



# ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

## PASTORAL REFLECTION

### Gethsemane

The grass never sleeps.  
Or the roses.  
Nor do the lily have a secret eye that shuts until morning.

Jesus said, wait with me. But the disciples slept.

The cricket has such splendid fringe on its feet,  
and it sings, have you noticed, with its whole body,  
and heaven knows if it ever sleeps.

Jesus said, wait with me. And maybe the stars did, maybe  
the wind wound itself into a silver tree, and didn't move,  
maybe  
the lake far away, where once he walked as on a  
blue pavement,  
lay still and waited, wild awake.

Oh the dear bodies, slumped and eye-shut, that could not  
keep that vigil, how they must have wept,  
so utterly human, knowing this too  
must be a part of the story.

- Mary Oliver, "Thirst"

The well-known poet Mary Oliver wrote this poem "Gethsemane." I always find it to be a powerful reminder of what I am to be about as I journey with Jesus into the week of his passion. I am to be about staying awake so I may see Judas lead the soldiers by torchlight to plant the kiss of betrayal on my Lord.

Twice, Jesus implores his disciples to stay awake and "wait with me" as he endures the agony of Gethsemane's garden.

The grass stayed awake because it never sleeps. Neither do roses. The lily has nothing like a secret eye that dozes until morning. Jesus implores his disciples to stay awake. But, they sleep. They always sleep. They always seem to miss everything.

The cricket, wrote Mary Oliver, has such splendid fringe on its feet and gyrates from a whole body sing, I am fairly sure that the Lord knows of its faithful watchfulness.

Jesus implores, "wait with me." I, like Oliver, believe that the stars did wait (remember the star of Bethlehem?) as well as the wind winding itself around a silver tree. I love the part where Oliver writes that so did the blue pavement of Galilee's sea not only waited but was awake in the wild tossing of its swells and waves.

But, those eye-shut slumped bodies sunk deep into la-la land sleep. They kept not the vigil, as did the grass and the roses and the single lily and the singing cricket and the stars and the winding wind. They kept not the vigil, as did the blue pavement of Galilee's sea.

Yes, Oliver concludes that those who did not "wait" with Jesus must have wept in knowing that this too is a part of the story.

To me, this poem holds something else written about by Lutheran Pastor and theologian Walt Wangerin. I do not remember his exact quote or the source so please forgive me. Pastor Wangerin made the poignant point that if we do not take seriously "waiting with" Jesus in Gethsemane and upon Calvary, how can we truly appreciate Easter Sunday? Easter Sunday is diminished without having kept awake through Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. How can we truly celebrate being Easter people if we have not sat with Jesus in the Upper Room and in Gethsemane? How can we experience the point of a joyful Easter Sunday if we have not even experienced the meaning of Golgotha?



I invite you to "wait with" Jesus. Wait with him at our Maundy Thursday service at 7 p.m. Hear his new commandment of "love." Partake of Holy Communion, and if you wish, foot washing. Sit in awe as altar guild members once again strip the altar of its beauty in darkness. Wait with him at our Good Friday service at 7 p.m. Hear proclaimed the word. Come forward to again touch the old wooden cross. Lean your head against its strength. Touch it with reverence. Let it fill you with the forgiveness of sins.

Then, with Easter bonnets on and dressed in your Sunday best, tumble into church on Easter Sunday singing, "Alleluia, Christ is Risen!" Come Lord Jesus for we have been waiting for you.



## ✝ THE RITE OF PRIVATE CONFESSION ✝

I am blessed with all kinds of conversations when people find out I am a pastor. While tooling around one day in Monticello, someone of the Roman Catholic faith asked why Lutherans do not practice private confession between the pastor and church member.

