



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

### REIMAGINING WHAT 'CHURCH' COULD BE

Here are a few of the notes that Sue Canning, one of our representatives, took at the recent Florida-Bahamas Synod Assembly.

The Rev. Shannon Kiser, who was the keynote speaker, represents an organization called Fresh Expressions. It helps congregations reimagine "Church" to connect spiritual longing and the people in our communities today with the Good News of Jesus.

As Shannon Kiser noted: We are a "proclamation" church, which we Protestant denominations inherited from the Reformation. We members traditionally have joined churches voluntarily and have been committed to the wellbeing of our church. Our numbers are steadily declining. We wonder what programs we can offer or changes we can make so that people will feel invited into our church spaces. We put up "all are welcome" signs. But we do not see that there's a gap between the people in our church and the people in our communities. We have moved beyond an age when people joined a church because they were associated with that church community. Today, people must feel they belong before they believe.

The Rev. Kiser described what she experienced in the UK. She observed a growing phenomenon there called "pub choir." Some pubs started offering



group singing, including hymns and prayer. She said the choirs became so popular that the pubs had to sell tickets to keep the numbers manageable. She asked: "Why did people pay to do something they could literally do in our church FOR FREE?"

She most definitely was not suggesting we turn our churches into pubs or give up the liturgy. It's more a question of asking: *What do people in our community need? What do they want? What does the single mom raising a neurodivergent child need? Food? Paper products?*

She used the example of a church that offers a food pantry. Church volunteers bag up food, and people who need food come to your building, pick up a bag at no charge and leave. What would it look like, she wondered, if you offered a meal with perhaps just a sign out front saying "Join us for a meal"? Or you could eat at tables in the parking lot, visible to the public. You could say to any and all, "Get a plate, take a seat and have a meal with us." No flyers, no speeches, no "Come back on Sunday." Just food and conversation. Do that the same day of the week, week after week, she suggested. Maybe add music. Add prayer. Gradually, she said, you'll create "dinner church."

Something to ponder, thanks to Sue and the assembly organizers. Learn more about Fresh Expressions at <https://www.freshexpressions.com/>. The website proclaims: "We partner with churches and faithful risk-takers to unleash new forms of Christian community in the wild and wonderful spaces of everyday life." (Photo of the Cannings forwarded by eagle-eyed Sharon Simmons)

## THE SUPERSTARS OF ST. STEPHEN

By Sue Canning

When we registered at the Synod convention, they gave us name badges with stickers attached that said “Superstars.” Mark and I were pretty sure they didn’t mean us personally. We saw other badges with “All Stars” stickers, and some with no sticker. We learned that *you*, St. Stephen, are the Superstars. Name badges that said “All Stars” identified congregations that met the suggested annual Synod contribution. “Superstars” meant congregations that exceeded the suggested annual contribution.



## OUR AZALEAS NEED TAMING

Follow along with us as we turn to the Good Book, otherwise known as *Southern Living* magazine, on the subject of “Why You Should Prune Azaleas”: “As with any plant, precision pruning can improve the air flow

between branches and encourage new growth, making for a healthier plant. It can also keep some plant diseases — like powdery mildew — at bay.”



We don’t want powdery mildew in our mammoth azalea forest, right? That’s why Grounds Chief Rob Schiffer and Longtime Plant Empress Emily Jennings are hosting an azalea-trimming workday on Saturday, June 20. Bring your lopping shears,

gloves, hats, mosquito spray, hydration of choice. (Rob will have a few water bottles left over from Donna’s retirement party.) It looks as if some people plan to show up as early as 8 a.m., others more like 9 or 10 — and Rob estimates we’ll be finished by noon or so.

Well, if we have enough volunteers, that is. So far, Rob says he’s heard from not quite a handful of us. Oops. If you haven’t already done so, please let Rob know if you’re planning to pitch in.

## MORE INSPIRATION FROM FIX THE NEWS

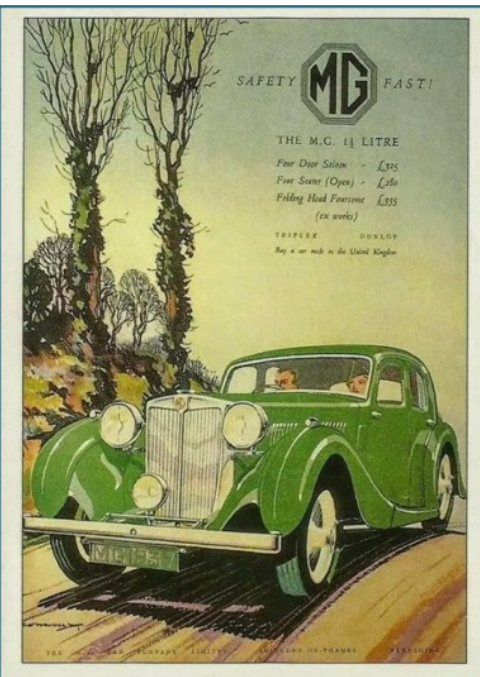
As some of you know, [Fix the News](#) calls itself “the world’s leading solutions journalism newsletter. We share hidden stories of progress with readers from 195 countries, and donate 30% of our revenues from our paid subscriptions to charity.” Below you’ll find a few recent items.

