



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



*Here's a pretty new arrival in one St. Stephen family's yard. It's called Cat's Whiskers – see why? It was recommended by Mark Warren, one of the people who make shopping at Esposito's such a pleasure. If you plant one, make sure it has plenty of elbow room. Mark says these whiskers like to stretch out.*

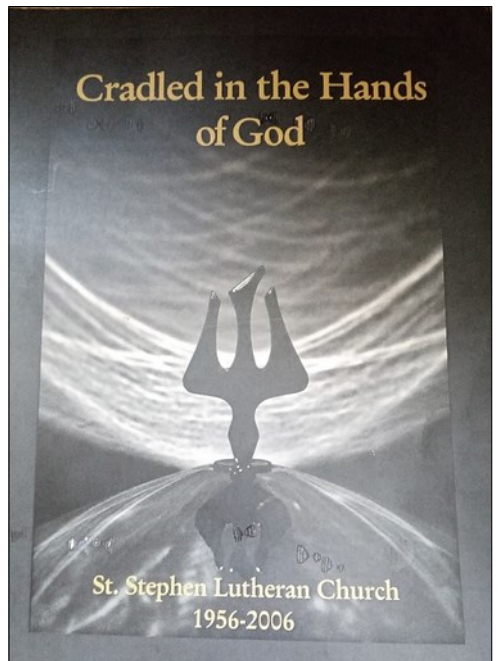
## BLESSED ANNIVERSARY

Sixty-five years ago today, St. Stephen's United Lutheran Church was officially organized. Over the years, it dropped the "s" and the "United." It prospered under a succession of dedicated pastors (Pastor Tom is our eighth full-timer). After years of meeting in borrowed spaces hither and yon, St. Stephen built one sanctuary here on Meridian Road, then built another beside it – the one that's about to undergo surgery.

St. Stephen exists because 50 Lutherans who didn't identify with the Missouri Synod wanted a place of their own here in Tallahassee. They kept pestering the Florida Synod until finally, after several years, a mission developer arrived in town. That was in late 1954. The congregation wasn't officially born until 1956.

So this roof project we're living through now is hardly the first time St. Stephen people have had to practice patience.

Of all the members listed in our latest directory, none were here at the very beginning. However, the following 16 souls have been here anywhere from 40 to 57 years: Mary Andersen, Chris Bischoff, Sue & Mark Canning, Sandy Davis, Don Dowd & Nathan Basford, Sharon Gordon-Girvin, Jan Harrison, Emory & Ann Hingst, Emily Jennings, Martha Marky, Jerry & Sandy Ness and Billie Reardon. We thank God for them, and for everyone who arrived here after them. That's how we got to be an active community that welcomes all people to nurture and share their faith and gifts with everyone, according to God's call. A blessed anniversary to us all.



# THE BARTONS' SAGA

By Karl Barton

*(Here's the latest installment in our series of essays explaining why some of our members worship at St. Stephen – and even why they worship at all. So far we've heard from Erin Kenney, the Reeces and Judi Duffy. Now ... the Bartons.)*

When I consider "why" we worship at St. Stephen, I must stop and consider "how" we came to St. Stephen in the first place, and then "why" we stayed.

The "how" goes back, in part, to our mixed marriage as a Roman Catholic (me) and ELCA Lutheran (Melissa) that took place at St. James Lutheran Church in Gettysburg with a Lutheran pastor and Catholic priest as co-celebrants the summer we moved to Tallahassee in 1989. What followed was about six years of avoiding our religious differences and giving up church for a backward kind of Lenten fast.

Before children, Melissa also played the flute (and was much better than I when we first met). We dueted and played at church weddings from time to time, which is part of what began our journey back to church. Once it really started in earnest, we thought that finding a compromise in-between like an Episcopal church was a good idea so that no one would "win"; however, the fit was never right.

At some point, Melissa suggested trying St. Stephen, which she had visited before the big, newfangled sanctuary was built, so we came to visit the updated worship space. What resulted from one of those early visits was a follow-up invitation to the Cannings' house by a group of members that included Tom and Jennifer Buchanan and others. I remember expressing my struggles with faith and doubt that night and felt a welcome sense of relief when they were echoed by others. This was certainly different from many of my experiences growing up in the Catholic Church and felt like it might be a good fit.



The "why" we have stayed is much simpler: St. Stephen is part of our extended family and the place where our children grew up. It is also the place where I have been able to become an integral part of children's lives through teaching Sunday School and playing with them after service as a "church uncle."

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the incomparable Katharine Gossman, who is such a fine pianist and musical collaborator with a warm, generous heart. Her friendship and musical camaraderie mean the world to me and have shaped both our nuclear and church families in ways that can only be described as divine.

Ultimately, our love of St. Stephen is because of you, our fellow congregants. We are certainly a family: dysfunctional at times, prone to arguments and disagreements, but ready to help in times of need. What's not to love? Besides, where else can an agnostic music director, a flute-playing, child-flinging nonconformist, LGBTQ members and guests, and people of every stripe come to find a moment of respite in the same sanctuary?

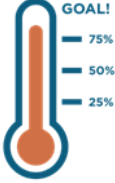
At the heart of it all, we stay because everyone is welcome, and there are no misfits at St. Stephen Lutheran Church!

