

October 26, 2023



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

### ‘STAND WITH OTHERS AMID SUFFERING’

*“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?” —Psalm 22:1*

Dear church,

As Lutherans, we are accustomed to holding tension between two truths. Thus the ELCA denounces the egregious acts of Hamas, acts that have led to unspeakable loss of life and hope. At the same time the ELCA denounces the indiscriminate retaliation of Israel against the Palestinian people, both Christian and Muslim.



For the past week we have borne witness to the horrors of the escalating crisis between Israel and Hamas. We also watch a growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza as Israel blocks food, water, fuel and medical supplies and as airstrikes continue to cause unbearable civilian casualties ahead of a just-announced ground assault. We see Israelis and families around the world in the agonizing wait for word about the fate of loved ones killed or taken hostage by Hamas. We are in anguish, grieving and praying for all people who are living in trauma, fear and uncertainty.

Among us are Palestinian Lutherans who are fearful for their families, their communities and their homeland. In our communities we have Jewish and Muslim neighbors, who are also facing the horrors of this crisis and its impact on their loved ones.

It is difficult to find words that suffice in the complexity of this moment, and in the web of relationships that bind us together, as church, with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and our interreligious partners. Yet God has called us to be a people who stand with others amid suffering.

We must also call a thing a thing. The power exerted against all Palestinian people — through the occupation, the expansion of settlements and the escalating violence — must be called out as a root cause of what we are witnessing. We are committed to our long-standing accompaniment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

The God who liberates us calls us to be a liberating witness. May it be so.

In Christ,

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Oct. 13

## WELCOME OUR BISHOP THIS SUNDAY

We'll have an extra special worship leader this Sunday: Florida-Bahamas Synod Bishop Pedro Suárez. And he'll be here on Reformation Sunday, no less. It's quite a special day.

The liturgy will be followed by a potluck. Margaret Bowers has created this link: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B044CAA92CA1F58-45260457-reformation>

As of this morning, we're still looking for people to bring a crockpot of chicken chili; a crockpot of some-other-meat chili; a crockpot of vegetarian chili; three bags of Fritos; one bag of finely shredded cheese; 3 gallons of sweet tea; 2 gallons of unsweet tea; two 8-ounce packages of sour cream; 2 cups' worth of green onion; two apple pies; three dozen brownies; and two cans of whipped cream. And we could use three people who can come in early to set up tables and chairs. The bishop will be so grateful.



P.S.: Wear something **red**. It's a Reformation thing. Write yourself a note that you'll see Sunday morning. Or else, like our congregational president, you just might show up in a burst of bright **yellow**.

## BISHOP FACTOIDS

In case you wind up standing next to Bishop Suárez in the potluck line, here are a few facts that might help generate some conversation:

- He was born in Venezuela.
- He's married to ELCA Deacon Aura Suárez.
- He was elected bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod in 2017 and re-elected earlier this year.
- Before he was bishop, he was lead pastor for a Pompano Beach congregation known as ... St. Stephen Lutheran Church! (By the way ... who's the short-haired guy standing next to the bishop?)



## BUT FIRST, THERE'S A HALLOWEEN PARTY

By Audrey Post



We're throwing an Intergenerational Halloween Party at 6 p.m. Friday in the fellowship hall. Everyone's welcome. Please come in costume if you're so inclined. (I'm coming as a gypsy fortune teller.) Among the details:

- There will be a friendly competition for the best Halloween snacks.
- We'll have tea, coffee, juice, water and hot cider.
- Margaret is coordinating getting a cornhole game and croquet for outdoor games. Got a Frisbee or a football to toss? Bring it.
- We'll have cards for card games, and an "heirloom" Trivial Pursuit game. Bring any other board games you want.
- We'll have a G-rated Halloween movie playing in the nursery.
- The kids are working on a special gift for Bishop and Mrs. Suárez, and Rita Ford says we can help the kids finish their project that night.



