



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



WHEW!

Just before Hurricane Michael made landfall in 2018, it jogged left – good news for St. Marks and Tallahassee, bad news for Mexico Beach and Marianna. Just before Hurricane Idalia made landfall this week, it jogged right – good news for St. Marks and Tallahassee, bad news for Keaton Beach and Madison.

Good news is great. But, boy oh boy, the accompanying suspense is murder. Just one more item to add to the list of Things To Ask The Almighty when, one day, we're all sitting around the table with God and shooting the breeze. Meanwhile, God bless everyone who did get roughed up by this storm. Three more months of hurricane season. God help us.

ELBOWS AT THE READY

Friends, it's time to bring back the fist bump and the elbow greeting. Recent COVID cases in our town, and in our congregation, are reminding us that the pandemic may be over but the virus is still with us. So is the common cold.

So it's time for us to heed the assisting ministers when they urge us to "safely" share the peace. As we've discovered in recent years, a fist bump or peace sign works just as well as a handshake or hug. Some of you no doubt will mask up. Remember, too, that hand sanitizer is also a gift from God – and that we have three separate pump bottles in the sanctuary, ready to give you a squirt before communion. As we await the arrival of the newest flu shots and COVID vaccine, let's be careful out there. And in here.



CONSIDERING THE UNTHINKABLE

Hardly a day goes by without news of a shooting or other act of violence in our country and even our town. In a store. In a school. Even in a place of worship. Just the idea of it seems profane. Many of us, especially we older ones, shake our heads and wonder how our world went so far off the rails. Then we move on, secretly convinced that such an unthinkable attack could never happen where we worship. And it probably won't. But it could.

So the unthinkable must become thinkable. That's why the Church Council invited Leon County Sheriff's Capt. Jimmy Goodman to conduct an information session for us after church last Sunday. His advice went far beyond our church setting. Wherever we go, he wants us to be much more aware of our safety and our surroundings. In a restaurant or a club or wherever we are, he wants you to check where the exits are – just in case. If your instincts are telling you that something bad is about to happen, he wants you to follow those instincts. Don't grab your coat. Don't look for your purse. Just get out.



Capt. Goodman is more than just a tough cop. He also demonstrated enormous compassion for the victims of violence and their loved ones. He strongly supported counseling for survivors. He even said that he regularly seeks counseling himself, and urges his deputies to do the same when they need it. And for us at church, he had this advice: Be welcoming and kind, but also be smart. For example, he said we should establish rules (such as "No backpacks"), and follow them.

“I kept thinking of Jesus' advice to be ‘wise as serpents and gentle as doves,’” Pastor Tom said. “We are called to do God's work, to keep others safe and to respond with love in all things.”

Here are more nuggets from the captain’s talk:

- **On average, it takes law enforcement three minutes to show up at the scene of an active attack. That’s incredibly fast – but an attacker can do a frightful amount of damage in three minutes.**
- **Checking the exits means more than just doors. Might be windows to open or break. Might be a ladder to climb.**
- **Have a plan, including at home. Have you discussed, in the event of a fire, how each member of your family would get out – and where you would all meet up outside? Do you have a fire extinguisher? Do you know where it is? Do you know how to operate it?**



- **Challenge your assumptions. Most of us, hearing a pop-pop-pop, explain it away with something comforting: “Must be fireworks.” But realistically speaking, except on the Fourth of July and New Year’s Eve, who sets off fireworks? The better impulse might be: “Is someone shooting?”**
- **In several school shootings, curious teachers have opened the door and looked down the hallway, sometimes with tragic results. His simple advice to teachers: Lock the classroom door. Most shooters know they have only three minutes. So if they encounter a locked door, they move on.**
- **Those rubber doorstops that you use to prop open a door open also work remarkably well to keep a door closed, and to keep a bad guy out.**
- **If there’s a bad guy inside your building, don’t just hide and hope. Get out if you can. Adopt the attitude of “I’m not gonna let you near me.”**
- **If you have a gun, keep it locked up. Officers know that most kids involved in shootings got their guns from someone else’s unlocked car.**
- **Of course, if trouble erupts, call 911.**



“Thank you to the more than 30 people who came to the safety meeting,” Pastor Tom said. “As Capt. Goodman said, it was a heavy subject, but important for preparations and safety in the world we live in. We give thanks to officers like him who have a passion for being guardians.”

You can reach Capt. Goodman at 850-606-3300 or goodmanj@leoncountyfl.gov.

EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM’S ‘LET IT BE’ SERMON

... [Paul writes that] your bodies, however they are today, are holy and acceptable to God. You’re good, you’re acceptable, you’re worthy.



In fact, Paul delves into neuroscience (sort of) by stating that this transformation occurs through the renewing of minds. Whatever we call it, we recognize that religion and science are not opposed to one another. Paul taught that the way we think is subject to change and – more importantly, I think – that “as we think, so shall we be changed.”

He goes on to say that grace, the gift from God, is behind our transformation and renewal. We don’t just get there by sheer determination or willpower. There are no diets. There are no drugs. We don’t achieve it by being born into a certain family or within a certain country. We get there by letting it be. Knowing that the will of God is in action, in and around us, and that the mercies of God descend upon those we disagree with, too.

This part comes out with his warning about being overly self-important: “Don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought to.” You’re you because of God and God’s grace....

MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Ruth Hartung sends her sincere thanks to all of you who've prayed, written, emailed or called after her recent eye-muscle surgery. It's going to take her eyes a while to adjust.
- Joey Bonfanti put the railroad tracks on our colorful nursery rug to good use on Sunday. *(Photo by Margaret Bowers)*
- Some of us have been having fun taking meals to Ann and Pastor Emeritus Emory Hingst. Thanks to Care & Hospitality Coordinator Margaret Bowers, we have an easy way to do it. 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.
- 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

Annette Claussen - 09/06
Martha Marky - 09/08
Sarah Rumph - 09/08
Greta Langley - 09/09
Bryon Ehlmann - 09/11
Aaron Halvorson - 09/14
Ron Hartung - 09/14
Ceilia Greeley - 09/23
Violet Greeley - 09/23
Kirsten Matthis - 09/23
Laura Kimel - 09/28
Sue Williams - 09/28
Don Dowd - 09/30
Melody Duke - 09/30
Jeanette Sickel - 09/30



IN THE WEEK AHEAD

Today:

12 p.m. - Al 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

This Sunday:

9 a.m. - Book study
10 a.m. - Worship, Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
4 p.m. - Congolese Church Group meets in FH

Monday, Sept. 4 (office closed for Labor Day:

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

Wednesday, Sept. 6:

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



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