



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



The sun rises Aug. 23, as a slice of the moon high in the sky says goodbye.

AN EXTRAORDINARY DAY FOR BETH AND DWIGHT

Three months ago, Pastor Tom surprised us at the tail end of the liturgy by announcing that Beth Alexander and Dwight Polivka were engaged. Last



Sunday, he surprised us again – by announcing that, last Saturday, Beth and Dwight were married! Beth swears she wasn't trying to be sneaky. They just wanted a small, brief, low-key event.

“It would have been wonderful to have anyone from church who wanted to be there join us,” she said Monday. “However, that wouldn't have been a low-key event. We just wanted to be married before God and a few family members. For various reasons my family wasn't able to travel, so my very close friends substituted for my blood family. They are my family in many ways. I did have Stephanie and Astrid attend, but both of them have interacted

with Dwight on multiple occasions, and therefore they represented all of St. Stephen for me.”

After the ceremony, Beth said, they left immediately for a long weekend at the beach. “We already had a trip planned to Maryland for Dwight to meet my family,” she said. “His family is awesome.”

And if you're thinking: “Gosh, what can I buy for these two crazy kids? Maybe some kitchen gadget?” You're so kind but, honest, these “kids” have loads of stuff from two households that they're merging. Really. No gifts, please.

MASKS? JUST A BIT LONGER

By Pastor Tom

The Church Council met Sunday after the liturgy and, among other things, discussed our current mask requirement for in-person worship. After going around the table, we agreed to keep the current mask requirement in place until two things happen:

1. Our community infection rate declines further. (As of this morning, the CDC still rated our COVID community level as “high.”)
2. And the new COVID booster becomes available.



Almost everyone I've spoken with is ready to make masks optional. Most of the Council is, too. But we're reminded that when we wear masks, we help protect those around us. We show them we value their health and welfare. Thank you for your patience as we wait just a bit longer before lifting the mandatory mask policy.

A 'GRANTCHESTER' QUESTION

It's rare to encounter God's forgiveness in a TV series, but that's what happened recently in the season finale of "Grantchester" on PBS' "Masterpiece Theatre."

A vicar was asked: Does God forgive anything, if you turn to him? He answered:



"Yes, but it's also up to us to respond to his forgiveness through repentance, atonement and making sure it never happens again."

As it turns out, Pastor Tom is also a "Grantchester" fan. We asked for his take on that "Yes, but" response. "The question about forgiveness with strings attached is something the church leans on," he explained. "It promotes the need for the institution to continue working in the world. But even if we take out the institutional church, we find some biblical backing – such as when Jesus said things like, 'Go, your sins are forgiven. Sin no more.'

"Then again," he continued, "there are plenty of counters to that command – Scripture that speaks of God's unconditional grace and forgiveness poured out for the world. So, I side with 'Both/and' [rather than 'Yes, but'] in order for my brain to not explode!

"Lean on the understanding that God forgives everything even when we don't turn to God, but when we do there's a greater opportunity to bask in the forgiveness and sense the atonement that comes freely. This awareness, in faith/belief, will lead to a better foundation that it (whatever 'it' was) might never happen again."

ODE TO THE NEW CHAIRS

St. Stephen has a talent-show tradition of putting goofy lyrics to our psalm tune. Last Sunday, with lyrics he wrote, Rudy Hehn revived that tradition for us. At the end of the liturgy, he led us in chanting The Unknown Psalm. Nicely done!

LEADER: Thank you, Lord, for answer- | ing our prayers.
You have delivered to us these | awesome chairs.

ALL: They came from afar, loaded in big | semi-trucks,
And we got a good deal; they did not | cost big bucks.

LEADER: We now have a sanctuary beautiful | to behold,
A welcome home for the sheep | of your fold.

ALL: A complex task with many people, each play- | ing a part.
We thank each of you from the bottom | of our heart.

LEADER: We now have a comfortable | place to sit
With a soft cushy landing where our bot- | toms can fit.

ALL: So as we join together on Sun- | days to meet,
Let us be grateful for our won- | derful seats.

NOW, ABOUT THE OLD CHAIRS

We've found new homes for all of them. Well, "we" didn't. Outreach coordinator Sharon Simmons did, with special help from Cassandra White. Pastor Tom on Sunday called it our Great Chair Giveaway. Among those places that will now be using our former chairs are ECHO, the Mickee Faust Club, the International Rescue Committee and Unity Church. May they serve you well, friends.



CATCHING UP WITH THE FIXIE CHICKS

By Gina Edwards and Caroline Collins

This is an update about the Fixie Chicks team's involvement in the Habitat for Humanity Women Build project. We were randomly chosen, out of 29 applications, as one of three organizations to "pitch" on Aug. 4 for a chance to win a grant from 100 Women Who Care (WWC).

