



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

### A ROOMFUL OF IDEAS

In its nearly 67 years as a congregation, St. Stephen has never been short of ideas. So suggestions came fast and furious at Sunday's Open Forum. They ranged from the routine ("How about trying to attract more young people?") to the adventurous ("How about converting part of the old sanctuary into an affordable studio apartment?").

Remember – these are just ideas, not detailed proposals. As discussions continue in future forums, we'll see which ones actually develop legs, and maybe even wings. But for now, they're tantalizing possibilities. Some apply specifically to our internal ministry work, some to our external mission work ... and some to both. Some are familiar to old-timers; others are bold and new.

"Denise and I were thrilled by the energy and ideas for possible ministries," said Pastor Tom, who led Sunday's session with President Denise Bookwalter. "In some churches, I had to work hard to get people to care. I am so thankful for the people of St. Stephen because it doesn't take a lot of effort to get them to care!"



For those who weren't taking notes, or those who couldn't take part, here's a review of the action from Sunday's Open Forum.

**FEEDBACK QUESTIONS:** Given out in advance as homework assignments

**"Why did you decide to join St. Stephen?"**



- Because St. Stephen is a welcoming church. (15 respondents)
- Because of the pastor at the time I joined. (9)
- Because it follows the Lutheran doctrine of liturgy and grace. (6)
- Because it accepts all people. (5)
- Because of the birth of my child. (2)
- Because of the youth program/Sunday School. (2)
- Because of God/God's presence. (2)
- Because of the location. (1)
- Because I had marriage counseling here. (1)
- Because it's a small church. (1)
- Because it was the only ELCA church around. (1)

**"What do you dream about for the future of St. Stephen?"**

- Undertake more mission activity, local or international. (8 respondents)
- Welcome more children/young adults. (6)
- Grow our congregation. (5)
- Make sure we care for/respect/fairly compensate our pastor/staff. (4)
- Make known God's love. (2)
- Carry out a project with a Black Church; worship with another congregation. (2)
- Host a houseless or immigrant family. (2)
- Bring more variety to our worship, maybe more universal music, maybe not exclusively Lutheran tradition. (2)
- Increase our racial/ethnic diversity. (2)

- **Strengthen our children's ministry. (2)**
- **Participate in more events inside and outside of St. Stephen. (1)**
- **Renew our Vicar Program. (1)**
- **Continue to see new people serve. (1)**
- **Renovate the Sunday School space for other ministries. (1)**
- **Update our kitchen. (1)**
- **Expand our women's ministries (WELCA). (1)**
- **Get our in-person worship population back to pre-COVID numbers. (1)**
- **Consider acquiring more property or at least a larger worship space. (1)**
- **Make our sermons more relevant to young people. (1)**
- **See Graham Reece preach one day, and maybe become a pastor. (1)**



**"How would you rank the characteristics of a healthy church?"**

We were given nine characteristics to choose from. These got the most votes:

- **"People can be their true selves."**
- **"People belong to a community."**
- **"There's passionate ministry."**

**IDEAS THAT SURFACED IN SUNDAY'S OPEN DISCUSSION**

- **Consider converting part of the education building into a studio apartment, perhaps for an immigrant or houseless person.**
- **Convert part of our education building into a small chapel.**
- **Publicize our calendar of events, to remind the congregation of the diversity of groups that use our facilities, and perhaps to inspire further connections with them. *[Editor's note: Starting today, a weekly calendar is appearing in the newsletter.]***
- **Explore ways we can share what we have to build more relationships in the community, especially with people different from us.**
- **Partner with larger churches, using the Manna on Meridian model.**



- **Give thought to how we can draw more children and young adults.**
- **Explore more creative ways to accommodate children in worship.**
- **Upgrade our fellowship hall and kitchen, and make it available to the community.**
- **Remind people just before Holy Communion that all are welcome.**
- **Consider having Pastor Tom do an online "All Are Welcome" video.**
- **Continue to livestream our worship services. For one thing, people church-shop online. Also, not everyone is able to come here in person to worship.**
- **Follow up with absent-from-worship members, particularly newer ones. Could be an individual sending a "We miss you" card, or a coordinated group effort, or both.**
- **Post personal testimonies on our website.**
- **Broaden our social media outreach.**
- **Personally invite people to church.**
- **Serve coffee and simple snacks after church. Maybe start once a month.**
- **Resume our potlucks.**
- **Advertise service-work opportunities to local middle and high schools.**
- **Offer English classes for newly arrived learners of English.**





“One of the feel-good moments for me was to hear how people were concerned with burnout,” Pastor said. “Whether they’re concerned with the pastor or other leaders at St. Stephen, it was encouraging to hear grassroots ideas from a variety of people and see the excitement around them. That, dear St. Stephen, is what helps avoid burnout!”

So, what happens next? “The points lifted up in our brainstorming activity should be thought and prayed over in the next few weeks,” Pastor said. “We are looking at getting together again in September. If people feel compelled by something written or have more ideas, they should write them down for our next meeting.” Thanks, Pastor and President Denise, for such a productive and uplifting forum.

