



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



## OCTOBER FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

By Pastor Tom and Treasurer Jen Dritt



- Total giving for the month: \$24,951
- Total expenses for the month: \$25,872
- After doing the math: We were \$921 under our financial target for October.

## PLEDGE TIME

Church Council members eagerly look forward to receiving our Estimate of Giving cards. Those cards will make it much easier for them to construct a prudent budget for 2023. Don't forget what Pastor Tom said last Sunday: If your

financial circumstances change midyear, you can always revise your pledge – and the Pledge Police won't come knocking on your door. So please pick up a pledge card in the narthex, or send Office Manager Lori your 2023 Estimate of Giving by email. God bless you.



### 2023 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.

## THE GIVING TREE NEEDS YOU

Who doesn't like Andrea Notley, right? Well, she could use our help. For years she's been coordinating our participation in the Giving Tree program – through which St. Stephen members take wish lists from families in need and go shopping to brighten their Christmas. Andrea (pictured here in 2015) has such faith in us that she told the Giving Tree organizers they could send her an extra batch of families. She's sincerely grateful to those who've replied so far but (gulp) she's not getting as many replies as she hoped for.



Can you help? If so, or if you already have, please remember that the deadline to bring in your gift-wrapped packages (each one marked with your client's wish-list number) is Dec. 11. If you have no idea what I'm talking about but you'd like to be part of it, talk to Andrea. Quickly! She's OK with having her contact info printed here: [notley90@comcast.net](mailto:notley90@comcast.net) or 850-443-5293.

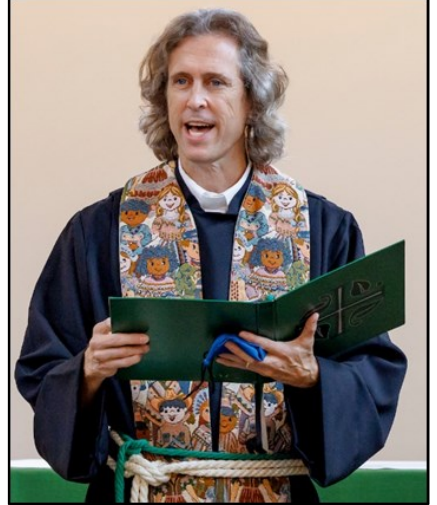
# BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL

By Pastor Tom

*About halfway through the year, Pastor Tom stopped wearing his usual white alb and started wearing a black one. Maybe you noticed. We asked him what prompted the change.*

There are practices and symbols within our worship that unintentionally elevate white supremacy. It can be in the language that communicates white as “good” and black as “bad,” or in the symbols of “white” purity. It also might be in a congregation’s desire to call only white males to be their pastor.

During this year’s book study of “Dear Church” by ELCA Pastor Lenny Duncan (my second time reading the book), I was struck by his perception of clergy attire. Lenny spoke of how the habit of wearing white robes – given the garment’s history with white supremacy, segregation and racial/ gender violence – props up a system that separates us. Therefore, I took a small action and began to wear a black alb, and I became more aware of the “dark” and “light” liturgical language I use during different church seasons. It was a surprising change. Best of all, it was one that incorporates the equality culture of St. Stephen.



# TENDING OUR LITTLE FOREST

By Jake Hartung, building and grounds coordinator

Have you ever walked behind the church playground? Probably not. Until last week, you couldn’t even see the fence between us and the office park behind our church. The vines had gotten thick and tangled, even reaching into the playground over and through the fence. The whole rest of the property was entangled with grape and briar vines going toward Pinewood Drive. So when Miller’s Tree Service came to take down a dead tree by Meridian Road, we asked them to also use a forestry brush mulcher in the back of our property to grind up anything that wasn’t a pine or oak tree. Now you can actually walk through there. It looks as if fresh wood chips were spread evenly on the ground.



Why does it matter? This is a pristine pine forest, the kind that used to exist in many parts of town 30 years ago. We have a responsibility as stewards of this beautiful property. Every forest requires some level of human involvement to maintain a healthy balance of native and exotic/invasive species. In the future, I’ll do more little things along

the way, so we won’t need major forestry machinery to help us out.

# GOOD NEWS

This *New York Times* bulletin popped into our inbox while we were putting the newsletter together Wednesday afternoon: “**BREAKING NEWS:** The Senate took a crucial step toward protecting same-sex marriage rights, with 12 Republicans joining all Democrats to advance a landmark bill.... The 62-37 vote signaled a remarkable shift in American politics and culture, demonstrating how same-sex marriage, once a politically divisive issue, has been so widely accepted.”



## HOTTEST TICKET IN TOWN

As you know, Graham Reece is performing in “Elf: The Musical” at Young Actors’ Theatre. He’s playing Charlie the Elf in Cast B, whose shows are this Friday at 7:30 p.m., Saturday at 2 p.m. and Sunday at 7 p.m. Alas, getting a ticket is a challenge. As Graham’s mom explained at church Sunday, all the seats are filled at the moment. However, she said there’s a possibility that some might become available – and there’s even a chance there’ll be additional performances in December. So don’t lose heart. Keep checking <https://www.youngactorstheatre.com/> and calling 850-386-6602.



