



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

THIS SUNDAY: NEW MEMBERS!

Get ready to welcome two new members to the congregation on Sunday: Lawana and Sandy Lamb-Daniels. As you may have noticed, they've already become active in the Altar Guild. We asked them for a bit of bio information to pass along.



Lawana (on the left) is a retired Tallahassee Police Department officer. She loves reading and, like Sandy, enjoys listening to music and seeing plays. She keeps busy taking care of Sandy and their two dogs. She also helps teach the younger generation and some older people about what to do and how to act when pulled over by an officer. The seminar, called "Going Beyond the Lights," is taught by prior law-enforcement officers.

Sandy is a retired property and evidence specialist with TPD. She's currently working with FDLE as a criminal-justice information analyst. She enjoys spending time with Lawana and their dogs and watching most sports.

They've found St. Stephen to be a good fit. "The congregation was very open, friendly and welcoming," they wrote. "The sermons are easily understood. Every week, the sermon seems to resonate with us, making us feel like God meant for us to hear that message. Even though we were both raised Baptist, the doctrine [at St. Stephen] seems to align with our beliefs."

Pastor Tom's reply: "Thanks be to God!" After the service Sunday, we'll have a light reception in the fellowship hall. Please join us as we welcome Sandy and Lawana officially to St. Stephen.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO US

Saturday is St. Stephen's 67th anniversary. We no longer have any charter members with us, but we have a blessed handful of active members who've been here since the 1960s or 1970s. Among them are Emily Jennings, Billie Reardon, Martha Marky, Jan Harrison, Don Dowd, Mary Andersen, Emory & Ann Hingst, and Sandy Ness. God bless them, and all of us.



THANK GOD FOR OUR GIVERS

Churches probably could get better at telling their donors "Thank you." After all, if you donate to St. Francis Wildlife or even Lutheran World Relief, you'll probably get a thank-you letter in the mail – or maybe a glowing email just seconds after you donate. With some organizations, your name might be listed in the newsletter. If your gift is big enough, they might even include your picture. If you're a monthly giver, every so often you'll receive an update along the lines of: "Thanks to your generosity, X number of people are living healthier lives...." If you're a gigantic giver, of course, your name might wind up on a building.

Admit it: It feels good to be recognized for an unselfish deed, doesn't it?

Here at church, as we all know, the rules are different. We come together with the understanding that everything we have and everything we are is a gift from God. It's a gift we can never fully repay, but we feel compelled to share what we can to assist St. Stephen's ministry to our faith community, the larger community and even the world. We don't expect applause. And, by and large, we don't get applause. But we feel the satisfaction of helping God's mission for St. Stephen come to life.



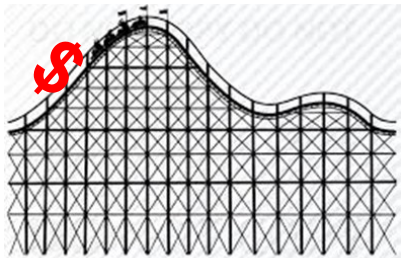
We usually don't know how much support the people sitting around us provide – although sometimes we have fun guessing. For big projects, often all we know is that some unnamed soul apparently wrote an enormous check. How do you thank Anonymous when you don't know who Anonymous is? Well, here's a start: "Thank you, dear givers, for your gifts large and small. God is working through you. Without you, where would we be? There are so many other ways you could have chosen to spend that money. Many, many thanks."

Sunday morning, one newish member was asking about options for giving. If you have similar questions, visit <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/giving>, or ask Pastor Tom.

THANK GOD FOR OUR FINANCIAL TEAM

Every year, our congregation approves a spending plan. Most of us pretty much ignore the church budget for the rest of the year. But for a tiny, dedicated team, the church budget is part of everyday life. Conscientious longtime Treasurer Jen Dritt tracks every dollar. Dependable Office Manager Lori Zengel assists Jen in numerous ways. Pastor Tom keeps his finger on our financial pulse. The Church Council discusses budget highs and lows every month. The rest of us? We give what we can, and every so often we wonder: "So, how is St. Stephen doing?"

At this month's Church Council meeting, Jen provided an answer. As Pastor Tom underscored during announcements Sunday, we're doing pretty well, thank God – having the kind of up-and-down budget year that churches usually have. It's late summer, so offerings have been slow – but history tells us we'll probably catch up by year's end. In the meantime, we're paying our bills – but to do that we've dipped into certain nonessential funds. Jen promises that we keep track of those moves, and that we always "pay ourselves back." As for red ink: On average every month, we're spending about \$2,400 more than we budgeted for (we didn't budget quite enough for staff compensation). And we're about \$4,000 behind in our mission support to the Florida-Bahamas Synod. But we're catching up. In a typical year, the final months are the most bountiful.



What does all that mean for you? Well, if you've fallen behind on your pledge, now would be a good time to catch up, if you're able. If you're able to increase your giving a little, that also would be a blessing. If you've donated for a particular cause, rest assured that your money will be spent on that cause. Unless, for example, you made a donation for an item that ended up costing less than we expected. In that case, someone from our financial team will check with you and ask to move your gift over to the general fund.

To be honest, the church prefers gifts that are not designated for one specific thing. The Synod, in fact, recommends that congregations not establish a great number of separate accounts. When we needed a new piano, you all came through with piano-specific donations. (Thank you!) Generally speaking, though, it's easier if our dollars can slide easily from today's need to tomorrow's.

