



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

BLESSED BE THE LEAK DETECTORS

Maybe this could be an essay question required for all prospective Altar Guild members: *You show up at the sanctuary on a Saturday morning. The office manager is off-duty. The pastor is out of town. So is the congregational president. So is the building-and-grounds person. You notice water gurgling up through cracks in the concrete outside one corner of the building. What do you do?*



That situation awaited Beth Alexander and Rita Ford when they showed up on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. They alerted Colin Hackley and Dwight Polivka, who found the shutoff valve for the water near North Meridian. Good start. “With the water shut off to the buildings, we had time to consider the next steps,” recalled Pastor Tom, who received the water-leak text message in Brandon at a nephew’s Eagle Badge ceremony. “We needed bathrooms for church service, so it was decided to turn on the water for the length of the Sunday service and then turn it off to save water.” That stopgap measure also saved us the expense of a holiday-weekend plumber’s visit.

Monday, Office Manager Lori called White’s Plumbing, which recommended calling a leak-detection service to pinpoint the source of the leak without demolishing more concrete than necessary. Gulf Coast Leak Detection lived up to its name. Around lunchtime Wednesday, White’s Plumbing dug up the pesky section, repaired the leak and poured new concrete. Total cost of this plumbing misadventure: about \$1,250. Well done, everyone.

TEN DAYS TILL GIVING-TREE DEADLINE



Quick note from Andrea Notley: “It’s not too late! I’m still collecting money for the Giving Tree. Also, the gifts are due back at church on or before Dec. 10. Thank you!” To reach Andrea, call or text 850-443-5293 or email notley90@comcast.net.

A NOISIER OFFERING

Because attendance was a bit sparse on the Sunday after Thanksgiving, we’re giving the Noisy Offering another go this Sunday. The proceeds will benefit the Peace and Justice Endowment Fund, established by Ann and Emory Hingst. That’s not to be confused with St. Stephen’s Justice and Mercy Fund, which Pastor Tom dips into for visitors who need help with gasoline or food. (Maybe we can ask God to change the name of one of those funds, to avoid further confusion.) So please, if you’re able, write a check or grab some coins before you head to church Sunday.



KUDOS TO THE OLDER KIDDOS

By Susan Hehn

On the Sunday after Thanksgiving, in Pastor Tom’s absence, I was asked to do the children’s sermon. It was a holiday weekend and our St. Stephen families with small children were not at the service. Beth Alexander was kind enough to round up some teens to be my “children” for the sermon and to collect the Noisy Offering. Kudos to the teens and a profuse thanks to Beth for the idea! I couldn’t have done it without you! *[Editor’s note: What if Susan hadn’t been there to deliver that children’s sermon? Or chant the psalm? What if Beth had asked YOU to fill in? Pretty scary, eh?]*

WHY I ATTEND CHURCH

Excerpt from a Nov. 8 column by Dan Ponder, publisher of The Donalsonville News. Jeanette Sickel gave it to me in response to my request for members to describe why they worship. Mr. Ponder isn't writing about St. Stephen, but he might as well be. It's a thoughtful piece, written after a health challenge had kept him away from church for five weeks.



... We had communion, open to all believers, that always touches my heart in a special way. Just to be able to walk to the altar with a cane reminded me of how fragile life is. The long lines that passed me on their way to receive the symbolic body of Christ reminded me once again that I am not alone.

I shook hands and received hugs from those that had missed me. It was more therapeutic than the pills and shots I have received over the past few weeks. It was indeed good to be in the House of the Lord.

I understand there are many paths to be able to sit at the feet of God. Many Christians do not even regularly attend church anymore. Some use technology to worship, which is fine. We often focus on the little that we disagree on, while we ignore the majority of what we share in common.

I am aware that most of the world does not believe like me. Some do not believe at all. Some prefer to worship in the privacy of their own home. Some will make their way to church on Easter and Christmas. There are many other religions whose teachings I respect and whose traditions I honor.

But on this Sunday, for me, I was simply reminded of why I find attending church in person to be so fulfilling. I was surrounded by caring friends. I was uplifted by music and song. I was inspired by those who went before me. I was encouraged by the children who are our hope for the future. I was challenged by a message. I found a peace that I did not expect, on a day when I was simply trying to make it to church.

Some days I sense the presence of the Holy Spirit. You have probably felt that at different times in your life. This Sunday that Holy Spirit was waiting for me on the pew. He knew I was coming that day, and He waited just for me. We enjoyed the wonderful service together.

That is why I attend church.

[And why does Jeanette keep coming back to St. Stephen? She answered simply: "Because of the love I feel."]



THE ADVENTURES OF LEX LUTHERAN

As told to Ron Hartung

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| <p>I thought my singing voice was not bad at all...</p>  |  <p>... until one Sunday when I was seated all alone in my section of the church.</p> | <p>No big voices beside me. No big voices behind me. Just me, warbling.</p>  |  <p>Pitiful.</p> |
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EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TREXLER’S SERMON

Not too far from our mountain cabin there’s a concrete cross by the side of the road. The message engraved in the concrete and highlighted in red paint warns: “Get right with God.” The implication seems clear: “Get right with God or God will get *right after you!*”

But you can’t do anything to “Get right with God.” God has already done everything for you. You are justified – that is, made right with God – by God’s grace through faith. There’s nothing you must do or even can do to make yourself right with God.

However, as one of my friends puts it: “Now that you don’t *have* to do anything, what are you *going* to do?”



HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

- Saturday, Dec. 16, 9 a.m.: Decorating the sanctuary.
- Sunday, Dec. 17, 10 a.m.: Worship, including children’s Christmas program.
- Sunday, Dec. 24, 10 a.m.: Fourth Sunday of Advent worship.
- Sunday, Dec. 24, 7 p.m.: Christmas Eve service, with communion and candle-light.
- Monday, Dec. 25: No service.
- Sunday, Dec. 31, 10 a.m.: Lessons and Carols.



COME SIGN A CARD

Caroline Collins reminds us that Tallahassee Citizens Against the Death Penalty is having its annual holiday card signing. “Every year we gather to sign cards for every person on Florida’s Death Row,” said Mary Anne Hoffman, the group’s chair. “We like to have as many signatures on each card as possible to show the men and women that people do care about them. Please drop by, even for a short while, and sign as many cards as you can. We will provide pens. Children who can print or write their first name are welcome.” The signing is scheduled from noon to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 9, at Cascades Park – specifically, Suwannee Street across from the Florida Department of Transportation building. You can park along Suwannee or in parking lots nearby.



BEFORE YOU GO...

- Last Sunday morning was cold and rainy, and we had a guest pastor. In short, it was a recipe for shutting off the alarm and sleeping till noon. You might have guessed that our guest pastor would be preaching to empty chairs and unplugged iPads. But you would've guessed wrong. Quite a few of those chairs were filled. Online worship was pretty active, too. Thank God for our faithful worshippers.
- 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. 24 and 31 bulletins. Just fill out the form in the narthex and place it with your payment in the offering plate, or email Lori with the information. The deadline is Sunday, Dec. 17.
- 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

Nancy Staff - 12/01
Bob Eshleman - 12/02
Annelise Leysieffer - 12/04
Annette Claussen - 12/08
Janet Barber - 12/09
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

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 Saturday:

10 a.m. - Sew for Hope meets in FH

This Sunday:

9:00 a.m. - Book study
9:30 a.m. - Choir practice
10 a.m. - Worship, First Sunday of Advent
11:30 a.m. - Council meeting
4 p.m. - Congolese Church Group meets in FH

Monday, Dec. 4:

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

Wednesday, Dec. 6:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in FH



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