



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



'... AND HE NAMED HIM JESUS'

It was a busy, beautiful weekend at St. Stephen. At right, Rita Ford, Judi Duffy, Caroline Collins and Vicki Guttenplan were among those who arrived Saturday morning to decorate the Christmas tree, which Mark Warren delivered and set up. They also dressed up the rest of the sanctuary and the fellowship hall. Sunday morning, Pastor Tom baptized Lai'yani Amiyah Moore, one of the best-behaved babies in baptismal history. She's the daughter of Natalie Schiffer and Ronterrius Moore. In the top photo, you can see the participants in Sunday's children's program. Live music was provided by Chris and Jen Reece. In front of the altar, Reece boys Graham and Elliot portray a shepherd



and a king. Behind them are angelic Violet and Ceilia Greeley. Kneeling at the foot of the altar are Sunday's graceful dancers, Colleen Holdcraft and Rita Ford. Alas, you can't see their dancing or their joy – or all of their planning and rehearsal – but they were a key part of a memorable celebration of Jesus' birth. *(Top and bottom photos by Colin Hackley. Decorating photo by Susan Warren.)*

LAST-MINUTE GIFT IDEA

By Cassandra White

Oh no! You forgot Aunt Susan, and Christmas is Sunday! Don't worry. You can still give the gift of Manna on Meridian support. Make a gift in the name of anyone on your list, and they will receive a letter from the ministry stating that they have made a difference for hungry people and families in Tallahassee.



Just \$25 covers the cost of nonperishable groceries for one family and offsets the cost of produce. Use the online payment form found at <https://bit.ly/MannaonMeridian> and enter a note saying whom you would like to honor with this gift.

SEMINOLE MANOR'S FOOD BANK

By Adrian Fogelin

This is part of the message delivered to us during our Ministry Minute last Sunday. Actually, Pastor Tom delivered guest speaker Adrian Fogelin's message – because poor Adrian woke up without a voice. Later in the liturgy was our monthly Noisy Offering. (We're still waiting to see how much money it raised for the Seminole Manor Neighborhood food bank.) In case you missed out, you can still donate via St. Stephen. Label your gift "Noisy Offering."

We are an example of the mysterious ways God works to bring good into the world. The food bank operates out of what was my father's house.... When he died the house did not stand unused for long. The first use was as a children's library.... Giving away food from the same location began thanks to serendipity. A neighbor who worked at Lucky's Market realized that a lot of good food was going in the dumpster. She began bringing it home for the neighbors. At first we set up a table in the driveway with a "Free, Help Yourself" sign on it. Then we remembered we were in Florida and put the food in coolers. Then we added a tent.

As the piles of food grew, we began driving a truck to the grocery store and pulling up to the loading ramp, sometimes three times a day. We developed a relationship with the Kearney Center and dropped excess food off there – what neighborhood can use three truckloads of bananas?

As the project grew, and grew, Lucky's asked us to join Second Harvest of the Big Bend, the North Florida arm of the federal program Feeding America. That way they would get credit for their donations. This was a big leap for us.... Little by little the entire house was converted into a food bank....

The monthly statistics we turn in to Second Harvest show that we feed up to 500 people per month.... That brings me to the people who frequent the pantry. Many are neighbors who own or rent homes in Seminole Manor Neighborhood [in the southwest part of town], but we are feeding a large homeless population as well. There are two encampments within a short distance of the food bank. Residents of the encampments come in on foot and by bike.... One woman arrives on a skateboard.



Right now, we are doing our best to stock giveaways that will help the homeless stay warm (sweaters, blankets, gloves, socks), and foods that are shelf-stable and can be eaten without cooking. We are always in need of things like socks, towels and blankets, especially now, when the weather is harsh....



We have been giving food away for about six years now. We have fed a heck of a lot of people, but have created something else that is, at least to me, equally important. We have become a community that cares for its members. We have come to know and support each other....

EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

... It is no small task to listen to God and then try to respond to God's intervention. Joseph's story (like Adrian's) reminds us that bringing to life the spark of God in a suffering world is risky, and messy, and can even be dangerous. Yet, when we welcome God's transforming work into the lives of those around us and witness change and growth, we come to find that before our very eyes are amazing rewards.

The reward is ..., as a midwife on a cold and dark night, we just may find ourselves accompanying another who carries Christ within them. We just might find ourselves with the child in our arms and welcomed; protected and nurtured.

It's messy. It's not easy, people will whisper, and it will likely break our hearts wide open. Yet, what else is there to do in these last days of Advent, but go and look for Mary?

COMING UP

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



MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- **Sad news about Pastor Tom's dad:** As of Wednesday, he was in ICU in Winter Park, and his condition was deteriorating. Pastor Tom has arranged for another pastor to fill in here on Christmas Eve. As we await further details, the Holdcraft family is in our prayers.
- **Thanks to the many members and friends** who've contributed to the St. Stephen newsletter this year. At the top of the list, of course, are Pastor Tom – who keeps us so well-informed and inspired – and Office Manager Lori, who every week brings this publication to life with illustrations and color. Among the other regular contributors are ace photographer Colin Hackley, Sharon Simmons, Caroline Collins, Terri Schmitt, Karen Olson, Dave Suhrweir, Judi Duffy....
- **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 or call 850-385-2728.

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

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
Mark Canning - 01/13
Nathan Basford - 01/19
Myrna Dowdell - 01/21
Stephen Barton - 01/22
Denise Bookwalter - 01/22
Ann Hingst - 01/22
Sandy Ness - 01/24
Gladys Kane - 01/28
Jennifer Buchanan - 01/29
Warren Schave - 01/31
Jayden Schiffer - 01/31



UPCOMING DATES

Saturday, Dec. 24:

6 p.m. – Worship with communion, Christmas Eve

Sunday, Dec. 25:

10 a.m. - Worship, Christmas Day

The office will be closed Thursday, Dec. 29 and Friday, Dec. 30.



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>.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, ELCA
2198 N. Meridian Road | Tallahassee, FL 32303

The Rev. Tom Holdcraft, Pastor

*Edited by Lex Lutheran. Designed by Lori Zengel, office manager, sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com.
Website: <http://www.ststephenlutherantally.com/>*

If you no longer want to receive this newsletter, please [unsubscribe](#). To unsubscribe please reply with "UNSUBSCRIBE" as the subject line.