



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

A SPIRITUAL RETREAT UPDATE

By Caroline Collins

Our retreat “Waiting for Eden: Holding onto Hope in Hard Times”

is coming up Saturday, April 11. The deadline to register is

only three weeks away. Please register on paper by Sunday, March 15. Simply pick up a registration form in the narthex on Sunday or see Rita in the church office during the work week, and return the completed form likewise.

Thanks to a generous sponsor, it will cost you nothing but time to attend the retreat. A catered lunch, beverages and snacks are included. Here are answers to questions you may have:

1. **“Do I need to read the book ‘Love Without Limits’ by keynote speaker Jacqueline Bussie?”** No, you do not. If you have one, there will be an opportunity to have the author sign it, so bring it along. If you’d like to buy one, there’s a list of sources in the narthex and church office. You may also find the list in your email if you browse back to Feb. 12.
2. **“Do I need to stay the whole day?”** No, you may leave whenever you wish. You may attend just the morning or the afternoon segment, if you can’t spare the whole day (9 a.m.-4 p.m.). It will help in our planning to know this by March 15, especially for lunch numbers.
3. **“Is the venue friendly for those with disabilities?”** Yes. There is designated parking close to the Goodwood Gardens Carriage House, and there are accessible rest rooms.

DONATION DRIVES

The words “toilet paper” don’t appear in the Bible — but ministry to others can hardly get more basic or more welcome than donations of you-know-what. And you, St. Stephen, really came through during February’s collection! “Many thanks to the congregation for their generous donations of toilet



paper and toiletries for the Kearney Center,” outreach coordinator Sharon Simmons says. “They are so appreciated.”

But the needs never stop, do they? So Sharon is also here to remind us that this Sunday we begin our diaper-drop collection for Refuge House. Drop off diapers on the designated pew in Hingst Fellowship Hall.

YARDWORK 101

By Rob Schiffer, grounds coordinator

In advance of Easter Sunday, we'd like to hold a groundskeeping day. We're seeking volunteers to assist with a general sprucing-up of the church property. This event will take place Saturday, March 7, between 10 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Please RSVP to me (robschiffer@gmail.com) if you'd like to lend a hand. A headcount would help to better identify what we can hope to accomplish, and provide coffee and doughnuts for those participating.



THEN, ONE WEEK LATER...

Thanks to Simone Schuster and others, San Luis Mission Park is about to get another cleanup. If you can help, show up at the park at 10 a.m. Saturday, March 14 (or 9:30 if you want to start out with coffee and pastries). No need to bring anything; gloves, pickers, buckets and other materials will be provided. (Please note: San Luis Mission Park is not the same as Mission San Luis. If you're unclear, Google Maps can help.)



NOT YOUR FATHER'S BIBLE STUDY

Simone also announced Sunday that she's organizing a new Bible study. It's aimed at young adults and young professionals — people who are in college or in their 30s. The group will be reading through the Book of Isaiah and connecting with other young Christians. When: Mondays at 7 p.m. Where: Simone's house. To find out more (such as her address), call her at 727-420-6242.



GREETINGS, ST. STEPHEN CAMPERS

By Mark Greeley, certified camp counselor (sort of)

The annual church camping trip is scheduled for the weekend of April 17-19 at St. Joseph Peninsula State Park. This is a great event every year: It never ever rains, and the mosquitoes only come by to gently fan you with their wings for a



pleasant breeze. If you're interested in this event, check these details:

- We already have enough sites for everyone (got the reservations 11 months ago).
- The leaders handle

the food. We don't eat fancy, but it's warm and filling and we cook it for you.

- Whether you want to stay 2 nights, 1 night or zero nights, you're welcome to come on out and spend some time with the group. There are friendly faces around from Friday morning to Sunday afternoon.
- If you need camping equipment, we can help. Talk to Colin Hackley or me.

In all seriousness, it's a fun weekend at a beautiful spot with time to walk, talk and beach — a chance to have campfires, sunsets and a Saturday-evening worship. Colin and I are your go-to people if you have questions.

Colin's and Mark's contact information is in the St. Stephen digital directory. If you don't have that, ask Rita in the church office. (Photo by Colin)

THERE GOES ISABEL

By Karl Barton

Isabel Barton began her music therapy internship at Tallahassee Memorial



Hospital in July 2025 and successfully completed it on Dec. 19. She had walked in her Duquesne University graduation ceremony last May, but she finally received her diploma in January, since the internship was the final requirement for the degree. Also in January, Isabel took and passed her Board Certification examination, which earned her the Music Therapist-Board Certified (MT-BC) credential. With her degree and credentials in hand, Isabel began looking for positions on the East Coast and very quickly had two interviews, one of which went very well and led to a job offer with AccentCare for a music therapist position in Washington, D.C. She will be working at two hospitals and may do additional work with the associated hospice care.

As it turns out, Isabel's brother, Stephen, and his wife, Crystal, had just bought a four-bedroom house in Annandale, Virginia, on Dec. 12, and everyone had pitched in to help them move over Christmas. This visit, by the way, included attending a Christmas Eve service at the Korean Presbyterian Church of Washington that was entirely in Korean and included a performance by the youth orchestra, conducted by none other than Stephen. The end result is that Isabel and her boyfriend, Tate Hanlon, will have a place to stay as they figure out exactly where they will live.

While Melissa and I will enjoy having our empty nest again, we will definitely miss having Isabel and Tate around the house, and the waffles, muffins and baked items that Isabel regularly makes. So, with impeccable timing as my position at Thomas University is curtailed starting next fall, Isabel will move off the Barton payroll, and a new era begins for Isabel as well as her parents!

Watch for future updates as Karl charts his next path. (Photo by Colin Hackley)

REST IN PEACE

Our sister Jan Harrison, who always goes out of her way to greet the rest of us with a smile, has been nursing a broken heart. Wayne Harrison, Jan and Jerry's son, passed away early last Sunday. Please pray for the Harrisons.

A PLACE AT THE TABLE

Next week is Pride Week, and St. Stephen has partnered with Equality Florida to set up a table to meet people and celebrate from 2 to 7 p.m. on Saturday, March 7. We're looking for friendly folks to staff our table for an hour, hand out flyers, answer questions about St. Stephen and have fun. Please let Sylvia Smith know if you have any questions or would like to know how to sign up for this event at Cascades Park.



THANK-YOU NOTE

Passed along by Dave Suhrweir

Dear Dave,

I want to thank you and the congregation so much for what you all have done to ensure our safe houses stay open. I also want to thank you for your kindness, and for informing me of all the updates that are going on in the church. It is a breath of fresh air, especially in this climate. Please keep in touch, and we will be back to visit again.

Janel Diaz

Executive Director, Capital Tea Inc.

www.CapitalTea.org



APRIL AT A GLANCE

April 5: Easter!

April 11: Retreat!

April 12: Liturgy with guest preacher Jacqueline Bussie!

April 17-19: Camping trip!



'BEING LIKE GOD': EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM'S SERMON

I believe ... that God is not finished with us. In the same way that God was not finished with Adam and Eve after they were exiled from the Garden of Eden. In our reading today, we find a story about the ways humans respond (typically) when we are given boundaries. It was God's first rule/law: "You can eat from any tree in the garden except for this one." Eden, the garden of delight, abundance, fullness and plenty, should have been enough for us, but when it comes to the lure of "being like God," it's too tempting. Now, the boundaries between good and evil become blurred. And if we're not careful, we'll lean to being "like God" every time.

The imagery and lessons are useful, and critical for us to soak in today on this First Sunday in Lent. God's reign, God's empire is present and growing stronger each day. You, by being here and hearing this message, give the world hope, one person at a time.

REASSURING NEWS

As Pastor Tom stated in last Sunday's sermon, the world delivers discouraging news every single day. We can't ignore it, but we can supplement it with encouraging news. Much of that is found in the Gospels. And, as you've read in this newsletter before, there's also encouragement offered every week by Fix the News. It's a compendium of tidbits that remind us of positive developments from around the world. Some of us subscribe to it (visit www.fixthenews.com). Not instead of the traditional news outlets but in addition to them — to give ourselves a healthier, more balanced news diet. Recently Fix the News offered 99 Stories of Progress from the preceding year. Here are three of them.

Disease Elimination: It takes years of dedication and multi-agency coordination to eliminate a disease, and yet 17 countries hit that milestone in 2025 — the most in one year ever. Trachoma bit the dust in Egypt, Mauritania, Senegal, Burundi, Fiji. The first-ever "triple elimination" by the Maldives. Brazil became the first country of over 100 million to stop mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The list goes on.

