



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

Don't forget! There's a potluck Sunday after church, where we'll wish former Office Manager Lori Zengel best wishes and Godspeed as she heads off to her next adventure!



A REFRESHING GLANCE AT OUR FINANCIAL HEALTH



By Rudy Hehn and the Finance Committee

Pastor Tom and others have praised the presentation and tone of the Finance Committee's report last Sunday. "Two extraordinary congregational meetings in a row!" said Pastor. "I feel so blessed to be the pastor at St. Stephen!" For those who couldn't attend, the committee has provided this quick Q&A summary.

Q: Why are we talking about money?

A: Money is one of the tools we use to accomplish our goals as a community of committed Christians.

Q: Who supplies funds for St. Stephen?

A: About 95% of our operating income comes from our congregational families.

Q: Has there been much change in our giving?

A: In the last five years, we lost 12 families that contributed faithfully. However, we gained 10 new families. Giving has increased but not quite enough to keep up with the increased costs. We do not rely on just a few donors. We have broad support among many families, and we feel this is a sign of a healthy church.

Q: What about expenses?

A: It's no surprise that we're spending more. Our expenses have increased at about the rate of inflation. Insurance, utilities and office expenses have increased. The Finance Committee feels we spend our money wisely.

Q: What's the bottom line for the last five years? Is giving keeping up with expenses?

A: Yes, but just barely. Our special projects, such as the building renovations in 2021-2022, the piano and our new sign, have done well. However, our general month-to-month giving has fallen behind our needs.

Q: How far behind?

A: Thankfully, not too bad, but the Finance Committee is concerned. On average, our expenses are running 5% more than our giving. It's a little better this year, but we're still behind.

Q: As of today, do we have enough funds on hand?

A: No, we do not. We have just enough funds to pay our expenses each month. We have no reserve funds to handle even a minor emergency such as plumbing, roofing or AC repairs. Running short on funds also limits our ability for community outreach and other programs. It doesn't stop us, but it limits how much we can do.

Q: *What do we see ahead?*

A: The Council and Finance Committee are anticipating a small increase in our typical recurring expenses. We will review salaries and expect these will be increased. We also will begin to plan for much-needed improvements for Hingst Hall and the education building. Also, our new financial software will improve our ability to track our income and expenses.

Q: *So, what should my family do?*

A: Three things. First, continue to stay involved. We're much stronger together and we need your input and support. Second, invite someone you know to join us! New members bring fresh ideas and broader support. Finally, consider your family's giving this year and in the future. If you're able to increase your annual giving by 10%, not only will we meet our expenses, we can gather reserve funds. We want to be good stewards of our resources. Having a reserve will help us cover emergencies and allow us to better fulfill our mission.

Q: *What about the building improvements?*

A: The Council, pastor and Finance Committee are working on this plan. Some members have already approached us about donating toward building improvements. Stay tuned!

DEFINING MUTUAL MINISTRY

Congratulations to Sylvia Smith, who was officially confirmed Sunday as the coordinator of our Mutual Ministry activities. I overheard one member whisper during Sunday's meeting, "What is Mutual Ministry anyhow?" Here's a reminder from Pastor Tom.

The Mutual Ministry Committee facilitates communication and feedback with the pastor and the congregation. The group acts a little like a human-resources department – to ensure staff support and dialogue while being attentive to the Holy Spirit's work in guidance with the mission of the church. Sometimes the pastor and staff can feel alone, as if on an island, disconnected. This committee helps keep me from feeling like a "lone ranger." The team of five to six people is a small group where I can share ideas and challenges that come with ministry.



ALL SMILES

Audrey Post forwarded this photo and note regarding one of our members: "Diane Hines spent a few days last week in Atlanta visiting her daughter, son-in-law and adorable granddaughter, Quinn, who will celebrate her third birthday later this month. She sent me this photo to let me know she had arrived safely. It's just so darned cute!"

REMINDER: ADVENTURES IN RENEWAL

By Pastor Tom

We continue our work of inclusivity and sharing the Gospel of Jesus in word and deed. Yet the cultural environment in the United States has undergone significant changes. What used to be a steady flow of new people to the church, new building campaigns and an overflow of resources has significantly diminished in the last 20 years. Many congregations have invested a significant amount of time, energy and programming resources in an effort to reverse this reality, to no avail.

What if God's invitation today is to set aside the institutional dilemmas that churches may be facing? Not because they aren't real and don't need to be addressed, but because the best way to address them is first to learn to be led by God into deeper connections with one another and our neighbors. This has always been, and remains, the path of church renewal. Most important, God is at the center of this process.

This is the Adventures in Renewal process, which will begin Aug. 24 – a yearlong journey centered on Scripture, prayer, listening and relationship building. If you're interested in joining the Renewal Team, please contact me.

NOT QUITE SURE ...

... what this “Renewal Team” stuff is all about? At Sunday’s meeting, Pastor Tom explained that we’re using materials generated by the Greater Milwaukee Synod. So in case you’d like to explore this whole proposal further, here’s a link:

<https://milwaukee-synod.org/resources/for-congregations/resources-for-mission-renewal/>

Also, here’s an excerpt from the Milwaukee web-site:

“We recognize that often, we have struggled to authentically connect with those who aren’t already a part of our congregations, which has led to too many times in which the default expectation is that any newcomer needs to come in and be like ‘us.’ These resources are meant as a first step to addressing that disconnect. By listening, learning, and experimenting, the Spirit will connect us with what God is already doing in the lives of those outside our congregation, and we will experience the renewal God desires for us all.”