Have suggestions? Want to help? Email Audrey at [post.audrey@gmail.com](mailto:post.audrey@gmail.com) and Margaret at [ambowersfl@gmail.com](mailto:ambowersfl@gmail.com).

# WHAT WE BROUGHT UP IN OUR OPEN FORUMS

*These are notes from our Oct. 15 follow-up discussions about St. Stephen's future. Just topics, with no details yet. Much more discussion will follow.*

## Topic: How to attract young families, new members and keep them connected



- Elderly transportation
- Child transport
- Show through social media
  - \* Regular/steady presence
  - \* Variety of platforms
  - \* Explore data
  - \* Efficiency - high impact with low maintenance
  - \* Testimonials
  - \* Optimize search engines
  - \* Intentional presentation

- “Paper” generation
- Outreach
  - \* Presence at community events
  - \* YouTube Channel (for stream)
  - \* Livestream logistical adjustments
  - \* OWLs fellowship
  - \* Welcoming partner
  - \* LGBTQ+

### Programs

- Devise new ones for youngsters
- Intergenerational
- Short topics before or after church
  - \* Devotionals
  - \* Shared responsibility
  - \* All ages

## Topic: How to build diversity

- Outreach to refugees (e.g., if we adopt a refugee family we'll meet all kinds of new people and potential new members)
- How do we inform our community of who we are? Video?
- More events to draw people in
  - \* Carnival
  - \* Auction
  - \* Music event
- How do we sustain diversity?
  - \* How do we define?
  - \* Racial/ethnic/cultural
  - \* Comfort for visitors
  - \* Online message and image
  - \* Is our acceptance obvious?
  - \* “Everyone” is welcoming
- How are we welcoming?
  - \* Make it simple
  - \* Video
  - \* Interview members
  - \* Congregation
- How to find St. Stephen
  - \* Online presence
  - \* Mission statement
  - \* LGBTQ acceptance & inclusion
- Getting a second visit
  - \* Pastor
  - \* Note from pastor
  - \* Saying “Hello - glad you're here”



*Watch for more discussions. Questions? Ask Pastor Tom or President Denise.*

# FAREWELL, DEBEE

By Pastor Tom

As most of you read in my email, St. Stephen member Debee Meyer passed away one week ago. She, husband Steve and sons Joey and Jason joined St. Stephen in 1995 and were quite active for several years – until they moved to Central Florida. Later, sadly, Steve passed away. More recently, Debee moved back to Tallahassee to be closer to Joey and his family. She came home, and she and St. Stephen were going to work well together.



Debee and I didn’t get to know each other as well as we’d hoped. Her bright smile and energetic spirit were busy with KidSafe. And on Sundays, she spent time with her family at home and watched the service later online. But she was always looking for ways to be involved in congregational life. When extra money was short for the Holdcrafts, she bought our ticket to the KidSafe fundraiser. When we needed counters, she was there. Debee had even emailed me after reading recently that we were seeking an accountant to help us do an internal audit.

But then different health realities arose. She died in the ICU at UF Health in Jacksonville, with Joey and his wife by her side. We rejoice knowing she is no longer in physical discomfort or pain. We rejoice knowing she is with Steve. So long for now, Debee. Well done, good and faithful servant of God.

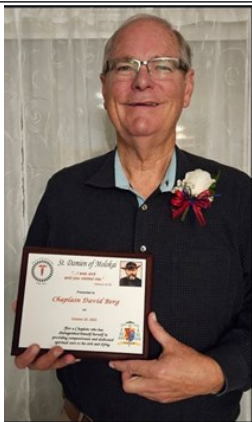
## SUNDAY-MORNING GLIMPSES

- Rudy Hehn under the eaves, around the side of the building, rehearsing the psalm that he’ll be chanting after the first reading.
- Colin Hackley taking yet another usher-in-training on a lap around our property.
- Lawana Lamb-Daniels, one of our newest members, soaking up what she needs to learn as one of our newest ushers.
- Six-foot-plus Pastor Tom folding up his long legs to sit on the floor during his time with the children.
- Margaret Bowers and Carol Santos hovering near the kitchen counter, making sure the snacks and drinks are just right for the umpteenth party/reception/congregational meeting of the year.
- Judi Duffy swaying, one arm raised in praise, as we sing “Lamb of God.”
- Hector Quinones using his bulletin to shield his eyes as he discovers he’s sitting where he’ll be blinded by the autumnal Sunday-morning sun.



