July 15. Ava Juliet weighed 7 pounds 13 ounces. Grams couldn’t be happier, and the rest of the family likes her too!” Mighty cute.
- Just spotted this on St. Stephen’s Facebook page, posted by Caroline Collins: “I bought my ticket to see ‘Mary Poppins Jr.’ at Young Actors Theatre on Saturday 7/22 at 2 p.m. I understand our own Graham Reese plays a leading role. Who else is attending the Saturday matinee?” Thanks for the reminder, Caroline. Quick, people: Go to [www.youngactorstheatre.com](http://www.youngactorstheatre.com) to get your tickets. Break a leg, Graham.
- Thanks to Care & Hospitality Coordinator Margaret Bowers, we have an easy way to donate meals to Pastor Emeritus Emory Hingst and Ann. Here’s the link: [Meals For Emory & Ann Hingst via Take Them A Meal](#). It tells you everything you need to know, including their food preferences. If you have any questions, see Margaret.
- Pastor Tom says our Justice & Mercy Fund could use replenishing, in case you’re able to contribute. Many thanks.
- Speaking of contributing: Pastor announced Sunday that last month’s Noisy Offering raised \$233 for the ECHO backpack drive. That’s in addition to all the backpacks and back-to-school clothes that so many of you are donating. Amazing.



- Want a sweet cat? One of these two might be just perfect for you. That’s Myrtle on the left, and Gigi’s on the right. Each one is 4, shy, spayed, up-to-date on her shots, and micro chipped. Financial help is available for food and veterinary care. To find out more, you may contact the Leon County Humane Society, (850) 224-9193, 413 Timberlane Road, [www.leoncountyhmane.org](http://www.leoncountyhmane.org). You’ll find flyers attached to this



newsletter. If you can’t adopt either cat, please share the flyers to help spread the word.

- There's still room for more bottled water in our fellowship hall. The water we're donating is for our friends at the Kearney Center, in response to Sharon's request. Deadline is the end of the month.
- Any vacation highlights? We know one St. Stephen family went to London, one went to NYC, one went to North Carolina, one went to North Georgia. Your editor is planning a trip to Woodville, or maybe even Homerville. How about you? Been anywhere special lately? Have a photo to share? A story to tell? Send it in!
- 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>.



## UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

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

Val Sullivan - 08/17

Marilyn Larson - 08/22

Greta Scavone - 08/23

Jerry Harrison - 08/24

Andrea Notley - 08/26

Susan Warren - 08/26

Melissa Barton - 08/27



## IN THE WEEK AHEAD

**This Sunday:**

**9 a.m.** - Book study

**10 a.m.** - Worship, Eighth Sunday after Pentecost



If you have news or photos to share, please send them to Lori at [sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com](mailto:sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com).

Don't forget our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/ststephentallahassee>.

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The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor