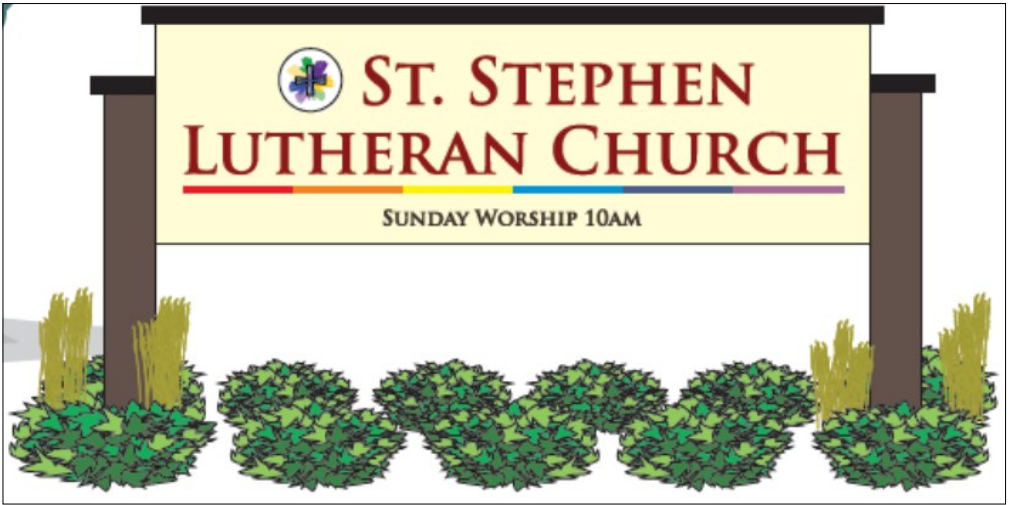




# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



## THIS SIGN IS THE CHOSEN ONE

By Pastor Tom

The votes are in and ballots counted! The Church Council had selected four designs for a new sign along North Meridian Road and invited our members to vote for their two favorites. In the end, it came down to Sign B and Sign D. And the winner is (*drum roll!*) Sign B! To date, we've raised \$7,598, and we have a pledge for \$1,000! Once that amount comes in, we'll be just \$400 shy of meeting the goal. Thank you to everyone for voting and for giving financial gifts toward improvements necessary for St. Stephen's future.

## ANDREA'S FAVORITE POSE

Andrea Notley lives for this moment – when the Giving Tree deadline arrives and



she's surrounded by a sea of toys and other gifts, on their way to local families who could use a Christmas boost. Year after year, she has led our congregation's Giving Tree participation. "St. Stephen has done it again!" she said this week. "Even though I took on more families this year, we did it. We adopted eight

families – totaling 26 people – and by the looks of it, they're going to have a happy Christmas. Thank you so much, St. Stephen. You make my heart happy!" (Photo by Colin Hackley)

## FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT FOR NOVEMBER

Total giving: \$18,117

Total expenses: \$23,340

So for the month we were **\$5,223 in the red.**

# CONTINUING OUR 'CATHOLIC' CONVERSATION

By Pastor Tom

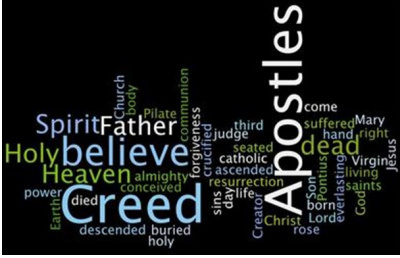
One little word ... "catholic." Thank you for your responses to last week's newsletter, where I wrote that some members had asked about the word "catholic" in our creeds, and had wondered whether it could be replaced with "universal." Since then, some have welcomed the desire to better communicate our beliefs, while others have expressed caution about changing the historical/theological content and meaning behind the word.

Please rest assured that the brief article did not reflect rigorous thought, discussion or prayer processes. Nor will we, as a congregation, rush to any conclusion. I am reaching out to the Office of the Bishop for advice and informally seeking counsel from a clergy group. To date, I'm finding that the once-popular "universal" definition is not such a good one to replace "catholic."

Some find "catholic" the best word, while to others it's a stumbling block.

In Luther's Large Catechism we find, in his explanation of the "Third Article" of the Creed, how he translated into German: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, one holy *Christian* church, the *community* of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the flesh, and the life everlasting. Amen." (*Italics mine*) Luther also found the word "communion" (as in communion of saints) to be better translated into "community." Not as a separate belief, but as a clarifier to the "one holy Christian church." To be continued!



