



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

## St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

### ANNOUNCEMENT FROM BISHOP SCHAEFER

February 10, 2017



Dear sisters and brothers of the Florida-Bahamas Synod, For the past three and a half years it has been my season to serve as bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod. While this was never an office I sought, it has been a remarkable honor and privilege to serve as this synod's chief pastor. There have been many joys and privileges associated with serving as a bishop in this church. At the same time, I would be less than truthful if I didn't confess that the rigors and responsibilities of this office, both on the territory of this synod and in the wider church, have taken a toll on me spiritually and personally, not to mention the toll it has taken on my family during my regular absences.

Following the Christmas holidays, I spent time with [my wife] Pr. Jennifer and my children reflecting on the toll this office is taking on my spirit. I have spent time in prayer and shared my struggles in this call with our presiding bishop. I have come to the realization that this call is not suited to my spirit. This reflection has led me to the decision to resign as bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod as of March 5. I have not come to this decision lightly or easily, but the weight this office has put on my soul these last years has led me to be at peace with this decision.

It has been the greatest honor of my ministry to serve as your bishop, and there are many, many ways that I will miss it. I am not sure what the Lord of the Church has in store for me next, but I will take some time over the next several months to listen. Please pray for me as I will pray for you in the time ahead. In the midst of all the changes and challenges of life, we know that God's love in Christ is the one anchor.

Life in the synod will go on as usual. Soon, an interim bishop will be appointed who will carry on and oversee the work of the Office of the Bishop until the next bishop is elected. The Synod Council is meeting this weekend and will communicate further details in the days ahead.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (*Hebrews 13:8*). Thanks be to God!

Yours in Christ,

**Robert G. Schaefer**

The Rev. Robert G. Schaefer,  
Bishop of the Florida-Bahamas Synod



God's work. Our hands.

### NOTICE FROM SYNOD VICE PRESIDENT

February 13, 2017

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ in the Florida-Bahamas Synod:

Grace, mercy and peace be to you this day. On behalf of the Synod Council, I write at the conclusion of our meeting in Tampa this weekend. It has been an emotional time for all, as we talked with Bishop Schaefer and began to process his decision to resign as our synodical bishop. Our surprise, sadness, and concern for him and his family was mixed with moments of laughter as we remembered our time together. We are extremely grateful for his ministry, and have been blessed by his 3 ½ years of leadership as our bishop. We give thanks for his deep faith, his irrepressible sense of humor, his inspired and clear leadership and his care and concern for God's church. It has been a blessing to serve alongside him.

Because we really are church together, we have been in contact with Presiding Bishop Eaton and the ELCA Director of Synodical Relations, Pastor Walter May, about care of the Office of the Bishop. Both have repeatedly assured us of their accompaniment and assistance through the process of calling a new bishop. Just as when a pastor leaves a congregation, the Presiding Bishop will identify a candidate for interim bishop and the Synod Council will call someone to that position. If, due to scheduling and the calendar, we are unable to call an interim bishop by March 5, an "acting bishop" will be appointed.

In this transition time, the Office of the Bishop will continue providing vital and substantial presence and leadership throughout the synod. Current ministries and initiatives will continue under the leadership of the Assistants to the Bishop: Pr. Jim Graeser, Pr. Jaime Dubon, Deacon Connie Schmucker, and Michele Hilton. The synod staff will continue guiding congregations in transition, walking with leaders in all ways, and providing resources and information for ministry. As you might imagine, there are many details to work out to elect and call a new bishop. Given that the 2017 Synod Assembly is soon, we do not plan to hold a bishop's election at that assembly. It is more likely that we will hold a special, much shorter, Special Assembly for the sole purpose of calling a bishop later this year. We are balancing the need for some time to process this change and to set up a meaningful discernment process, with the financial costs of holding another assembly in this fiscal year. We commit to you to provide you with our plans as we finalize them.

Finally, we ask for your prayers. Pray for Bishop Schaefer and his family. Join us in giving thanks to God for his willingness to use every ounce of his giftedness to further God's mission in our territory and for his family as they have supported him. Please pray for the staff and their families as they continue to serve in this transition; for our Presiding Bishop as she discerns interim bishop candidates; and for the Synod Council as we work to be faithful leaders. We know that this is God's church, and the work of the synod—through the ministry you all are involved in—will continue.

May you continue to live into the synod's mission of Boldly Proclaiming Christ, Passionately Making Disciples, and Faithfully Doing Justice. May the Holy Spirit continue to stir in your hearts.

