



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

'A-TISKET ... A-TASKET ...

What's new in the Transition Basket?'

Two comments were shared with me last Sunday. I base my responses on The Great Commission found in Matthew 28:16-20:

"Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some **doubted**. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age."

The disciples were feeling **doubt** and uncertainty as they knew Jesus would soon ascend to the father. I imagine their feelings were much like feelings experienced during a church transition period. "What are we supposed to be doing?" "What are we supposed to be about?" "Who will now lead us?"

The first comment mirrored the same questions. "So, Pastor Mary, what are we supposed to be doing as a church? What are we supposed to be about before the permanent pastor arrives?" Doubt and uncertainty are normal feelings during such an uncertain time.

But the purpose of "church" never ceases to be "church," nor does the urgency with which the church goes about doing its business to God's glory ever ease up. Jesus' words shatter any reticence we may have in going forth to make disciples of all nations, inviting them into the Holy waters of Holy Baptism, and teaching them to obey all Jesus has commanded of us. **Doubt** and uncertainty turn tail and run when Jesus firmly assures us that he will always be with us "to the end of the age."

We, as "church," continue to be "church." We are fed by the Word and Holy Eucharist. We are nurtured through fellowship and intergenerational scripture studies. Thus renewed, we go forth to feed the hungry (Manna on Meridian) and clothe the naked (ECHO Back to School Drive), to name a few.

The second comment touched on the concept of **fence sitting**." This, too, is a normal dynamic during an interim time. At its foundation is the temptation to take the "wait and see" approach! "Pastor, I've noticed we have had a few visitors, but they probably do not want to join our church until we 'wait and see' what style and personality the permanent pastor brings." Infrequent or even frequent members drop off in their attendance because they have bought into the "wait and see" concept. Morale thus drops. Giving falls off. Again, fence sitting is normal, but it does nothing to express faith that it is Jesus Christ who is the head of the church and no one else. Pastors come and go. Staff come and go. Members come and go.



Hebrews 13:8 reminds us that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." It is he who gives us strength and energy and commitment to assure the vitality of St. Stephen Church regardless of the presence of a permanent pastor or interim pastor.

So, although **doubt** and **fence sitting** are normal temptations, let's turn our **doubts** into the assurance that the Lord is leading us from doubt in joyful anticipation of our future. And, to get there, let's hop off the fence and continue attending, giving of our time/talents/possessions, inviting friends to worship, and being the church of Jesus the Christ!

REMINDER

Transition Basket: Gather whatever questions you have regarding the transition process and continue to place them in the "A-Tisket, A-Tasket" transition basket in the back of the sanctuary. Look for the answer in the next email blast!

Pastor will also be leading a Q&A session at our monthly potlucks! The next one is Sunday, Jan. 15, after worship.



'THANK YOU' FROM ST. STEPHEN STAFF

Once again the congregation opened their hearts and their pockets to provide our team with a nice Christmas surprise. Here are words of thanks:

- "I was delighted to receive St. Stephen's generous Christmas gift. I continue to give thanks that God has placed me here as your interim Pastor, and I look forward to continuing serving you for as long as God has me here. May all experience God's peace as we move into the New Year." (Pastor Mary)
- "I want to thank you for your most generous Christmas gift. You all do so much for me in so many ways, and I count myself lucky and privileged to have been in your family for another year." (Katharine)
- "I want to thank you all for the Christmas gift. It was very generous, and very welcome! I feel very blessed to be a part of St. Stephen and I look forward to 2017. Happy New Year." (Lori)

IF YOU KNOW...

...anyone wishing to become a member of this worship community, please be so kind to let Pastor know.

...anyone who wishes to be visited by Pastor, please be so kind to let her know.

MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES



- **POTLUCK:** We will continue the potluck on the third Sunday of the month. Pastor will have a Q&A session following the potlucks, so be ready with questions regarding the transition process or anything else you may want to ask!
- **OWLS GATHERING:** The OWLs will be gathering for lunch on Wednesday, Jan. 18, at 11:30 a.m. at the Midtown Caboose. Please see Jan Harrison for reservations.
- **TAOIST TAI CHI SOCIETY:** The Taoist Tai Chi Society will be offering two open houses: this Saturday, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., with free Jai lunch at noon; and this coming Monday, 5-7 p.m.



UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS:

Karen Olson - 01/05

Vince Muchuruza - 01/07

Marsy Miller - 01/10

Mary Anderson - 01/11

Sharon Gordon-Girvin - 01/11

THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR

This Sunday:

9 a.m. - Sunday Church School

Adult study

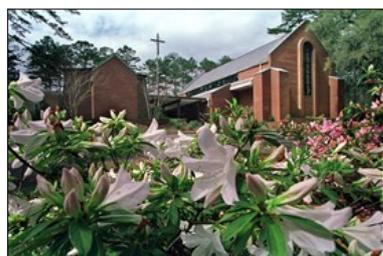
10 a.m. - Worship, Baptism of Our Lord Sunday

Wednesday, Jan. 11:

7 p.m. - Choir rehearsal

SERVING SUNDAY:

Pastor Mary Nesmith, Presiding, Preaching; **Kirsten Ebbesen**, Assisting Minister; **Susan Warren**, Cup Minister; **Anna Amundson**, Visitation; **Tim Larson**, Walkways; **Gladys Kane**, Greeter; **Sandy Sampson**, Lector; **Billie Reardon & Rita Ford**, Altar Guild; **Jeff Norcini & Judi McDowell**, Counters; **Susan Warren**, Bread; **Anna Amundson**, Announcements.



If you have news or photos to share, please send them to Lori at ststephentallahassee@embarqmail.com.

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

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, ELCA
2198 N. Meridian Road | Tallahassee, FL 32303

Designed by Lori Zengel, office manager, ststephentallahassee@embarqmail.com.

If you no longer want to receive this newsletter, please [unsubscribe](#). To unsubscribe please reply with "UNSUBSCRIBE" as the subject line.