# CHRISTMAS CONSTRUCTION

In previous newsletters, we've seen Habitat-house builders. Today, we have gingerbread-house builders. Hard at work last Sunday were (from left, going clockwise) Blake Simmons, Elliot Reece, Graham Reece, Violet Greeley, Jonas Holdcraft, Colleen Holdcraft (standing), Astrid van der Mark (we assume that's her, though all we can see is the top of her head), Stephanie Leitch and Ceilia Greeley.



The plan, says Terri Schmitt, is for these tiny houses to be on display Sunday in the fellowship hall, after the liturgy. Yes, they're smaller than the Habitat house but, presumably, they're also tastier. (Photo by Terri)

# BRING YOUR CASH FOR THIS SUNDAY'S NOISY OFFERING

Our Ministry Minute speaker this Sunday is Adrian Fogelin, author of numerous works of young-adult fiction, and half of the musical duo Hot Tamale. Like our own Karen Olson, she lives in the Seminole Manor neighborhood. Both Karen and Adrian regularly seek out ways to assist their neighbors, many of whom face multiple challenges. Adrian will fill us in on ways we can become involved in Seminole Manor's food ministry. Also this Sunday, we'll collect a Noisy Offering to benefit their ministry. So come prepared! Bring your checkbook or cash or whatever means you use to donate to a worthy cause.



# OUTREACH UPDATES

By Sharon Simmons, outreach coordinator

**GOING PLACES:** Members and friends of St. Stephen are generous and caring. Last week Justin Barfield (*pictured here with Pastor Tom*) came by to pick up



the many donations for CCYS Going Places and to receive the check for the bicycle we helped purchase for one of their clients. The CCYS tub in our fellowship hall is empty and waiting for items such as sweatshirts, socks, toiletries (any size), sanitary supplies, reusable water bottles and backpack-ready snacks.

**IRC:** The Outreach Committee invites you to join us in expanding our support of the International Rescue Committee by collecting household cleaning supplies such as laundry detergent, counter spray, toilet-bowl cleaner, mop fluid/general cleaning solution (Mr. Clean) and personal hygiene items such as deodorant (men or women), body lotion, shampoo, conditioner, body wash/bar soap and

maxi pads. Place items in the IRC tub in the fellowship hall. When it's full, those items will go immediately to the IRC for distribution. Cleaning and hygiene supplies are important because they can't be purchased with WIC or food stamps.

**TNT:** Our upcoming joint initiative with New Mount Zion AME Church will begin in January. It's TNT time! No, we're not blowing anything up; it's Toilet Paper 'N' Toiletries. There'll be a box in the fellowship hall beginning Jan. 1, and collections will run through Jan. 29. Those items will go to the Kearney Center.

**MANNA:** Manna on Meridian continues to need T-shirts to be repurposed into bags for food distribution on Manna days. The box is still in the fellowship hall for T-shirts size medium or larger. (*Photo by Lori Zengel*)

# HAIKU CORNER

By Lex Lutheran



## OUR AWESOME OFFICE MANAGER

Thank you to Lori for making our newsletters colorful and fun.

## TO OUR FEARLESS LEADERS

We're thankful you take your thankless Church Council roles so seriously.

President, Denise Bookwalter	Buildings/Grounds, Jake Hartung
Treasurer, Jennifer Dritt	Worship & Music, Beth Alexander
Care & Hospitality, Margaret Bowers	Outreach, Sharon Simmons
Mutual Ministry, Jennifer Buchanan	Education & Discipleship, Rita Ford
Communications, Audrey Post	Youth, vacant

to be an active community that welcomes all people to nurture and share their faith and gifts with everyone, according to God's call.



## THE YOUNG AND THE LUTHERAN

I just love to watch the kids of St. Stephen speak our mission out loud.

## EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

... John angered the religious leaders and we know he angered the political leaders, but isn't it interesting that he probably angered his own followers, too? With his sureness that the Messiah to come would bring military might and military liberation from Roman occupation – and with his truth about religious puppets. Zealots of every age never proclaim a God that is a mystery to human-kind, but speak of a vengeful God....

John's zeal now was dissolved and he wondered, like we all would have wondered: Was it all worth it? He'd pointed out Jesus, named him the Lamb of God, but he hadn't known the kind of message Jesus would bring – and still not one sword had been picked up. Not a single army formed. No messianic army coming to rescue him. He'd laid it all on the line and now, in a cold, dark cell, he wondered ... for what? Maybe you've had similar feelings after trying to do something good or something you felt important to your faith – only to later have doubts and wonder if Jesus really is the One.

I can only imagine what it feels like to wait behind bars in prison. And I really want to find fault in John the Baptizer for his doubting of Jesus the One...But who among us in times and suffering hasn't had the same doubt?