## ‘EVERYONE CAN CONTRIBUTE SOMETHING’: EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM’S SERMON

... “Our command,” as Paul put it, is to keep away from idleness and to not grow weary in doing what is right....The word “idleness” here does not mean rest or taking time to rejuvenate. We need those times! “Idleness” here refers to being disorderly or doing things that hurt the health connection of the community....

You see, the Christian community in Paul’s day thought Jesus was coming very soon. Some even believed that Jesus was already back and ... the New Jerusalem was about to be restored, so they just stopped doing anything. They just quit. These able-bodied people became difficult burdens on the community in both physical and psychological ways. They stopped doing what needed to be done and ceased following Jesus’ command for endurance.

So his statement “Anyone unwilling to work should not eat” didn’t mean that the community should neglect the poor or ignore people who are unable to work, or even stop helping the people who were suffering. It was encouragement for all people to participate in the building of community.... No one should freeload, and all people can do work according to their physical and mental abilities. Everyone can contribute something....

## HAIKU CORNER

By Lex Lutheran

### AFTER THE ELECTIONS

Many of us feared  
Category 5 chaos.  
So good to be wrong.



### FAITHFUL SERVANTS

To all those who work  
behind the scenes to keep church  
running smoothly: Thanks!

### MY ST. STEPHEN ANNIVERSARY

Forty years ago,  
against your better judgment,  
you welcomed me in.



## CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

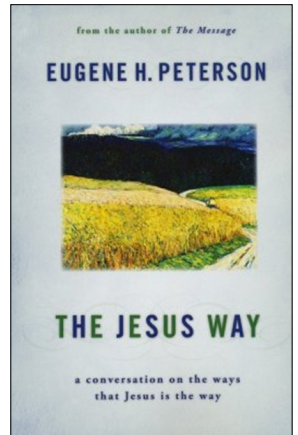


We'll be decorating the chancel area with poinsettias for Christmas. Would you like to dedicate one (or more)? The cost is \$10, and the dedication list will be in the Dec. 18 and Dec. 25 bulletins. Just fill out the form in the bulletin and place it with your payment in the offering plate, or email Lori with the information. The deadline is Dec. 11.



## PLACES YOU MIGHT WANT TO BE

- Nov. 30: "Community Connections: Highlighting Community and Scientific Innovation to Address Nutrition and Food Security Needs," Zoom session, noon-1 p.m. To register, click [here](#). (Zoom ID is 932 9104 1318.)
- Nov. 30: Prayer service supporting the abolition of Florida's death penalty, 7 p.m., Good Shepherd Catholic Church, 4665 Thomasville Road.
- Dec. 4 and subsequent Sundays: "The Jesus Way," book discussion at 9 a.m. in Matthew Room. Book costs \$19. Let Pastor Tom know if you want to order one.
- Dec. 10: Annual holiday card signing for those on Death Row, noon to 4 p.m., northeastern part of Cascades Park (across Suwannee Street from DOT building). For some, this is the only piece of mail they get all year. Sponsored by Tallahassee Citizens Against the Death Penalty. Join fellow St. Stephen members there.



## MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- No newsletter next week. Happy Thanksgiving, everyone, from the mighty St. Stephen newsletter's worldwide network of correspondents!
- FYI: There were no takers for the idea of having Thanksgiving dinner at church, or delivering meals to those who can't get around.
- As Pastor Tom reminded us recently from the pulpit: It's not too late to get a flu shot. And, of course, we owe it to ourselves and each other to keep up-to-date on our COVID boosters.
- Whenever you donate to charities, you're guaranteed to get a lifetime of letters and emails from them – as if you told them you wanted to donate every week. Usually, they at least get your name right. Somehow, though, my friends at Habitat got the idea that my name is not Ronald Hartung but Yjjugdys3ikw1v9. You can call me Yjjug.
- 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 2023 Flower Chart in the narthex. The cost is \$35, which you can place in the offering plate.
- Have any questions for our Church Council members? They're listed on our website, <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/about-us>.
- 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



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  
Graham Hackley - 11/30  
Nancy Staff - 12/01  
Bob Eshleman - 12/02  
Brian Oliveri - 12/03  
Annelise Leysieffer - 12/04  
Annette Claussen - 12/08  
Janet Barber - 12/09  
Maria (Ridy) Hofer - 12/11  
Laura Sullivan - 12/14  
Rita Ford - 12/18  
Wesley Holdcraft - 12/18  
Pastor. Tom - 12/29  
Kate Stuart - 12/29  
Mike Martinez - 12/30

## UPCOMING DATES

**This Sunday, Nov. 20:**

**9 a.m.** - Bible talk

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

**10 a.m.** - Worship with communion, Christ the King Sunday

**Thursday, Nov. 24:**



*Pr. Tom will be out of the office during the week of Nov. 20 - 27. Pastor Joe Parrimore will be our guest preacher on Nov. 27.*

*The office will be closed on Nov. 24 & 25 for Thanksgiving.*



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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