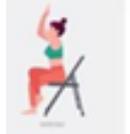
Disaster Response: What do Ebola outbreaks and natural disasters have in common? We're ready for them. In the first half of 2025, 94% fewer people died in weather-related disasters compared to the historical six-month average. And in September an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was isolated and sequenced in just 24 hours.

Cleaner Air: Are we entering the clean-air-ocene? Global concentrations of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and organic carbon are all falling. The EU has been smashing clean-air pledges ahead of schedule. And the average citizen now lives 2.9 years longer in China thanks to air-quality reforms.

THE RETURN OF EVENING YOGA

By Audrey Post

We are resuming our weekly 5:30 p.m. Tuesday yoga classes in the sanctuary on March 3, but with a couple of changes.



First, we'll still have chair yoga, but we also have the option of bringing mats and exercising on the floor or in a standing position. We have plenty of room to spread out; we just have to put the chairs back in place at the end of class. Our certified instructor, Fatimah Zaid, always emphasizes adaptive poses, and it's not supposed to hurt. She guides you as you learn what feels right for you.

Second, we're going to a monthly subscription payment plan. The cost will remain \$5 per person per session, and payment will be due before the first class of the month. Most months have four Tuesdays, so that's \$20 a month. (Although March has five Tuesdays, we're not having yoga class March 17 because it's Spring Break.)

Rita Ford is handling the money, but we're keeping it separate from church funds. Cash only, please. The subscription guarantees your place in the class. If you cannot attend a class, you may send a friend in your place, but there are no refunds. Nor can you drop in when it's convenient for you and pay \$5, unless it's your first time and you want to see what it's like. Either you're in or you're not.

Here's why: Fatimah is cutting us a break by charging us only \$40 per session, but we needed to have eight people each session to keep the cost at \$5 per person. Alas, we rarely had eight people. The usual attendance was five or six. Instead of raising the price, we think this is the best way to keep the class going and have consistent attendance.

Questions? Ask or Rita or me.

BEFORE YOU GO...

- We're having a New Member Reception Potluck on Sunday after the service. Watch for Margaret Bowers' email flyer Friday.
- There'll be a Noisy Offering this Sunday. This time, we're collecting for the benefit of the Seminole Manor Neighborhood Garden and Food Box. Come prepared to toss something noisy (or even quietly generous) into the kids' echoing buckets.
- Jim Treanor needs a ride to a doctor's appointment the morning of Wednesday, March 4. You'd need to pick up Jim at 6:45 a.m. The other details are flexible. Jim can provide those further details at 763-202-6711 if you're able to assist. FYI: He's available to provide rides to others for appointments and errands as needed.
- Here's a helpful tip from a Wednesday *Washington Post* story about how AI is helping scammers sound more convincing: "If someone calls claiming to be from the IRS, hang up immediately unless you initiated the contact."
- Please remember that you can look up past sermons or newsletters that you missed. Visit our website: <https://ststephenlutherantally.com/>.
- 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!
- And below is the classic car of the week, the 1949 Buick. Watch for it in the parking lot this Sunday. Gather round! Wear your hat!



COMING UP

Today:

Noon - AI-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. - Bible study

9:30 a.m. - Choir rehearsal

10 a.m. - Worship: Second Sunday in Lent

11:30 a.m. - New Members Reception/Potluck

Monday, March 2:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

Tuesday, March 3:

5 p.m. - NA meets in HH

Wednesday, March 4:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

7 p.m. - Choir rehearsal

Thursday, March 5:

10 a.m. - Bible study

UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS



Judi Duffy - 2/27

Rob Schiffer - 2/28

Jan Harrison - 3/2

Jim Christianson - 3/3

Robin Oliveri - 3/5

Sylvia Smith - 3/6

SERVING THIS WEEK

Pastor Tom Holdcraft, Preaching and Presiding; **Rob Schiffer**, Assisting Minister; **Kirsten Ebbesen**, Cup Minister; **Stephanie Leitch**, Lector; **Loraine Sundberg and Audrey Post**, Tech Team; **Beth Alexander**, Altar Guild; **Susan Warren and Margaret Bowers**, Counters; **Susan Hehn**, Cantor; **Denise Bookwalter**, Announcements



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