- Railway solar project turns unused track space into energy: Switzerland is testing a simple idea: lay removable solar panels between train tracks to generate power from space that normally sits unused. A pilot in Buttes has installed 48 panels over 100 meters, producing about 16,000 kWh a year while trains keep running. If it scales, rail lines could double up as clean energy sources, without taking up extra land. Source: [SNCF](#)
- Once a poster child for drought, San Diego now produces surplus water: enough to export to other states, thanks to decades of investment in recycling and desalination. The city is now negotiating deals to supply Arizona and Nevada, easing pressure on the Colorado River. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#)

- **California cuts fossil gas use 60% in three years as renewables exceed demand:** Fossil gas generation on California’s main grid is down 60% in 2026 compared with 2023, as wind, water and solar increasingly dominate supply. Renewables now consistently meet more than 100% of demand for big stretches of the day. Source: [Mark Jacobson](#)
- **US power mix hits clean milestone as capacity surges:** US utilities generated more clean electricity than fossil fuels for the first time in March 2026, with clean sources reaching 52% of monthly output and 47% across Q1. It’s not going to get any better for fossil fuels – over 80 GW of new solar, wind and batteries is set to come online by early 2027, even as the EIA is projecting a net decline of 5GW of fossil fuel capacity over the same time period. Sources: [Reuters](#); [Electrek](#)

## BEFORE YOU GO...

- You’ll see a special altar-flower dedication from Martha Marky in this Sunday’s bulletin. Martha, who’s been part of St. Stephen pretty much from the beginning, worships remotely these days, so many of us don’t see her often. But she comes by every week to pick up the linens for Altar Guild – and brings them back freshly washed and ironed. “Mornings are slow for me, but I watch the Sunday service on the computer,” she said this week. “Rita gets me the bulletin, which is a big help.” She tries to keep up with what’s happening around church. If you’re back by the camera during the sharing of the peace, give Martha a wave. She’s one of St. Stephen’s best. *(This photo of Martha is from 2014, taken by Colin Hackley)*
- As Simone Schuster announced Sunday, the Bible Study sessions on Thursday and Sunday are still taking place, even in Pastor Tom’s absence. She hopes to see you there.
- Thank you for remembering your regular church offerings, especially as we tiptoe into the always-suspenseful summer season!



- 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 Office Manager Rita to sign you up. Include the \$40 with your regular offering. And then take the flowers home!
- And pictured here is the newsletter editor’s latest suggestion, in case the Church Council votes to provide him with a company car. It’s a 1937 MG, with quite a bit more leg room than the MGs we’re used to seeing. I think my azalea loppers and gardening gloves should fit quite nicely in the boot. God, watch over us as we drive through life.

## SERVING THIS SUNDAY

**Pastor Matt Frease**, Preaching and Presiding; **Jen Drit**, Assisting Minister; **Rita Ford**, Cup Minister; **Greta Scavone**, Lector; **Simone Schuster**, Cantor; **Colin Hackley** and **Sandy Lamb-Daniels**, Tech Team; **Susan Warren** and **Rita Ford**, Altar Guild; **Marilyn Larson** and **Patricia Handschy**, Counters; **Bob Eshleman** and **Patrick Kennell**, Ushers; **Denise Bookwalter**, Announcements.



ST. STEPHEN LUTHERAN CHURCH

HINGST FELLOWSHIP HALL

SUNDAY, JUNE 21, 8:30AM

BISCUITS & GRAVY

CELEBRATING ALL THE FANTASTIC  
FATHERLY FIGURES!

ALL ARE WELCOME!

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## 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:

9:00 a.m. - Bible study

10 a.m. - Worship, Third Sunday after Pentecost

### Monday, June 15:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

### Tuesday, June 16:

5 p.m. - NA meets in HH

### Wednesday, June 17:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

### Thursday, June 18:

10 a.m. - Bible study

## UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Susan Hehn - 6/11  
Billy Oates - 6/14  
Andrew Stover- 6/16  
Tim Larson - 6/16  
Ann DelRossi - 6/19  
Martin Guttenplan - 6/19  
Joseph Collins - 6/23  
Ruth Hartung - 6/23  
Steve Kunst - 6/23  
Sandy Davis - 6/28  
Loraine Sundberg - 7/3  
Sarah Barton - 7/3  
Karl Barton - 7/4  
Tom Buchanan - 7/14  
Jonas Holdcraft - 7/15



If you have news or photos to share,  
please send them to Rita at  
[sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com](mailto:sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com).

Don't forget our Facebook page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/ststephentallahassee>.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, ELCA