



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

*Look who greeted me  
on an early-morning  
walk this week.*



## OPEN FORUM FOLLOW-UP

*By Denise Bookwalter, congregational president*

Coming up Oct. 15 (three weeks from this Sunday) is the follow-up to our July open forum. We'll meet in the fellowship hall after the service. First we'll have a discussion, then we'll break into two groups to brainstorm the following topics:



- How can we attract new members – particularly young members – and encourage them to stay?
- How can we build community relations – and build diversity?

You're invited to join one of those two groups. We'll provide snacks to boost your energy, and we'll wrap up by 1 p.m.

## MESSAGE: STOP THE HATE

*By Sharon Simmons, outreach coordinator*

Hymns, prayers and enthusiasm rocked First Presbyterian Church on Friday as it hosted the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II. His "Repairers of the Breach" describes itself as "a national moral movement united across race, class, gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, faith, and other divisions, with the goal of repairing the breaches caused by centuries of systemic oppression and injustice in our country."



Pastor Tom and I joined the ecumenical gathering as participants geared up for a march to the Capitol, to deliver a letter to Florida's political leaders. "We write this letter," one paragraph stated, "calling on you to cease and desist with the hate against Black history, hate against wokeness, hate against trans people, hate against immigrants coming out of your mouths every day."

The songfest started with "I Want Jesus to Walk With Me," followed by an a cappella rendition of "Someone's Hurting My Brother and It's Gone on Far Too Long." That one brought the congregation to their feet, singing with vigor.

The first speaker was David Hogg, from the March for Our Lives organization. [You might remember him as a student survivor of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School mass shooting.] He reminded the audience that hatred is not a mental illness, nor is racism, nor is using language that incites violence.

Politicians use mental illness as an excuse for gun violence – but actually, he said, racism, hatred, poverty and militarism are leading indicators of gun violence in our country. He encouraged attendees to call out people who use rhetoric that encourages others to commit violence.

The Rev. Dr. Barber said that knowing why we are gathering and marching is the first rule of peaceful protest and civil disobedience. “We must be clear,” he said, “to inform legislators what we are doing.” He encouraged us to work toward a



March 2024 “simultaneous gathering” in 30 capital cities across the nation. He reminded us that Sept. 15 was the 60th anniversary of the church bombing in Birmingham, where four girls were killed as they studied about “loving their enemies.” And he reminded us that we can no longer sit on the sidelines but must call out all attacks on Blacks, Latinos, women, LGBTQ+ people and immigrants in

our country. “Words of hate,” he said, “create an ethos of hate.”

Many in the group then marched to the Capitol while a trumpeter led the way with “When the Saints Go Marching In.”

*Here are some declarations from Repairers of the Breach, taken from a flier Sharon passed along:*

- ***“Poverty is a policy choice, reflecting both low wages and high costs of living. These two conditions make it hard to meet basic needs and easy to fall into debt. In Florida, between 2018-2020, there were 9,539,000 poor and low-income people, accounting for 44.5% of the population.”***
- ***“Across the country, approximately 1,000 people are still dying from COVID every week and millions of people lack access to health care.”***
- ***“Extreme heat, storms and drought are becoming more common, with poor and low-income communities at greatest risk.”***
- ***“Across the nation, a surge of attacks on voting rights and on the rights of women and LGBTQ+ people are denying basic rights to millions of people.”***
- ***“Government spending that prioritizes war, mass incarceration, excessive policing, and anti-immigrant forces is leading to greater violence, fear and criminalization of the poor.”***

To find out more about Repairers of the Breach, visit <https://www.breachrepairers.org/>.



## GOD BLESS OUR VALZ



If you’re new to St. Stephen, the phrase “the Valz” probably doesn’t mean much to you. For the rest of us, though, it brings to mind Val Sullivan and Val Kibler, two of our longtime, beloved and delightful members. It’s been a while since they’ve been able to worship with us in person. They’ve had some challenges. A week ago, Pastor Tom sent out this update to the St. Stephen family:

***“Val and Kib returned home to Tallahassee yesterday. The doctors at Shands have determined that a lung transplant is not an option. The focus will be on managing [Val’s] pulmonary hypertension. Please join me in continued intercessory pray for strength and healing. We call on the Great Healer, in times such as this. May God deliver unto us a miracle, for God’s glory. AMEN!”***

## HOW NOISY WILL YOUR OFFERING BE?

The proceeds from this Sunday’s Noisy Offering will go to the KidSafe program at Lutheran Social Services of North Florida. As you gather up your noisy change or write your silent check, remember Barb Ehlmann’s words from last Sunday, when she updated us on KidSafe’s recent accomplishments (giving away 160 child safety seats this year to low-income families) and bold plans (hoping to give away 200 next year). To learn more, visit <https://www.kidsafebigbend.org/>.



# FORGIVENESS: EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

... In the Lord's Prayer we recite, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." Have we done that? It is difficult to be generous like that. Today is a good day to start the habit.



## MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Susan Warren's flower dedication last Sunday was a keeper: "in gratitude for Katharine & Karl's musical talents, which they so willingly share week after week."



- Do you have an anniversary, birthday, special memory or special St. Stephen person or program you'd like to honor? Do what Susan did: Celebrate the occasion by sponsoring the flowers for our service. Sign up on the flower chart in the narthex. The cost is now \$40, which you can place in the offering plate.
- Those two cats whose flyers have been posted for weeks? We're told that they've been adopted. Hallelujah.

- Message from Nathan Basford last Friday: "Don had a great morning. That's Ms. Pam (right), Don's caregiver; Ms. Sydney (left), hospice CNA; and Danyelle (back), former caregiver, who came to visit him this morning. He was all smiles. His shirt says it all: 'Thank you for being a friend.' His Golden Girls!!!!"



- Barbara Sullivan has a conference table with six upholstered armchairs that she's offering for free. The table is 7x4, has rounded corners and is made of solid wood. Call or email Barbara if you're interested: 850-591-7423, [jesull@centurylink.net](mailto:jesull@centurylink.net).
- Sign up to take a meal to Ann and Pastor Emeritus Emory Hingst. 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.

## UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

- 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
- Vivian Halvorson - 10/02
- Debee Meyer - 10/02
- Emery Oates - 10/08
- Janet Lovins - 10/09
- Fred Allen - 10/19
- Isabel Barton - 10/19
- Val Kibler - 10/20
- Dave Suhrweir - 10/21
- Jim Sampson - 10/22
- Audrey Post - 10/24
- Barbara Ehlmann - 10/25
- Graham Reece - 10/26
- Bern Mustian - 10/30





## IN THE WEEK AHEAD

### Today:

Noon - Al-Anon meets in fellowship hall (FH)

7 p.m. - AA meets in FH

### This Friday:

9:30 a.m. - TOPS meets in FH

### This Sunday:

9 a.m. - Book study

9:30 a.m. - Choir practice

10 a.m. - Worship, Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost with Noisy Offering

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



### Monday, Sept. 25:

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

7 p.m. - Compassionate Friends meet in Matthew Room

### Wednesday, Sept. 27:

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](mailto: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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