## ‘COMPASSIONATE AND DEDICATED’

This photo was posted on Facebook by former St. Stephen member Constance Berg, whose husband was our vicar in 1991-92. (They now live in California.) David is shown here in San Bernardino at an Our Lady of the Rosary Cathedral White Mass especially for health-care workers. He received a St. Damien of Molokai award for distinguishing himself by “providing compassionate and dedicated spiritual care to the sick and dying.” We’re proud of you, Chaplain David.



## HERE COMES THE GIVING TREE



We’re nearing the busiest time of year, which Andrea Notley also describes as the greatest time of year. She reminds us that the Giving Tree will be here the first weekend in November. Stay tuned....



## REMEMBERING OUR SAINTS

We're accepting the names of loved ones for remembrance during the All Saints service Nov. 5. Please email or call Lori in the church office with names by Wednesday.



## SOCKS & SOAPS

By Sharon Simmons, outreach coordinator



- The sock deadline is the end of the month! We've been gathering socks for our joint initiative with New Mount Zion AME Church, for the clients at Kearney Center. Socks for men or women are greatly needed. You can find reasonable prices at Target, Dollar Tree and Dollar General, among others.
- We continue to collect cleaning and personal-care supplies for new Tallahassee residents through the IRC. The collection tub is in the fellowship hall. Items needed include cleaning liquid, dish soap, laundry detergent, bar soap/body wash, shampoo and deodorant. This is an ongoing initiative to support IRC and households.



## MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- This Sunday is Noisy Offering Sunday! "We will not have a special speaker this month," Pastor Tom says, "but will be collecting for Lutheran World Relief. Specifically, giving to help civilians caught in danger in Israel and Gaza. Thank you, St. Stephen, for your generosity and gifts to LWR."
- Jennifer and Tom are celebrating the birth of their new grandson, Colby Mark Buchanan, in Ellicott City, Maryland. Colby's parents are Jay and Maggie Buchanan, and his big sister is Rosie. Jay, as some of you recall, grew up in St. Stephen.
- From Pastor Tom's words of welcome Sunday: "In a world that creates barriers and ... pushes individualism, we strive to interact with others. To go outside our comfort zones and challenge prejudices and false narratives that say the other cannot be trusted."



- If you have an anniversary, birthday, special memory or special St. Stephen person or program you'd like to honor, celebrate by sponsoring the altar flowers for our service. Sign up on the flower chart in the narthex. Include the \$40 with your regular offering. And then take the flowers home!

## UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Graham Reece - 10/26

Bern Mustian - 10/30

Jen Reece - 11/02

Paul van der Mark - 11/06

Hector Quinones - 11/7

Barbara Sullivan - 11/07

Daniel Martinez - 11/10

Mark Warren - 11/13

Elliot Reece - 11/14

Cheryl Stuart - 11/14



## 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

**6 p.m.** - Intergenerational Halloween Party

### This Saturday:

**10 a.m.** - Al-Anon meets in FH

### This Sunday:

**9:30 a.m.** - Choir practice

**10 a.m.** - Worship, **Reformation** Sunday

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

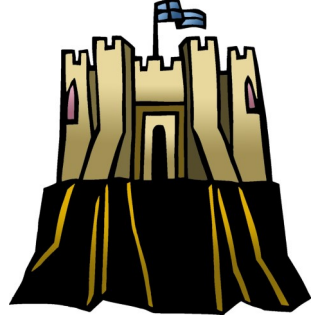
### Monday, Oct. 23:

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

### Wednesday, Oct. 25:

**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>.

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](mailto:sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com).  
Website: <http://www.ststephenlutherantally.com/>  
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