Did you know that we do? This has to be one of the best kept secrets in Lutheranism! Martin Luther was a huge advocate of retaining private confession. Luther shared his passion for the retention of private confession when he wrote in his:

- Treatise "Of Confession: "I will let no one take away private confession and would not exchange it for all the wealth of the world, for I know what strength and comfort it has given me."
- Eighth sermon against Carlstadt (1522), who had abolished private confession in Wittenberg during Luther's absence, Luther closed with the words, "I know the devil well. If you had known him as well as I, you would not have thrown private confession so quickly to the wind."
- "Babylonian Captivity of the Church:" "Of private confession, which is now observed, I am heartily in favor, even though it cannot be proved from the Scriptures; it is useful and necessary, nor would I have it abolished; nay, I rejoice that it exists in the church of Christ, for it is a cure without equal for distressed conscience."

A few years ago, as a part of my Lenten Discipline, I participated in "The Rite of Private Confession." I did not participate as the pastor hearing a church member confess heavy hearted sins. Instead, I participated as one wishing to confess, repent, and receive forgiveness for my own heart-heavy sins.

I sought out a trusted colleague who lead me through "The Rite of Private Confession." Immediately, I felt the "strength and comfort" given me to use Luther's words. Luther's additional words that it was "a cure without equal for distressed" consciences was also felt by me.

We are entering into one of the most somber weeks of the church year. If you would like to enhance your reflective journey towards Easter resurrection, please prayerfully consider participating in "The Rite of Private Confession." The cool thing is that this may be done with either me as your pastor or a trusted friend. Your friend does not have to be ordained to listen to you, and through God's grace, to proclaim to the words of forgiveness. If both of you prefer a time of quick instruction with me, I am available.

You will find copies of "The Rite of Private Confession" printed on purple paper in the Narthex. I will meet you anyplace and anytime should you want to experience this powerful rite. Rest assured that all will be kept in the strictest of confidence.

Pastor Mary

## RICHARD SINGLETON

We give thanks for the earthly life of Richard Singleton and his entrance into life eternal. Richard was a long time member of St. Stephen Lutheran Church. We will always appreciate his God given gift and talents and will miss his presence among us.

There will be a Visitation at Culley's Meadowwood Funeral Home (700 Timberlane Rd.) on Monday, April 10 at 10 a.m. and the funeral will follow at 11:30 a.m.



## LILIES

We'll be using Easter lilies to adorn our chancel area for Easter. Would you like to dedicate one or more? The cost is \$10 each, and we'll have the dedication list in the Easter bulletin. Look for a form to fill out in the Sunday bulletin. Then place it with your check in the offering plate, and be sure to designate on the check that the money is for the Easter lilies. The deadline is Sunday.

## SIMPLY GIVING

Have you considered the ease of financial giving made possible through our Vanco Online Giving program? It eliminates the need for check writing and assists continued financial support of our ministries should you travel or if you are away for several months at a time! Jennifer Buchanan has volunteered to be our facilitator! Enjoy the announcements! Thank you, Jennifer!

- Check out a testimony regarding Simply Giving by Tom Buchanan: "We signed up for Simply Giving several years ago. It's been great! I was the poster child for forgetting the check book, forgetting the envelopes, forgetting when I'd last paid, etc. Now I don't have to worry about it. The amount is deducted from my checking account every Monday. To date, there has never been a snag. I highly recommend using this service."

## ADULT STUDY

Adult Education class will resume on Sunday, April 23rd. We will close out our study of Luther's Small Catechism by watching and discussing Rick Steve's video on Luther.



## Schedule of Services for Holy Week

**Sunday, April 9, 10 a.m.: Palm/Passion Sunday:**



- Procession with Palms
- Dramatic Reading of the Passion
- Holy Communion
- Instrumentalists
- Darkened sanctuary to symbolize Holy Week's beginning



**Thursday, April 13: Maundy Thursday: 7 p.m.:**

- Holy Communion
- Foot Washing
- Stripping of the Altar
- Darkened sanctuary

**Good Friday, April 14: 7 p.m.:**

- Veneration of the Cross
- Simple Liturgy
- Darkened sanctuary

*There will be no Easter Vigil service but rest assured it will be resurrected next year! The decision was made prayerfully with Pastor Mary, Katharine Gossman, and the Worship Committee.*