Peace be yours,

Cheryl Stuart  
Vice President

## GET TO KNOW OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!

On Sunday, February 12, we were blessed to receive four new disciples! Judi Duffy, Dale Henning, and Ben and Annette Claussen joined our community of faith through Affirmation of Baptism!

Judi Duffy is originally from Elkhart, Indiana, but has lived in Florida for many years. She is a retired RN and taught nursing at the University of Miami, Florida State University, and Tallahassee Community College. Her most recent occupation was as an RN with Big Bend Hospice in the hospice inpatient house.

Judi enjoys reading and jigsaw puzzles, and on two separate occasions she raised English bulldogs.

She shared the following about St. Stephen Lutheran Church: "I feel very comfortable in the congregation. I have been able to get back to church because of Pastor Mary, feel most welcome here and would like to participate" in our community activities. Judy is also a regular attendee of the Adult Education study held each Sunday.



Photo by Colin Hackley

She would like to become involved as an acolyte, cup minister, lector, and serve on Altar Guild. She would also like to volunteer for special events like the Christmas Program, Easter Egg Hunt, Rally Day, and preparations for funerals and memorial services. She would also like to volunteer for Manna on Meridian, Crop Walk, envelope stuffing and applying labels.



We also welcome Ben and Annette Claussen! Ben and Annette moved to Tallahassee from Colorado about one and a half years ago. Ben is a true Midwesterner, as he was born in Iowa. He works as an RN at Tallahassee Memorial Hospital. Annette was born in Germany and is a psychologist at Florida State University. Their hobbies and interests are centered in the love of God's outdoor creation. They enjoy hiking, camping, and their new-found sport of kayaking.

Photo by Colin Hackley

They were drawn to St. Stephen because of our open and affirming embrace of all God's children, the relevancies of Pastor Mary's sermons, and the friendliness of the congregation.

Annette and Ben are expecting their first child around May 24. She will be named Claire and we will gladly welcome Claire into our faith community!

Make a point of welcoming and getting to know this delightful couple.

Look for more information on Dale as it becomes available!

## MARCHING WITH JANET

St. Stephen member Janet Barber took part in the Women's March in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 21. In this photo she's wearing the signature hat of the march, created for her by St. Stephen knitter Cindy Suhrweir. In case you can't read Janet's great poster, here's what it says: FIGHT LIKE A GIRL.



## ADULT STUDY



Please join us in Adult Education each Sunday at 9 am in the Matthew Room. We are working our way through the Small Catechism. Each week is a new adventure, so if you miss a week, you can still learn something new (or be reminded of something you have long forgotten)! All are welcome!

## ALICE IN WONDERLAND

Young Actors Theatre (609 Glenview Drive) will host the 17th annual Benefit Performance for Lutheran Social Services of North Florida at 7 pm on Feb 26. The performance will be "Alice in Wonderland." Join us before the show for refreshments beginning at 6 pm. Tickets are \$20 and available from Janet Barber (321-8875).

## MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Remember: Place any transition questions you have for Pastor Mary in the "A-Ticket, A-Tasket" Transition Basket in the back of the sanctuary.



## UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS:

Patrick Kennell - 02/18

Jennifer Ault - 02/22

### THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR

#### This Sunday:

9 a.m. - Sunday Church School  
Adult study

10 a.m. - Worship, Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

#### Wednesday, Feb. 22:

6 p.m. - Worship Committee meeting

7 p.m. - Council meeting

7 p.m. - Choir rehearsal

### COMING UP

Feb. 25, 2 p.m.: Women's March Meeting at St. Stephen

Feb. 26, 11:30 a.m.: St. Stephen Annual Talent Show

March 1, 7 p.m.: Ash Wednesday Service

## SERVING SUNDAY:

**Pastor Mary Nesmith**, Presiding, Preaching; **Barb O'Donnell**, Assisting Minister; **Rob Schiffer**, Cup Minister; **Sharon Simmons**, Visitation; **Kevin O'Donnell**, Walkways; **Rita Ford**, Greeter; **Jennifer Dritt**, Lector; **Anna Amundson & Val Sullivan**, Altar Guild; **Audrey Post & Billie Reardon**, Counters; **Barb O'Donnell**, Bread; **Anna Amundson**, Announcements.



If you have news or photos to share, please send them to Lori at [ststephentallahassee@embarqmail.com](mailto:ststephentallahassee@embarqmail.com).

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

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, ELCA