



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



*The Florida State campus has been hot under the collar for a variety of reasons lately, but Tuesday morning's sky brought nothing but tranquility in pinks and blues. No mere sunrise – to borrow the sermon language you'll see a few pages down. (Photo by Jake Hartung)*

### THREE DAYS TILL GIVING-TREE DEADLINE

Last reminder from Andrea Notley: If you're participating in this year's Giving Tree, please remember that the gifts are due at church this Sunday. Also, if you said you'd donate money for another shopper to pick out your presents – but you haven't had the chance to donate yet – please place the money in the offering basket or pay through Venmo. To reach Andrea, call or text 850-443-5293 or email [notley90@comcast.net](mailto:notley90@comcast.net).



### TARRANCE'S STORY CONTINUES

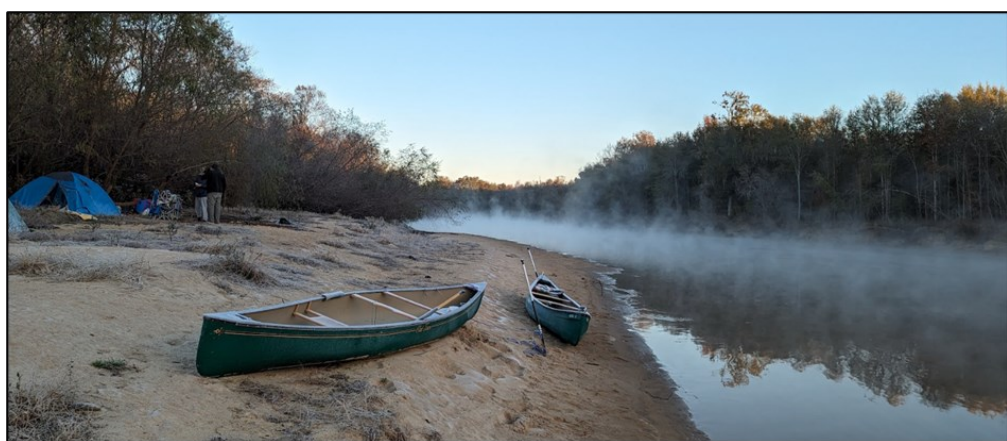
*By Pastor Tom*

You may remember the update a few weeks ago about our friend Tarrance. It described how St. Stephen had allowed him to take shelter in the shed at church in between his stays at a motel. Thankfully, we've received donations from St. Stephen's worship community to help keep Tarrance temporarily at the Suburban Inn. We're storing a few of his belongings in the shed, but he hasn't had to spend the night there. Dental problems and cold weather have kept him from attending Sunday worship, but he's doing well and hopes to be back soon. He awaits the restart of his Social Security disability income, and once that



happens Ability First will try to get him settled into subsidized housing. Please continue to pray for Tarrance. And if you have the means and wish to help, contribute to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund (aka Justice and

Mercy) so we can keep him sheltered at the Inn.



## ON THE RIVER WITH RUDY

*Recently, Rudy Hehn and two friends spent six days traveling on the Ocmulgee River, which starts near Macon and flows into the Altamaha River in the middle of Georgia. Here are six things Rudy says he learned on this trip:*

- God created a beautiful world. We enjoyed the herons, kingfishers and even the vultures.
- Raccoons are good swimmers. We saw one crossing the river.
- Parts of Georgia are still remote. We paddled four days before seeing another human.
- I survived fine without a phone in my pocket 24/7.
- Waking up in a 27-degree tent with ice on the ceiling gives you renewed appreciation for the luxury of a heated bedroom.
- Coffee made with river water and full of grounds tastes terrific if you are cold and tired.



## ‘STAY AWAKE’: EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM’S SERMON

... There’s an urgent tone to “stay awake,” but the intent is to safeguard the community and to encourage shared responsibility and equal participation. We clearly need one another to be able to be obedient to what Jesus commands. We cannot do it alone.

We need one another to remind us to not become hardened by the injustices of the world. We need one another to avoid complacency and indifference. We need community because it can be easy to turn our backs to the suffering that others encounter. To get complacent and blindly say, “That’s ‘merely’ a sunrise.” Merely a flower. Merely a mountain....



## 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.





## COMING UP LATER

- Jan. 21: Congregational meeting.  
Jan. 28: Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday.  
Feb. 11: Mardi Gras Talent Show.



## BEFORE YOU GO...

- A few weeks ago we heard the Gospel story of the man who buried his talents in the ground. Poor guy. Maybe it's time for you, too, to dig up or dust off your talents ... and share them with your church pals. Coming up Feb. 11 is the return of the St. Stephen Mardi Gras Talent Show! Some of your favorite performers will grace the stage once more – but already we know of two multitalented young Lutherans who've created a new act for your enjoyment. Surely there'll be others. So mark your brand-new 2024 calendar: Feb. 11, after the liturgy, after a snack. More details to come.
- From the prayers we shared Sunday: “Be with those who keep awake at night: nurses and health-care staff working overnight shifts, caregivers for newborns and aging adults, those who are anxious or traveling, those who patrol streets to serve and protect. Reveal to all that the dark can be a place of calm and comfort filled with your presence.”
- Tallahassee Citizens Against the Death Penalty is having its annual signing of holiday cards for those on Death Row – from noon to 4 p.m. Sunday. “Please drop by, even for a short while, and sign as many cards as you can,” said Mary Anne Hoffman, the group’s chair. The signing is at Cascades Park – specifically, Suwannee Street across from the Florida Department of Transportation building. You can park along Suwannee or in parking lots nearby.
- 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!



## 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. - Game night meets in FH (outside group)

### This Saturday:

- 9 a.m. - DKG meets in FH  
1 p.m. - Alanon 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  
5 p.m. - Compassionate Friends meet in FH and sanctuary



### Monday, Dec. 4:

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

### Wednesday, Dec. 6:

- 5 p.m. - TIMA meets in FH



## UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

**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**



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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