



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



The hibiscus in our back yard is still blooming (on the right). And now, so are the camellias. Creator God, you certainly do have a way with pink.

PRAYERFULLY CONSIDER YOUR ESTIMATE OF GIVING


By Pastor Tom

Risk/reward language is familiar to financial investors. The greater the risk an investment poses, the greater the potential for reward. On the other hand, with that increased risk comes a greater chance of financial loss. We give thanks that this is not the language of our Lord. When we take risks for the sake of the Gospel, and risk material wealth to invest in Kingdom of Heaven things, we please God. As in the Parable of the Talents, we hear affirmations of “Well done, good and faithful servant ... enter into the joy of your master.” The reward of ALL rewards!



I invite you to prayerfully consider your estimate of giving for the 2024 calendar year. I know how hard it is to let go of our money gods, but this is where spiritual growth and the building up of the church occurs. You and I are part of something bigger. Will you join me in offering the first fruits to the Lord?

On Nov. 19, you will be invited to place your estimate-of-giving card in a basket during worship. Alternatively, you may call or email Lori in our church office with your estimate of giving for 2024, but please do so before Dec. 10 so our financial team can prepare the budget for a congregational vote in January. Taking the right risks for the sake of the Gospel brings about amazing rewards.



2024 Estimate of Giving

In support of God's mission for St. Stephen Lutheran Church:
To be an active community that welcomes all people to nurture and share their faith and gifts with everyone, according to God's call.

NAME(S): _____

I/we pledge to intentionally give financially to the ministry of St. Stephen Lutheran Church:

(Please select one option)

\$ _____ per week

\$ _____ per month

\$ _____ per year

I/we understand that this plan can be changed by notifying the financial secretary.

IT'S 'GIVING TREE' TIME AGAIN

By Andrea Notley

The Giving Tree is here! I've received this year's names of people who could use our help in making Christmas merry. I'm going to do it the same way as the pandemic taught me: If you let me know you're interested, I'll send you information about your person's wants or needs. As always, if you want to participate but don't like to shop (or aren't able to shop), you may donate money and one of us will shop for you. (Include the donation with your regular offering.) Make sure you return your wrapped gifts by

Dec. 10. You've got a whole month! Call or text me at 850-443-5293 or email notley90@comcast.net.



RACHEL BROWN & 'OVER ZERO'

Caroline Collins thought you'd be interested in a program coming up next week. It's "Over Zero: The Roots of Belonging and The Risks of Othering," sponsored by Village Square at 7 p.m. Tuesday via Zoom. Caroline said she's going to register. What about you? Visit <https://tlh.villagesquare.us/>.



WHY WE'RE HERE



I've recently met someone who's a stranger to religion. She's not against it, necessarily, but it hasn't been part of her life. Not ever. I suspect she looks at people like us and wonders, "On a beautiful Sunday morning, when there are so many other things they could be doing, why in the world are they stuck inside a building – singing, chanting and listening to, of all things, a sermon! What do they get out of it?" If she asked you, what would you tell her? Please write to me at rrhartung1@gmail.com, or send a note to Lori in the church office. (I'd love to put your reply in the newsletter. If you're bashful, we can leave out your name.)

THE ADVENTURES OF LEX LUTHERAN

As told to Ron Hartung

<p>The noise level at our Sunday potlucks...</p> 	<p>... is equivalent to 20 jackhammers. You can't hear me. I can't hear you.</p> 	<p>But as long as we keep smiling and nodding in our mild-mannered Lutheran way, we'll be fine.</p> 	<p>I SAID, "WE'LL BE FINE!!!" WANT ANOTHER BROWNIE?</p> 
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'EVEN AS WE CRY': EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

... We are diverse in many ways but uniquely the same when it comes to experiencing death. Live long enough, and you will encounter what it feels like to lose someone you love. It can be a hard truth to swallow. It may feel like a dark cloud, a storm, a drowning, a loneliness ... but let me assure you, as I was assured and led to remember: You're not drowning and you're not alone.

You are part of something bigger. You are a vital member of this community ... but even more, you are a child of God ... you can go on!

In Revelation 7, we read about a great multitude that no one is able to count. In that multitude is every nation; all tribes and peoples and languages are there. They gather and sing with palm branches and they're robed in God's glory. (Palm branches were the Greek symbol of victory.) What a victory, indeed.

There are names we know who are among the great multitude. People we love and people we struggled with are counted in the multitude. There are Jewish and Palestinian names, Russian and Chinese names. Names we know and names we don't know are there, and we are part of them, just as they are part of us.

Even as we cry, we are permitted to celebrate in victory. It is God that will wipe away every tear. It is the person next to you, wherever you are, who will place a hand upon your shoulder and you upon theirs. It is a love that you can see around the throne, and a love that you can see, right here and right now, if you look (just look) and remember: "See the love the Father has given." A love that calls us children of God.

MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- For our most recent Noisy Offering, you contributed \$428 to Lutheran World Relief, for the benefit of those who are enduring nightmarish conditions in Israel and Gaza. In fact, you've been donating more than \$400 for a good cause just about every month for quite a while. It's amazing what a posse of little Lutherans lugging shiny buckets around can accomplish.



**LUTHERAN
WORLD RELIEF**



- Brenda Christie, from our sister congregation New Mt. Zion Church, recently delivered the socks that our church and hers had donated. She told Sharon Simmons that, as she was leaving the Kearney Center, some of the clients there were putting on socks. Mission accomplished.
- From Pastor's welcome notes Sunday morning: "Today, in the ordinary, will we see God? In a candle, a song, a moment of silence..." Or even a pair of socks.
- I love it when the real world enters our worship service, in prayers like this one from Sunday: "Holy advocate, we lift grateful hearts for our ability to vote and elect leaders. Inspire us to go to the polls and elect leaders who will use wisdom and compassion to serve humankind. May our polling places be safe and elections fair."
- "Carousel" will be performed at Young Actors Theatre through Sunday. Noted Lutheran actors Graham Reece, Elliot Reece and Will Allen are all in Cast B, and tickets are available now. <https://www.youngactorstheatre.com/>



- 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



Daniel Martinez - 11/10
Mark Warren - 11/13
Elliot Reece - 11/14
Cheryl Stuart - 11/14
Marda Messick - 11/20
Cindy Suhrweir - 11/21
Sue Canning - 11/25
Marley Bonfanti - 11/26
Emory Hingst - 11/26
Michael Bonfanti - 11/27
Phil Williams - 11/29

IN THE WEEK AHEAD

Today:

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

7 p.m. - AA meets in FH

This Friday:

Church office closed in observance of Veterans Day

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

6 p.m. - Game Night meets in FH (outside group)

This Sunday:

9:00 a.m. - Book study

9:30 a.m. - Choir practice

10 a.m. - Worship, Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

11:30 a.m. - Worship Committee meeting

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



Monday, Nov. 13:

11:30 a.m. - OWLs Gathering at The Getaway

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

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

Tuesday, Nov. 14:

7 p.m. - Alateen meets in the FH

Wednesday, Nov. 15:

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>.

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The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor