



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

AN ABUNDANCE OF APPRECIATION

By Sharon Simmons

The second Sunday of October is designated by the Florida-Bahamas Synod as Pastor Appreciation Day. This year, St. Stephen really stepped up and showed abundant appreciation for Pastor Tom and his wonderful wife, Colleen.

Beginning shortly after the announcements, the children took center stage to tell Pastor all the ways he helps the church community and the community at large. Then, Violet and Ceilia Greeley wowed everyone with a beautiful chant. With Jonas Holdcraft leading the way, Armand Stover, Bastian Stover, Ceilia and Violet made their way from the narthex to the front, where they delivered gifts, cards and baskets of goodies.

But the celebration didn't end there, as the congregation and some visitors adjourned to Hingst Hall for an exuberant reception in honor of Pastor Tom and Colleen, replete with cake, cookies, fruit and drinks, coordinated by Margaret Bowers and Carol Santos. The long, beautifully decorated table with green runners and small plants quickly filled with members and guests. The conversation was lively and joyful and carried on well past the noon hour. *(Photo by Colin Hackley)*



VENMO? HERE YOU GO

In Sunday's sermon, Pastor Tom mentioned that "one of the high points of our worship together is the time of offering. We might have done it for years out of duty, and I appreciate that, but my prayer is that we move from duty to an offering of love," for the happiest people on earth are those who are generous. If you'd like to be generous and give through Venmo, this QR code makes it easy to donate to St. Stephen.

Stephen Saint
@Stephen-Saint



venmo

AS ADVENT APPROACHES...



The Worship and Music Committee will meet Nov. 9 in Hingst Hall after the worship service. Discussion will center on the upcoming Advent season, Christmas decorating, the Children's Pageant, the worship service, etc. Current members include Pastor Tom, Susan Hehn, Katharine Gossman, Linda Eshleman, Rita Ford, Colin Hackley and Audrey Post. Altar Guild members as well as members of the congregation are all welcome. Please let Linda know by Nov. 2 if you have items you would like discussed and/or if you plan to attend the meeting.

WHERE IS GOD IN GAZA?

Excerpt from the Oct. 12 New York Times section called Believing.

... [T]he war in Gaza has exposed the ugly, jagged edge of human experience. The war's grotesque details, live-streamed around the world, are an example of "the problem of evil," an idea attributed to the Greek philosopher Epicurus. It's an issue that has vexed people throughout history as they tried to reconcile the existence of suffering with the belief in a benevolent God. As David Hume, the 18th-century Scottish philosopher, put it: Is God "willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?"

Thinkers have wrestled with this idea in abstraction, and have even given it a fancy name: "theodicy." But it's also something people have to face practically in war and famine - in rebuilding makeshift shelters, sifting through a collapsed home and waiting for hours for food, only to be turned away to starve.

"The war has made so many people question God - his absence, his silence," said the Rev. Munther Isaac, a Palestinian Christian based in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. It's the most common question he has gotten ... the past two years.... But anecdotes abound of survivors clinging to their faith, or finding it for the first time, in the rubble or the tunnels.

Palestinians often bookend their sentences with a hopeful "inshallah" - the Arabic word meaning "God willing." It was everywhere as the truce emerged last week. "Inshallah," there will be a cease-fire, Amjad Abdel Nabi told the BBC. "The people are very tired and some have been displaced 10 times, others 20 times." The Hebrew version ... is "B'ezrat Hashem," with God's help. "With God's help we will bring them all home," Benjamin Netanyahu posted on X moments after President Trump announced the deal on Wednesday night....

[A] *Jerusalem Post* study found that about a third of Israeli Jews report a stronger belief in God since the war began. Omer Shem Tov, who spent 505 days in captivity in Gaza, is one of them. A secular Jew before his kidnapping on Oct. 7, Shem Tov [said] that he found God in Gaza's tunnels 130 feet underground. "Faith kept me going," he said, adding, "I always believed I would get home, though I didn't know how or when."

Shem Tov ... tried to keep kosher while in Gaza and developed a daily habit of reciting what he could remember of Psalm 20, an ancient plea for deliverance. "May the Lord answer you on a day of distress," he said again and again in the darkness. He didn't know that his mother, back home in Herzliya, went into his empty bedroom each morning and recited the same Psalm....



THE STORY OF MANNA (PART 2)

Last week we read the history of Manna on Meridian, compiled by Manna organizer Shellie Camp from Faith Presbyterian. This week, she lists some of the ways we can help support this ministry.

Share your story. Whether you were a founding member, a coordinator for your church or a dedicated volunteer, we want to hear how you shaped Manna and Manna's impact on you. Sue Colombo, a member of Faith Presbyterian Church, has offered to gather and record Manna's past. Send your stories and pictures to Sue via mannaonmeridian@gmail.com

Follow and share Manna's story through [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#). We have exciting news that we should be able to share soon.

Thank and support the area businesses that support Manna. These include:

- [Blue Tavern](#), which keeps Manna stocked with toothbrushes and toothpaste.
- [Amicus Brewing Adventures](#), which has selected Manna as its monthly charity tap beneficiary twice.



- Our Second Harvest-designated retail partners, who have donated over 40,000 pounds of food to Manna in 2025. These donations allow Manna to continue to bring the monthly per-household cost down from over \$25 in 2022 to \$5.36 in 2025, keeping Manna in operation and allowing it to feed more people while significantly cutting costs.
 - ◇ [Publix at the Shops at Bannerman Village](#) (#1863).
 - ◇ [Trader Joe's](#) (#763).
 - ◇ [Walmart](#) on North Monroe (#4427).

Volunteer.

- Saturdays: Show up anytime between 6:30 and 9 a.m. on the third Saturday of the month to help with the drive-thru distribution.
- Sundays:
 - ◇ Sign up to help with the pickup and/or distribution at https://www.signupgenius.com/go/508084AA8A82EA75-44786866-manna#.
 - ◇ Contact Cathi Wilkinson via mannaonmeridian@gmail.com for Publix pickup training. A minimum of two vehicles are needed to pick up from Publix each Sunday.
 - ◇ Mondays:
Contact Carolyn Pardue at 850-443-7807 or pardue2@comcast.net to volunteer to pick up from Walmart between 8:15 and 8:30 a.m.

Donate.

- [Reference our reel](#)
 - ◇ Grocery bags (brown, plastic, reusable)
 - ◇ Egg cartons
 - ◇ Books, puzzles and games for children
 - ◇ Soups, cereal and canned goods
 - ◇ Peanut butter and jelly
 - ◇ Hygiene items (soap, shampoo, deodorant, etc.)
 - ◇ Unused baby items (food, wipes, diapers, etc.)
 - ◇ Unused senior-care items (Boost, adult incontinence items, etc.)
 - ◇ Fresh fruit and veggies from your yard or garden. We can even put you in contact with someone who can help harvest produce from your citrus trees in the winter.
- Financial donations can be made through one of the supporting churches or online as a onetime or recurring donation directly through [Faith Presbyterian](#).
 - ◇ Be sure to designate Manna on Meridian on your donation.
 - ◇ A \$5.50 recurring monthly donation will allow Manna to provide over \$50 in groceries to one of the over 700 households we serve each month.

Give thanks for those who serve with you at Manna, and to God for continuing to provide resources that allow Manna on Meridian to provide greater access to nutritious food with dignity, respect and through good stewardship of resources.

BEFORE YOU GO...

- Saturday, there will be another No Kings Rally in front of the Historic Capitol (which some of us still call the Old Capitol). Organizers say the goal is to protest “Trump’s continued authoritarian power grabs.” It’s scheduled to last from 10 a.m. to noon.
- Sunday, from 5 to 6 p.m., the interfaith prayer vigil for immigration justice will continue at the Historic Capitol steps.
- Last week, we reported that Pastor Tom was on his way to join a group of clergy delivering a letter to Florida Division of Emergency Management Director Kevin Guthrie, regarding the importance of allowing interfaith clergy to provide spiritual care to the people in the Everglades prison camp. The letter was delivered. Stay tuned for further developments.
- In preparation for All Saints Day on Nov. 2, the church office invites you to send in the names of loved ones who’ve died this year and whose names you would like to be included in this special part of the liturgy. Please get those names to Office Manager Rita by Oct. 27.

- “Don’t forget to sock it,” says Outreach Coordinator Sharon Simmons. “Our annual sock drive for the homeless continues until Oct. 26. Donated socks will be delivered to the Kearney Center for homeless clients. There is a need for men’s and women’s socks. You can find reasonable prices at Dollar Tree, Five Below or Costco.”
- Need the contact information for a St. Stephen member? Use your digital directory. Don’t have it on your phone? Office Manager Rita can fix you up.
- 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!



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS

Isabel Barton - 10/19
Val Kibler - 10/20
Dave Suhrweir - 10/21
Jim Sampson - 10/22
Audrey Post - 10/24
Barbara Ehlmann - 10/25
Graham Reece - 10/26
Anita Sawh - 10/26
Bern Mustian - 10/30

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. - Bible study

9:30 a.m. - Choir practice

10 a.m. - Worship: Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

12:30 p.m. - Zoom Council Meeting

Monday, October 20:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

Tuesday, October 21:

5 p.m. - NA meets in HH

Wednesday, October 22:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

7 p.m. - Choir

SERVING THIS WEEK

Pastor Tom, Preaching and Presiding; **Beth Alexander**, Assisting Minister; **Susan Warren**, Cup Minister; **Stephanie Leitch**, Lector; **Cindy Suhrweir and Colin Hackley**, Tech Team; **Linda Eshleman and Barbara Sullivan**, Altar Guild; **Kirsten Ebbesen and Susan Warren**, Counters; **Pastor Tom**, 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