## PROJECT UPDATE

Pastor Tom informed us Sunday that the completed drawings for our sanctuary project are now in the hands of the planning department, awaiting approval. That could take up to 90 days – but we pray it'll take less time than that.

While we wait for work to begin, here's something to ponder: We have an impressive 82 percent of the project cost either in hand or pledged. Thanks be to God. Of course, that means we still have to come up with 18 percent.

So our church friends who've poured so many hours into preparing for this project are asking us to assess our ability to make a first-time or follow-up donation. Pastor Tom passed along these updated figures for the Capital Campaign:



Total cost – \$196,999  
Money in hand – \$149,309  
Money pledged – \$12,144  
Money still needed – \$35,546



## CALLING ALL HIGH-SCHOOLERS

Every three years, 30,000 high school youth and their adult leaders from across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America gather for a week of faith formation known as the ELCA Youth Gathering. The dates for the next gathering are July 24-28, and early-bird registration is open now! Please visit [elca.org/youthgathering](https://elca.org/youthgathering) or ask Pastor Tom if you're interested in attending. "I have been to five National Youth Gatherings," he said, "and they are awesome experiences every time."

## IMPORTANT CONVERSATION

This Saturday, the *Just Love* team of the Florida-Bahamas Synod is hosting a movie and conversation around the repudiation of the "doctrine of discovery." The guest speaker, the Rev. Dr. "Tink" Tinker, provides an incredibly valuable history of the ways in which the doctrine was used during the colonization of what is now the United States and how this mindset is still reinforced through U.S. culture. I hope you have time to join us for the movie and the following conversation.



*"Repudiating Discovery and Dominion":* Movie and discussion with the Rev. Dr. "Tink" Tinker, 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Register at <https://bit.ly/JLTDominion>.

## GLOVES? CHECK. PRUNERS? CHECK.

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.



## HAIKU CORNER

By Lex Lutheran

### KNOT IN MY STOMACH

So much is at stake  
in Washington this week. God,  
bring us safely through.

### STEPPING FORWARD

In no time at all,  
the Eshlemans have become  
indispensable.

### A MONTH PASTOR TOM WOULD JUST AS SOON FORGET

Detached retina.  
Close brush with jury duty.  
Colonoscopy.

## A FIRST FOR THE ELCA



Did you hear that the ELCA recently installed its first transgender bishop? “I had wondered if the Lutheran church would be able to have me in it, but I never wondered if I was a Lutheran,” Bishop Megan Rohrer told *The Lutheran* in 2015, back when Rohrer was the first openly transgender pastor on the ELCA roster. “I’ve always had this deep sense in my gut that God was with me.” Dave Suhrweir passed along these links to more information about Bishop Rohrer, serving in Northern California and Northern Nevada.

<https://www.aol.com/news/evangelical-lutheran-church-installs-1st-151726496-171347935.html>

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/2021/05/living-into-hope-grasping-onto-grace/>

## EXCERPT FROM SUNDAY’S SERMON

**Mark 9: “... If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off....”**

Pastor Tom said in his sermon:

... Being a “stumbling block” leads to Jesus saying that one is better off having a millstone tied around their neck and then thrown into the sea. Is it really better to be killed than it is to cause a little one to stumble? Is self-harm something we should do in order to not sin? No! Of course not. This is hyperbole.

They are exaggerations from Jesus to make a very important point. It is not all about us. When we fight with other denominations, or other religions, or even with atheists who are doing loving and healing things, we are becoming a stumbling block. The Greek word for stumbling block is *skandalon*, literally a trap for a live animal. *Skandalon* is a metaphor for when life goes wrong.

Jesus taught the disciples and every follower to this very day that we ought not be a trap for other people. When we become stumbling blocks or try to trap others, we potentially harm them – and life goes wrong....

## BIBLE STUDY DOESN'T FIT YOUR SCHEDULE?

For those who'd like to take part in the weekly Bible study but have a schedule conflict, here's a link to the recorded meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/uvAyiwuzAfnByL3mpevww6fjxBbs3T0yMEC-qxkUYnyvZ9Aw3zf3VQ65E36L9dPQ.UiVv2kffGSyKIMWR>

## MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Here's a reminder: Even if you didn't get around to signing up online to participate in live worship, come on in anyway. Those sign-ups aren't required. They're just designed to keep us updated on whether larger-than-usual crowds are heading our way ... so we can be prepared with seating, communion, etc.

- Several weeks ago, our outreach committee asked for donations for the Haiti Project with our sisters and brothers at Tallahassee's Eglise Bateau de L'Evangile de Jesus Christ Church. Pastor Tom says our do-



- nations so far have totaled \$1,900. Thanks be to God. It is not too late to donate. Send in your payment to St. Stephen and designate "Haiti Project" in the memo line.
- 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



Hilary Dennis - 09/30  
Don Dowd - 09/30  
Melody Duke - 09/30  
Jeanette Sickel - 09/30  
Vivian Halvorson - 10/02  
Emery Oates - 10/08  
Janet Lovins - 10/09  
Jackson Sullivan - 10/09

## UPCOMING DATES

**This Sunday:**

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

**Wednesday, October 6:**

Noon - Bible study (online)

**Saturday, October 9:**

8 a.m. - Yard clean-up day



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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2198 N. Meridian Road | Tallahassee, FL 32303  
The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor