



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



### TWENTY YEARS ON

*God, we remember  
September 11 with  
sighs too deep for words.*

## THE CHINESE CONNECTION

By Dave Suhrweir

In 2011, I began serving as a volunteer mentor at Gilchrist Elementary School. In the fall of 2016, I was asked to work with “Freddy,” a fifth-grade student from China. His teacher asked me to start by teaching him simple instructions such as “sit down” or “line up at the door.” His father was a visiting scholar at FSU and a professor in China. After the father’s one-year contract expired, the family returned to China. Freddy’s parents recommended me to two other visiting-



scholar Chinese families to tutor their children, etc., etc. To date, I have tutored nine Chinese children. All have returned to their homes

in China. Currently, I tutor five of those students once a week one-on-one for an hour over Skype.

All families know Cindy and I are Christians. We have shared some basic teachings of Christianity and sought to be examples of Christian love. Some of them have attended our church service and our Advent bonfire event. Freddy was even part of the act in an Amazing Zing performance in a church talent show.

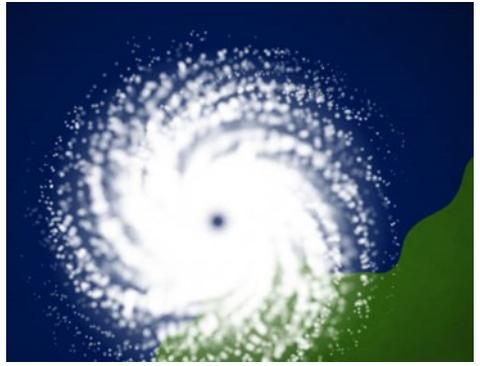
Freddy just graduated from ninth grade (the end of middle school in China). The very high-pressure exams at the end of ninth grade determine the quality of high school a student will attend. There are seven exams covering various subjects. Freddy got five A’s and two B’s! One of the A’s was in English. “Peter” competed in an English Speech competition, getting first place in Shandong Province and third place in national competition. (The “place” is not an individual, but rather a group of 10.) Two of my students are reading “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” with me. (I had forgotten the high-level vocabulary in that book.)

The families have become dear friends. And the kids are like grandchildren to us.

## AID AFTER IDA

After Sue Canning went online to donate toward Hurricane Ida relief, she wrote down the how-to information for the rest of us – in case we'd been meaning to donate but hadn't quite got there yet.

- **Online:** Donate at [elca.org/disaster](http://elca.org/disaster). You can specify U.S. hurricane response.
- **Mail:** Send a check to ELCA, PO Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009. Put "Hurricane Ida" in the memo line.
- **Phone:** Call the ELCA at 800-638-3522, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. weekdays. You're calling the donation processing center at the above address.



## REACHING OUT TO HAITI

By Erin Kenney

St. Stephen's Outreach Committee has unanimously voted to support the earthquake relief effort in Haiti. In the *Tallahassee Democrat*, Pastor Hugues Balde of local Haitian church Eglise Bateau de L'Evangile de Jesus Christ asked for help. After speaking with him about specific needs, the Outreach Committee decided to donate up to \$500 to Pastor Balde's church for earthquake relief. He has many connections with people in Haiti and knows where donations can be best utilized.

If you feel called to support individually, you can write a check to St. Stephen with "Haitian earthquake relief" in the memo line. We'll have a separate account set up for donations, as will his church. A few members of the Outreach Committee will then go meet Pastor Balde with the donation so we can start to develop a relationship with his church.

## MY JOURNEY BACK TO CHURCH

By Judi Duffy

I was baptized and raised in a high Episcopal church and endured six months of once-a-week catechism to be confirmed. It was hard studying – ask me what I remember! Then came the big day when we fifth-graders could receive Holy Communion. Those were the days of fasting before communion. One Sunday two of us pre-teens fainted at the altar rail, and Father Shirley decided it wasn't a good idea for young people to skip breakfast after all.



Years later I was a single parent, teaching nursing, and raising two children whom I sometimes took to Sunday school. I thought the Sabbath was a "day of rest," so I rested.

When Liz and Tom were grown and back on the East Coast, I moved from California to Tallahassee. I was working for Big Bend Hospice, usually covering the weekends so the other nurses could take their children to Sunday school. One day, a Lutheran pastor in Panama City said, "Maybe you could use some spiritual refreshment yourself." I thought a lot about that, and later that same pastor pointed out how rewarding and heartwarming it is to belong to a church community family. I visited several Episcopal and Lutheran churches. After several visits to warm and friendly St. Stephen Lutheran Church, and after talking with interim Pastor Mary, I made one of the best decisions of my life.

