



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter



God has shepherded us through another year together ... though "together" keeps getting redefined, doesn't it? We look ahead to a year when we'll get to worship in our safe, sturdy and newly spiffed-up sanctuary. We look ahead to singing without masks on – though, alas, not anytime soon. We look ahead to whatever new opportunities God offers us. A blessed Christmas to you, St. Stephen!

CHRISTMAS EVE TOGETHER

For both in-person and online worshippers, our Christmas Eve service is scheduled to begin at 4 p.m. Friday. As always, we encourage those planning to worship with us in the fellowship hall to register ahead of time on SignUp Genius: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0c45a4a62ea7fbc16-sunday>. This morning, Pastor Tom increased the available "slots" from 50 to 75. So in case you looked last night and concluded there was no room at the inn, take another look!

We'll be having refreshments after the service. "Please join us if you're able," said Margaret Bowers, care and hospitality coordinator. "See you all then."



GRATEFUL FOR YOUR PLEDGES

As Pastor Tom announced Sunday, the Church Council is thankful for St. Stephen's generous Estimate of Giving totals for 2022. So far, 38 individuals/families have submitted pledges totaling just over \$152,000.

Judging from last year, we're expecting another \$30,000 or so in pledges, which would give us about \$182,000. As those of you who've served as leaders know, church budgeting is not an exact science. Each year, the Council proceeds in faith – praying that God will provide the money needed to carry out our ministries. Pledges help enormously as the Council crafts a budget proposal, but not every member feels comfortable making a pledge. If your financial situation *does* allow you to pledge, and you haven't done so yet, now would be a perfect time. Bless you for your prayerful consideration.

2022 Estimate of Giving
In support of God's mission for St. Stephen Lutheran Church.
It's for 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.



“We also remind you that there will be a congregational meeting Jan. 23 after the liturgy,” Pastor said. “The main business of that meeting will be to vote on next year’s budget and elect new Council members. Everyone is welcome to attend, but only members of St. Stephen are eligible to vote. If you wish to become a member, please contact me.”

Now, about those *other* pledges: The Council is still celebrating the fact that your pledges have exceeded the amount needed to complete the sanctuary repairs and renovations. Rest assured that those extra pledges will be put to good use in the sanctuary. Here are the latest Capital Campaign figures:



Total estimated cost: \$196,999
Money in hand: \$191,974
Money pledged but not yet in hand: \$10,200
Extra money donated: \$5,175



OUR ORCHARD

Here it is: Photographic proof that we have tangerines, courtesy of our fruit-tree czar, Building & Grounds Coordinator David Butler. You can't pick them until mid- to late January, if the weather stays as is, he says.

GOD GIVES, AND WE SHARE

By Andrea Notley, St. Stephen's Giving Tree coordinator

A special thank-you to everyone who adopted a family member or donated money toward the Giving Tree, an annual community effort that raises money to brighten the Christmases of families in financial need. It warms my heart when I think how amazing St. Stephen is. We have a lot of ministries going on, and even our own campus needs repairs – yet we make it all happen somehow. The Giving Tree families were SO very grateful for you. I, too, am very grateful and blessed to be part of the St. Stephen family.



DOUG BAGNALL, U.S. NAVY

“As many of you know, Doug joined the U.S. Navy,” Zach Bagnall wrote in a message last Thursday. “We found out yesterday he will leave for boot camp at the beginning of January instead of February. Good news is we’ll get to spend Christmas and New Year’s together. Please keep us in your thoughts, especially Doug as he heads off to boot camp, then his A School.

“We wish all of you a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year with continued health and wellness for us all!”



WELCOME, TERRANCE

By Pastor Tom

In our worship services the last couple of Sundays we’ve welcomed Terrance, whom we’ve been helping with groceries and other food items from time to time. He’d been living in a tent for about 90 days, but now he has a subsidized apartment behind the Ross store on Apalachee Parkway.

Yesterday we helped Terrance get some furniture from Salvation Army over to his new place – thanks to St. Stephen’s Justice and Mercy Fund, a U-Haul and the extra hands from Jonas, Wesley and Davis! Terrance also needs a lamp or two, a cake pan, a large pot that he can cook chili in, a deep-fat fryer and basic bike-repair tools ... in case you have extra to give away.