QUICK QUIZ

Which hymn from last Sunday required us to sing the word “wert”?



It was “Holy, Holy, Holy.” The line went: “falling down before Thee, Which wert and art and evermore shalt be.” Translation: “falling down before you, who were and are and evermore shall be.” Here in the 21st century, “wert” doesn’t get dusted off much.

GREED IS NOT GOOD: AN EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM’S LATEST SERMON

... Jesus said, “Be on guard against all kinds of greed.” Our government must hear these words and take them to heart and then to action because it’s given itself over to greed. Withdrawing aid to the poorest nations of the world because we feel taken advantage of is a sin. Taking medicine out of the hands of organizations that use it to help eradicate disease that runs rampant over impoverished people is a sin. “One’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” The Teacher, Jesus, said that....

Did you know 1 in 3 teen girls don't have access to menstrual products?!

This event is open to all middle school, high school, and college age students to attend!

BACK TO SCHOOL

PERIOD PRODUCTS PARTY

Join us for a fun-filled event with delicious food trucks, music, and community as we come together to support students in need.

Help us fight against period poverty and ensure every student returns to school with confidence and the supplies they need to succeed!

August 9th, 2025
3pm–6pm

621 Gallery: 625 Railroad Square, Tallahassee, FL

BEFORE YOU GO...



This message goes with the bright poster above, passed along by Cassandra White: Join 621 Gallery and the nonprofit Black Women Feel Pain Too for a back-to-school period-products party. Black Women Feel Pain Too brings educational information and free hygiene products to underserved communities. Here's where you can find out more: <https://facebook.com/events/s/back-to-school-period-products/1382239066174163/>

- Tom Buchanan and his fellow musicians will present the Thursday Night Music Club's fantastic Annual Jazz Showcase a week from today: Thursday, Aug. 14, at Ruby Diamond Concert Hall. The show starts at 7:30 p.m. (doors open at 7). The cost is only \$17. Get your tickets at <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/thursdaynightmusicclub/1765189>
- The monthly OWLs luncheon is scheduled for 11 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 12, at the Olive Garden. Please let Barbara Sullivan know if you plan to attend.
- We hear that our new, weekly chair-aerobics sessions are going great. Thanks to Audrey Post for coordinating them. Want to take part? Even if you're not a member? Show up in the sanctuary at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday. Cost is a puny 5 bucks.
- Most of you know that St. Stephen has a digital church directory. Many of us have the app on our phones. (Some have a .com version, which Val Kibler reminded me of.) The beauty is that, as long as you have your phone or iPad in hand, you can instantly check on Jan's birthday or Nathan's phone number. You can even update your own info. If you're not part of the digital world, our office manager can print out a version for you. Of course, as soon as you print it out, it's already becoming dated. With our digital directory, updates are instant and painless. So if you don't already have access to it, check with the church office. In fact, that's the answer to many of life's questions: Check with the church office.
- Oh, and there's a new occupant in the church office. Welcome to the hot seat, Rita Ford! Thanks for sending out this newsletter!
- 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, out by the name tags, or ask Rita to sign you up. Include the \$40 with your regular offering. And then take the flowers home!



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS



Caroline Collins - 08/14
Marilyn Larson - 08/22
Greta Scavone - 08/23
Jerry Harrison - 08/24
Andrea Notley - 08/26
Susan Warren - 08/26
Melissa Barton - 08/27

**If you have an upcoming birthday not listed above, let the church office know.*

SERVING THIS WEEK

Pastor Tom, Preaching and Presiding; **Jen Dritt**, Assisting Minister; **Rita Ford**, Cup Minister; **Graham Reece**, Lector; **Sandy Lamb-Daniels and Audrey Post**, Tech Team; **Linda Eshleman and Barbara Sullivan**, Altar Guild; **Margaret Bowers, Diane Hines, Susan Warren**, Counters; **Simone Schuster**, Cantor; **Denise Bookwalter**, Announcements

SERVING AUGUST 17

Pastor Tom, Preaching and Presiding; **Audrey Post**, Assisting Minister; **Susan Warren**, Cup Minister; **Ceilia Greeley**, Lector; **Caroline Collins and Mark Greeley**, Tech Team; **Rita Ford and Susan Warren**, Altar Guild; **Billie Reardon and Loraine Sudberg**, Counters; **Cassandra White**, Cantor; **Denise Bookwalter**, Announcements

COMING UP

Today:

Noon - Al-Anon meets in Pastor Emory Hingst Memorial Fellowship Hall, aka Hingst Hall (HH)
7 p.m. - AA meets in HH

This Friday:

9:30 a.m. - TOPS meets in HH

This Sunday:

9 a.m. - Book study
10 a.m. - Worship: Third Sunday after Pentecost



Monday, August 11:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH
7 p.m. - Compassionate Friends meets in Matthew Room

Tuesday, August 12:

11 a.m. - OWL's gathering
5 p.m. - NA meets in HH
5:30 p.m. - Chair Yoga in Sanctuary

Wednesday, August 13:

10 a.m - Friendship Quilting Group
5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH
7 p.m - Choir



If you have news or photos to share, please send them to Rita 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 Ron Hartung (alias Lex Lutheran). Designed by Rita Ford, office manager, sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com.
Website: <http://www.ststephenlutherantally.com/>*

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