*That's Judi's story. What's yours? We'd love to read it. Send it to [rrhartung1@gmail.com](mailto:rrhartung1@gmail.com).*

## ANYTHING BUT FURY

If you never met Agnes Furey but just heard her name, you might picture her perpetually filled with anger. St. Stephen met her several times, including five years ago when she was our guest speaker for Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday. Far from furious, Agnes spoke of the beauty of forgiveness.



Around town, across the country, she became famous for one particular act of forgiveness: She forgave the man who murdered her daughter and grandson. Through her Achieve Higher Ground efforts, she became a tireless advocate for restorative justice. Last month, after contracting COVID, she died. She was 84.

May Agnes Furey rest in peace. A memorial celebration of her remarkable life is being streamed from United Church of Christ at 1:45 p.m. Friday. Visit <https://vimeo.com>.

## SMITE THOSE WEEDS!

By David Butler, building and grounds coordinator



Once again it's time to get the azalea bed along Meridian Road as weed-free as possible. With the azaleas trimmed back, it will be very easy to get the job done. We need as many hands as possible. So please mark your calendars for 8-10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 9. Please bring gloves and a pair of regular hand pruners. If you have a kneeling pad, that might help. Coffee, juice and doughnuts provided. RSVP at 850-510-2994, text or phone.

## FOR TOMORROW'S DOCTORS

Following up on Susan Warren's recent Five Wishes talk: The medical students at FSU's College of Medicine encounter their first "patients" during their first summer in school. Those are the patients who made provisions in their will to have their bodies used for medical education and research. It's an extraordinary gift of untold value to the students. If you're interested and would like to learn more, visit <https://med.fsu.edu/giving/willed-body-program>.



## 'WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?': AN EXCERPT FROM SUNDAY'S SERMON

Mark 7:24-37

"... What is wrong with you, Jesus? Really? You were in Tyre, a Gentile city, and a Gentile woman came to you begging you to help her daughter. I get it – you and the disciples were tired.... You wanted to hide away in the house. But you are on this woman's turf, and she begged you for help to heal her daughter. And you said, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.'

"What were you thinking, Jesus? What was wrong with you, ... to say something like that? I guess we will never know. But we can't condone it.... You called her a dog. It was wrong and offensive. But we've been there too. I have said things that were wrong and offensive. Our words have hurt people.

"Today, we get to focus on what this 'little' person did. Mark reminds us that we want to emulate and be like the 'little people' in the Gospel. They are often not even named. Her words in response to Jesus' offensive remark began an amazing transformation in Jesus.... He had been quite segregated from those outside of his culture and religion up to now. This woman opened Jesus' eyes....

"... Her words and courage, the unnamed foreign woman, transformed Jesus to realize the potential of his ministry. Her words pushed Jesus to be opened to something God had planned all along. An ever-widening circle and all-inclusive embrace from God. So, 'What's wrong with you?' Whatever it is, be assured it is nothing that God cannot fix...."

## MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Margaret Bowers has new grand-twins! Here are Nia and Nico, hanging out with big brother Mateo. Pretty adorable, right?
- This is the last newsletter until Sept. 29. Office Manager Lori is getting some richly deserved time off.
- Remember Nathan's plea for help in his yard? Well, an anonymous member has hired two gentlemen who do yardwork. They'll be coming this Saturday for two hours, to do the grunt work so that on the 18th those from church won't be overwhelmed. If you can come on the 18th, see you between 9 a.m. and noon.
- 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 2021 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](mailto:sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com) or call 850-385-2728.



## UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Greta Langley - 09/09  
Bryon Ehlmann - 09/11  
Aaron Halvorson - 09/14  
Ron Hartung - 09/14  
Jerry Ness - 09/14  
Mary Nesmith - 09/22  
Ceilia Greeley - 09/23  
Violet Greeley - 09/23  
Kirsten Matthis - 09/23  
Connie Taylor - 09/24  
Doug Bagnall - 09/26  
Laura Kimel - 09/28  
Sue Williams - 09/28  
Hilary Dennis - 09/30  
Don Dowd - 09/30  
Melody Duke - 09/30  
Jeanette Sickel - 09/30



## UPCOMING DATES

### This Sunday:

10 a.m. - Worship, Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

### Wednesday, September 15:

Noon - Bible study (online)

### Sunday, September 19:

10 a.m. - Worship, Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

### Sunday, September 26:

10 a.m. - Worship with communion, Eighteenth 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