Women Build chair Kyndra Light and Big Bend Habitat Operations Manager Te'Rel Bowman presented. They explained the Habitat process and shared testimonials from previous Women Build recipients about how homeownership changed their families' lives. This year's prospective homeowner, a veteran with children, will contribute many hours of sweat equity over two years building Habitat homes, including her own, which is already being prepped on Volusia Street.



Over \$21,000 has been raised of the \$35,000 pledged by teams like the Fixie Chicks. With an overall goal of \$85K for this home, team fundraising continues. And the more we can raise, the less Habitat would have to rely on its United Way funding to meet the difference, allowing those funds to be routed to other home builds.

Despite a captivating pitch, we lost to the Alzheimer's Project; however, numerous 100WWC members encouraged us to try again. The Fixie Chicks are optimistic that, despite protracted fundraising, we'll be onsite to build during cooler autumn days.

Many thanks to Barbara Ehlmann, who came to support the Fixie Chicks; she has also joined 100WWC. To contribute to the Women Build project: <https://donorbox.org/women-build-2022-break-the-bias>. For more about 100WWC: <https://www.100wwctlh.org/>

'THE NARROW PATH': EXCERPT FROM PASTOR'S SERMON

... You probably know that Sen. [Liz] Cheney lost her election in the primary this past week. The reason she lost the primary was that she refused to accept the fanatics' command that to belong, you must follow a narrow path and not look up to see what it is doing to other people. But see, by not accepting the fanatics' demand to stay on the narrow path, she is able to see the broader picture of where the narrow path was taking her. She retains her integrity and is therefore set free.

There are others like Liz Cheney who hold their beliefs for the best practices of leadership and strive for processes that they believe will make government work the best; ones who speak words carefully and will not forfeit their integrity just to win. There are others, but it looks to be that their numbers are shrinking....

HAIKU CORNER

By Lex Lutheran

DEER WATCH

On my morning walk,
they managed to ignore me
oh so gracefully.



TWO MINUTES LATER...

This kwazy wabbit
was on his hind legs, munching
on our Blue Daze.

AT THE DOC'S OFFICE

Hand sanitizer?
It's not rubbing in too well.
Nope. It must be soap.



MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Our hearts go out to Barbara Sullivan. Her husband, Jackson, passed away this month. She'll share his obituary once the details for the memorial service are set. Look for it in next week's newsletter. Bless you, Barbara.
- The Noisy Offering this Sunday will benefit Lutheran Disaster Response, addressing the flooding in Kentucky and Texas. Please bring your loose change (or quiet paper money) to church.
- See you right after the liturgy Sept. 25. We've asked Colin Hackley to take a brand-new congregational photo, outside, in the shade. No masks.
- We still need counters. If this is a way you can assist St. Stephen's financial ministry, please let Pastor Tom or Office Manager Lori know.
- The art teacher at Terri Schmitt's school got your shoeboxes and now covets your clean, empty glass jars and bottles for another art project. BYOB to the fellowship hall.
- Remember that from noon to 1 p.m. next Wednesday, Aug. 31, is a free program titled "Supporting Healthy Aging at Health System and Community Levels." It's organized by the FSU College of Medicine's Department of Behavioral Sciences and Social Medicine. To register: https://fsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3eiPb3Afnila6kS.
- Decide whether you want to take part in Lutheran Social Services' upcoming fundraiser on classic French cooking. It's set for 6:30 p.m. Sept. 22 at Publix's Aprons Cooking School, 3521 Thomasville Road. The donation is \$100 per person, \$180 per couple. Email Dottie Hinkle at info@lssnf.org by Sept. 19.



- We suspect there are more pet tales to hear from the St. Stephen faithful. So far we've met two dogs, two cats, horses and cattle. More, please.
- Have any questions for our Church Council members? They're listed on our website, <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/about-us>. Also, remember that Council meetings are open to everyone.
- 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 2022 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



Andrea Notley - 08/26
Susan Warren - 08/26
Melissa Barton - 08/27
Martha Marky - 09/08
Sarah Rumph - 09/08
Greta Langley - 09/09
Bryon Ehlmann - 09/11
Aaron Halvorson - 09/14
Ron Hartung - 09/14
Mary Nesmith - 09/22
Ceilia Greeley - 09/23
Violet Greeley - 09/23
Kirsten Matthis - 09/23
Douglas Bagnall - 09/26
Laura Kimel - 09/28
Sue Williams - 09/28
Don Dowd - 09/30
Melody Duke - 09/30
Jeanette Sickel - 09/30

UPCOMING DATES

This Sunday, August 28:

9 a.m. - Documentary: "A Time for Burning" in fellowship hall

10 a.m. - Worship with communion, Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost/Noisy Offering



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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