**Easter Sunday, April 16: 8:30 a.m. - Easter Breakfast and Easter Egg Hunt;**

**10 a.m.:**

- Festival worship
- Holy Communion
- Instrumentalists



# EARTH DAY 2017

By Pat Simmons



Hello, SSLC! This year's celebration of Earth Day is April 22. There's no shortage of events happening in Leon County, including The Adventure Race, exhibits by Sustainable Tallahassee, and the March for Science. In addition, St. Francis Wildlife will host its third annual Wildlife Fest (wildlife exhibits, children's activities, food, music) in Gadsden County from 9:30 a.m. to 2p.m. at White Dog Plantation (the old Nicholson Farmhouse), on SR 12 between Havana and Quincy.

Earth Day was selected to be observed right in the middle of the spring bird migration at our latitude. Birds from spoonbills to warblers will be commonly seen feeding their chicks during this time. Butterflies and bees will dominate flowers; dragonflies will snatch mosquitoes; frog croaks will fill the evening air; and lizards will scurry between rays of sunshine. Earth Day is a recognition of spring's renewal that emanates from Creation's hands like no other time, and those of us at St. Francis Wildlife hope you and your family are able to spend time outdoors to enjoy the Earth Day celebrations.

## MORE MIDWEEK UPDATES

- Ol' Bill Taylor is back home at Allegro.
- Don't forget! The co-ed baby shower for Annette and Ben Claussen takes place THIS SUNDAY at 3 p.m. in the fellowship hall. They're registered at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com). Everyone's invited. Questions? Ask Ruth Hartung or Susan Warren.
- The OWLs will be gathering at Samrat Indian Restaurant (2529 Apalachee Parkway) on April 19, at 11:30 a.m. Please let Jan Harrison know if you plan to attend.
- Remember: Place any transition questions you have for Pastor Mary in the "A-Tisket, A-Tasket" Transition Basket in the back of the sanctuary.
- Ride for Hope: June 10<sup>th</sup> is the date for the annual Ride for Hope fundraiser for the TMH Cancer Center. <http://therideforhope.com/register/>. Registration is \$25.00. ([kirstenebbesen740@gmail.com](mailto:kirstenebbesen740@gmail.com)). Join our team.



Photo by Colin Hackley

## UPCOMING BIRTHDAYS:

- Gordon Fleischer - 04/06
- Colin Hackley - 04/06
- Jeff Norcini - 04/10



### THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR

**This Sunday:**  
**9 a.m.** - Sunday Church School for children  
**NO** Adult study  
**10 a.m.** - Worship, Sunday of the Passion/  
 Palm Sunday  
**3 p.m.** - Claussen Baby Shower

**Wednesday, April 12:**  
**7:00 p.m.** - Choir rehearsal

### COMING UP

**Thursday, April 13, 7 p.m.:** Maundy Thursday service

**Friday, April 14, 7 p.m.:** Good Friday service

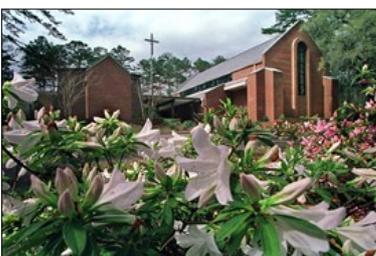
**Sunday, April 16, 8:30 a.m.:** Easter Breakfast/East Egg hunt

**10 a.m.:** Easter service

**Wednesday, April 19, 11:30 a.m.:** OWLs gathering at Samrat Restaurant

## SERVING SUNDAY:

**Pastor Mary Nesmith**, Presiding and Preaching; **Rob Schiffer**, Assisting Minister; **Nathan Basford**, Cup Minister; **Anna Amundson**, Visitation; **Phil Williams**, Walkways; **Gladys Kane**, Greeter; **Jennifer Dritt**, Lector; **Anna Amundson & Rita Ford**, Altar Guild; **Kirsten Ebbesen & Rob Schiffer**, Counters; **Susan Warren**, 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>.

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