ELIZABETH AND MARY: EXCERPT FROM SUNDAY’S SERMON

... Elizabeth is pregnant with John the Baptist and Mary pregnant with Jesus.... The mystery, for me, that surrounds this scene is the mystery of knowing. Did Elizabeth and Mary know? Did they know who their baby boys would grow up to be? The answer is not entirely clear. But what is clear is this: Mary and Elizabeth put their lives on the line. Neither entered into their calling in docile ways. They accepted all the risks, and we are reminded of other women in the Bible who have sung songs that have been retold throughout the ages, and how they also put their lives on the line.

Miriam sang a song of resistance when God delivered the oppressed people from Egypt. The once-barren Hannah sang a song of resistance when she was afflicted by people in power. Bold songs of God’s good news bursting into the world.

Mary’s song of resistance ... speaks of Mary “bursting with God-news and dancing the song of my Savior God. God took one good look at me, Mary sang, and proclaimed, ‘Look what happened - I’m the most fortunate woman on earth!’” This translation from The Message reminds us that Mary sang and danced resistance against those who oppress people, subjugate women, and belittle God’s blessing upon the low in status....

Want to read Pastor Tom’s sermons? Go to <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/>, look for the dropdown menu called “More,” and click on “Sermons.”

A correction to Sunday’s sermon: Pastor Tom spoke about two things happening in the gospel. One of them was “the in-vitro John recognized the in-vitro Jesus.” “Of course, I should have said the in-utero John recognized the in-utero Jesus,” Pastor said. “Thanks to the Amazing ZING (aka Dave Suhrweir) for bringing this to my attention.”

SPECIAL CONCERT AT GRACE

Our sisters and brothers at Grace Lutheran are hoping for a good turnout for their upcoming piano concert. Next Wednesday, Jackie Yong, Grace's keyboard/piano/organ specialist, will present a Christmas program and even share a bit of his home story. For him, home is Malaysia. He's in Tallahassee pursuing his doctorate at FSU's College of Music. The free concert begins at 3 p.m. Dec. 29 at Grace, 2919 Miccosukee Road. For details, call 850-877-5423.



HAIKU CORNER

By Lex Lutheran

RETURN OF THE TWINS

Violet, Ceilia,
Mom and Dad were back in church.
My, those girls have grown.

ALSO SEEN AT CHURCH...

Oh, and Rebecca
and mom Sue, too. Plus Stephen.
Such welcome faces.

WHO – ME?

Here's an idea:
Let's pick folks at random and
say, "You! Cantor! Now!"



'MARY, DID YOU KNOW?'

Many thanks to Rita Ford and Colleen Holdcraft for "Mary, Did You Know?" – their graceful, powerful liturgical dance during Sunday's service. (Photo at right by Amrit Bhagwandin. Screen capture above by Lori Zengel.)



MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- **Reminder from Karen Olson:** The famous “Festival of Lessons and Carols” will be broadcast live from King’s College in Cambridge, England. It’s at 10 a.m. on Christmas Eve on the WFSU-FM classical station, 91.5.
- Ruth caught a glimpse of lovely employee Jan Harrison in a Bevis Funeral Home commercial last night. Have you seen it?
- 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 2021 Flower Chart in the narthex. The cost is \$35, which you can place in the offering plate.
- This is our final newsletter of the year. We’ll be back with you in ’22.
- Have anything to add to a future newsletter? Email Lori at sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com or call 850-385-2728.



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

David Kennell - 12/24
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
Mary Anderson - 01/11
Mason Bonfanti - 01/11
Sharon Gordon-Girvin - 01/11
Erin Kenney - 01/11
Mark Canning - 01/13
Natalie Schiffer - 01/15
Nathan Basford - 01/19



UPCOMING DATES

This Friday:

4 p.m. - Worship with communion, Christmas Eve

This Sunday:

10 a.m. - Worship, First Sunday of Christmas, Christmas Lessons and Carols

***The office will be closed Monday, Dec. 27 and Wednesday, Dec. 29.**



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

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