## 'A SIXTH SENSE FOR TROUBLE'

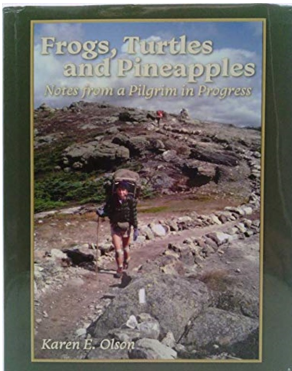
*By Karen E. Olson (Excerpt from the Aug. 13, 1979, edition of The Plow, a magazine about mountain life based in Abingdon, Virginia)*

... In an era without electricity, telephones or pavement, Sister Sophia [Moeller, a Lutheran deaconess nurse] was something of a local legend. Her hair-raising, heroic feats have been told and retold in mythic proportions. People say she had a sixth sense for trouble, braving blizzards on foot in response to some mysterious, telepathic cry for help.

That's not how Sister Sophia sees it. She's a feisty, no-nonsense woman who likes puppies, people and speaking her peace. She doesn't mind telling off the pregnant woman who refuses to get prenatal care: "If something goes wrong with your baby's delivery, I want you to hear it's all your fault."

... The most celebrated Sister Sophia story harks back to March of '42, when Catherine Weaver came due in a blizzard. She was bleeding seriously, five and a half miles from the road, marooned by drifts of snow several feet deep. Her husband, Wade, had a telephone because he worked for the Forest Service. Sophia called a doctor up from Damascus [Virginia] and had the Norfolk & Western railroad hold the train at Whitetop Gap, three or four miles away.

She hitched a sled to a couple of horses. With several men pulling the sled through the deepest drifts, Sophia and Mrs. Weaver got to the train on time. Thirty-five volunteers were pulling them near the end of the trip. Doctors at the hospital in Abingdon performed "the fastest Caesarean section I ever saw in my life," Sister Sophia recalls.



Mother and newborn son survived. He was named Dickie Field Norwest Weaver – "Norwest" for the railway that carried him. If he'd been a girl, he'd probably be named Sophia....

*You'll find this and more of Karen's stories in the book "Frogs, Turtles and Pineapples: Notes From a Pilgrim in Progress," available at church or from Karen.*

## PLACES YOU MIGHT WANT TO BE



- **SATURDAY:** Decorating the sanctuary! Beginning at 10 a.m.
- **SUNDAY:** During the liturgy, Rita Ford and Colleen Holdcraft will lead the St. Stephen children in a Hallelujah Dance. Also during that liturgy, Jonas Holdcraft will play the violin. We'll have a Noisy Offering and guest speaker (see story above). And we'll have a baptism! The liturgy begins at 10 a.m.
- **ALSO SUNDAY:** Astrid will be among the participants in the Tallahassee Youth Orchestra's Holiday Concert, at 3 p.m. in FSU's Ruby Diamond Concert Hall.



- **A WEEK FROM SATURDAY:** Worship on Christmas Eve, beginning at 6 p.m.
- **A WEEK FROM SUNDAY:** Worship on Christmas Day, beginning at 10 a.m.
- **JAN. 22:** Congregational meeting, after the liturgy.

## MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Remember that a donation to the Manna on Meridian food pantry can make a great gift. Visit <https://bit.ly/MannaonMeridian>. To donate in someone else's name, please include their name and address in the note section of the checkout process so Manna can send them a letter.
- Haven't filled out your "estimate of giving" card yet? You have until the end of the year. You may pick up a form in the narthex or, easiest of all, just email Lori your pledge.
- 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 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

Rita Ford - 12/18  
Wesley Holdcraft - 12/18  
Pastor Tom - 12/29  
Kate Stuart - 12/29  
Mike Martinez - 12/30  
Linda Eshleman - 01/04  
Karen Olson - 01/05  
Vince Muchuruza - 01/07  
Marsy Miller—01/10  
Erin Kenney - 01/11  
Mary Andersen - 01/11  
Mason Bonfanti - 01/11  
Sharon Gordon-Girvin - 01/11



## UPCOMING DATES

### **This Saturday, Dec. 17:**

**10 a.m.** - Decorating the sanctuary

### **This Sunday, Dec. 18:**

**9 a.m.** - Book study: "The Jesus Way" by Eugene Peterson

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

**10 a.m.** - Worship, Fourth Sunday of Advent/Noisy offering/Baptism

**11:00 a.m.** - Reception



### **Wednesday, Dec. 21:**

**7 p.m.** - Choir practice

### **Saturday, Dec. 24:**

**6 p.m.** - Worship with communion, Christmas Eve

### **Sunday, Dec. 25:**

**10 a.m.** - Worship, Christmas Day



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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