The Synod also recommends an occasional audit. Our finance team is exploring that. If you know a trustworthy bookkeeper or person with banking experience, please let Pastor Tom know.

One more thing: Watch for the newsletter to resume its role of updating you monthly on whether we're in the black or in the red. And thank you.

THANK GOD FOR OUR CHURCH COUNCIL

By Pastor Tom

Let's talk about the responsibility and fellowship of the Church Council. When we meet, there is information to share and there are agendas to tackle, but it is always done with caring words, listening ears and a little food. Council is not always easy, but the wisdom of shared ministry and supportive people makes the hard parts less stressful.

You probably know that one issue that creates a lot of anxiety is dealing with financial worry. St. Stephen, your Council is sharing ideas and tackling the sometimes-surprising costs of keeping the building and property clean, safe and operable. Sometimes the best decision is to not make one, and other times decisions must be made. You should know, the trust bond between members of the Council is strong and healthy. They've made the difficult decisions when necessary and have grown in faith and trust in God along the way. I feel very blessed to have this Council to rely upon.

SUPPORT OUR YOUNG ACTORS

As you know, we have several young actors in our congregation. Occasionally we're invited to catch one of their Young Actors Theatre performances, only to hear some folks lament that they waited too long and tickets were sold out. Well, as Tami Allen pointed out Sunday, there's a solution to that problem.

You can pre-order your tickets by becoming a YAT subscriber. "Once you go to youngactorstheatre.com you can click on 'Subscribe' and decide what you'd like to buy: single, duet, trio or quartet," Tami explains. "For example, if you'd like to purchase one ticket for each show, select 'single.' Two for each show, 'duet' ... and so on. If you or anyone else is interested in doing this, just let me know so that I can put it on Will's ledger that the kids need to hand in."



As you'll see on the website, the upcoming season is ambitious. There's "Carousel" (Nov. 3-12), "Romeo & Juliet" (Feb. 16-25), "Finding Nemo Jr." (April 5-14) and "Mean Girls" (July 19-28). "Will is in 'Carousel' and will audition for all the rest," Tami said. "All company members get a part. Graham and Elliot Reece are also in 'Carousel.' We look forward to seeing you in the audience supporting them!"

The deadline for subscriptions (preordered tickets) is Oct. 4. That's next week! Hurry! Remember, Tami said: Anyone who has a subscription gets first pick for seating before general tickets go on sale. Also, even if you don't think you can make it to the performance but you want to support these young artists, you can become a patron. You'll find those details, too, at youngactorstheatre.com.

THE FEW, THE PROUD: THE BLOWING TEAM

By Pastor Tom

We're looking for a few people who'd like to help beautify our parking lot and walkways around the church. A long time ago, we had a team that shared this responsibility – but then COVID hit. We have a few people already willing to help, so this is a chance to join a new team. If we had eight people, each one would only be responsible for blowing once every eight weeks! If there's a lot of debris it takes about 45 minutes to do it all, but most of the time it takes much less time. Interested? Please let me know.



'UNFAIR!':

EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON



... The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner that gives equal pay for unequal work. We call it unfair! I'd feel cheated, too! I'd be a little angry! Wouldn't you? Yet, this is the way of God. God's mercy and love is far greater than our anger or our reluctance can ever be. God is willing to wait for us, stay with us and guide us while we figure out this kind of God-love. And while we struggle with staying or going, we recall God's promise to always stay in our midst. To hold humanity in the palm of his hand and shelter us under her wing.

MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Gary Ranzinger, an active member of Grace Lutheran and in years past a president of St. Stephen, died last week. He was 87. His wife, Irene, died a year ago. Longtime members here remember them well and bid Gary farewell.
- As current President Denise Bookwalter explained Sunday, we'll be having a fire drill soon. The Church Council is trying to make sure we all know where the exits are – just in case of emergency. Be prepared!



- Slice-of-life excerpt from the June 1987 *Second Sunday* newsletter, when Jen and Tom's first son was a little boy: "The boing-boing-boing of a racquetball escaping from a pew during a quiet moment at the late service, followed by half a minute of silence, Jay Buchanan's tiny voice announcing 'Uh-oh,' and the wonderful sound of not-quite-suppressed laughter in the house of the Lord."



- For the record: Yes, Pastor Tom got a haircut. About 3 inches shorter. Stay tuned for further updates.
- Sign up to take a meal to the delightful Ann and Pastor Emeritus Emory Hingst. This link, [Meals For Emory & Ann Hingst via Take Them A Meal](#), tells you everything you need to know, including their food preferences.



- OWLs will resume their monthly gathering beginning on Tuesday, Oct. 10, at 11:30 a.m. at Café' de Martin (seating outside). RSVP to Margaret: ambowersfl@gmail.com.

- PLEASE NOTE: The cost of altar flowers has risen to \$40, up from \$35. If you have an anniversary, birthday, special memory or special St. Stephen person or program you'd like to honor, celebrate the occasion by sponsoring the flowers for our service. Sign up on the flower chart in the narthex. Include the \$40 with your regular offering. Bonus: You get to take the flowers home!



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

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, Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

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



Monday, Oct. 2:

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

Wednesday, Oct. 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.

Don't forget our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/ststephentallahassee>.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, ELCA
2198 N. Meridian Road | Tallahassee, FL 32303

The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor

*Edited by Ron Hartung (alias Lex Lutheran). Designed by Lori Zengel, office manager, sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com.
Website: <http://www.ststephenlutherantally.com/>*

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