## FINANCIALLY SPEAKING...

Also at the congregational meeting, Treasurer Jennifer Dritt gave us an update on our financial health. Shorthand version: Thumbs up. We're in the black; we have \$35,000 in the bank; we've overspent in some categories and underspent in others, so it all evens out; we've gotten timely donations to tackle big-ticket items that pop up; we're in the summer-giving doldrums, but we expect October through December to be gangbusters as always.



Jen mentioned how grateful she is for the assistance of Office Manager Lori Zengel. Afterward, we asked Lori to refresh our memory on the financial role she plays: “Last year I started the input of the offerings into our database. I am now paying the bills electronically or with credit card (I am not a designated check signer, so Jen is still doing that). I am also updating the revenue and expenses of the budget while Jen is providing oversight and liaison duties.” Then she added: “It is all very new, but I am enjoying the challenge of organizing and making things more efficient to track.”

As anyone who has worked with Lori will tell you, “organizing and making things more efficient” is embedded in her DNA. She’s a treasure. And a treasurer! Sorta. Thanks, Jen and Lori.

## PANTRY PRIDE

*By Pastor Tom*

Here are a few pics from our Saturday workday in the Seminole Manor neighborhood. At right, community member and author Adrian Fogelin stands in front of the home that acts as a food pantry every other week. As she told us in an earlier newsletter, it serves about 250 people per month. Behind her you can see the new screen and trim wood we put up Saturday.



The other picture shows the work crew and Adrian, with the railing work we did on the first workday (June 3) and the new screen on the left. The cost for materials for both projects was just under \$300, covered by a donor who gave directly to the project.

Clockwise from left: Andrea Notley, Adrian again, Andrea Albertin and husband Chico, Sharon Simmons, Colin Hackley and me. *(Photos by Karen Olson)*

## EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM’S SERMON

“Ch-Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes!”

### MORE OUTREACH UPDATES

- BOOST FOR OUR TEACHERS:** We donated \$800 on Noisy Offering Sunday for our own public-school teachers! When asked how she’d spend her \$160, Donna Schiffer replied: “Snacks!” Her kids at Oak Ridge Elementary have to eat lunch very early – so by the afternoon, they get mighty restless. That’s why she buys snacks for them. Usually she uses her own money. Now she can use some of ours. So can Terri Schmitt at Nims, Jen Reece at Gretchen Everhart, Andrea Notley at DeSoto Trail and Colleen Holdcraft at Killlearn Lakes.
- WATERY NEWS:** We went well beyond Sharon Simmons’ goal for bottled water. Sharon had hoped we could donate 12 cases. We donated 15! “Many thanks to the AWESOME members of St. Stephen for the generous donations of water for the residents of Kearney Center,” said our outreach coordinator. “Giving 15 cases was truly amazing.” But there’s always another need, isn’t there? Keep reading.
- SCHOOL SUPPLIES FOR REFUGEE KIDS:** “We have received a request from our friends at IRC,” Sharon says. “They need school supplies for the 50 elementary students who will be starting school in a couple of weeks. The items needed are crayons, composition books, markers, No. 2 pencils, kids’ scissors (rounded tips), reusable water bottles, pencil boxes, glue sticks and dry-erase markers. All these items are tax-exempt for the next week and can be found at Dollar Tree and many other stores. Place them in the fellowship hall, on the pew with the IRC Back to School Supplies sign. Thank you for your support of our youngest and newest residents.”



### CALLING ALL SOD-SLINGERS

By Pastor Tom

This Saturday at 8 a.m. we’ll need a few able bodies to repair the landscape damage from the needed plumbing work under the parking lot. *(This photo shows just one area that needs sod.)* We have four people who can manage the shoveling and wheelbarrow work, but we need a few more hands to put down the sod. If you’ve never done this before, think of it as putting a puzzle together with large square pieces – and all you have to remember is “Green side up!” With a few more people, we’ll get this done in under two hours. Make sure you bring work gloves and a shovel, if you have one.



### MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- The Thursday Night Music Club performance at Ruby Diamond is set for Aug. 10 – one week from today. Tom Buchanan won’t be there this time, but he urges you to come to the show anyway. As some of you know, these shows are always a blast. Tickets are \$16. To get yours, visit <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/thursdaynightmusicclub/958916/r/directemail>.





- 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.
- Those flyers at church seeking a home for a cat are asking people to adopt one kitty, not both. So if you're sharing this news with friends and co-workers, make sure they know it's not a package deal. To find out more about Myrtle or Gigi, contact the Leon County Humane Society, (850) 224-9193, 413 Timberlane Road, [www.leoncountyhmane.org](http://www.leoncountyhmane.org).
- 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.



## UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

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

### Today:

12 p.m. - AI Anon meets in 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, Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

4 p.m. - Congolese Church Group meets in FH

### Monday, Aug. 7:

5 p.m. - TIMA (Tallahassee Martial Arts) meets in FH

### Wednesday, Aug. 9:

10 a.m. - Friendship Star Quilting Group meets in FH

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in FH



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