



PHOTO CREDIT: Neal Warfield

# THERE'S NO

*by Neal Warfield*

There is no place like home.

It is common to say that someone thrown into a difficult situation is being baptized by fire. Such has been my life living with innate depression. Some of the congregation may remember me as a shy and bashful teen and I remember one comment about me, “still waters run deep.” My waters were very still and very deep!

Self doubt and over-self-examination was what made my waters still and were the start of my very painful journey into adulthood. I had mistakenly taken the view that, like Job, God was putting me to the test or, like Luther, that no matter what I did I could not be right with God. Failed marriages, abusive relationships, a bipolar child, death of a parent and death of a loved one ... these were things that just plummeted me to the lowest depths of despair.

I had lost my connection to faith and on too many occasions felt it necessary to temporarily mask the emotional pain by inducing physical pain and, several times, trying to give up on life itself. Love from family, friends, and neighbors kept me here.

I started the climb out of my pit of despair and one day, not too long ago, realized and accepted that fighting depression did nothing but waste energy which added to the downward spiral. Acceptance that innate depression is part of my ‘self’ allows me to see it with objectivity rather than an overwhelming struggle.

After developing a relationship with someone who finally accepted me for who I am (and who is faithful and persistent), I was convinced to rejoin a congregation family. These important events brought me back from the abysmal depths of despair. Even though I did not agree with that congregations' theology (you just can't take the Lutheran out of me), it challenged me to examine my own beliefs and brought me back to searching for a congregation to call home.

# PLACE LIKE

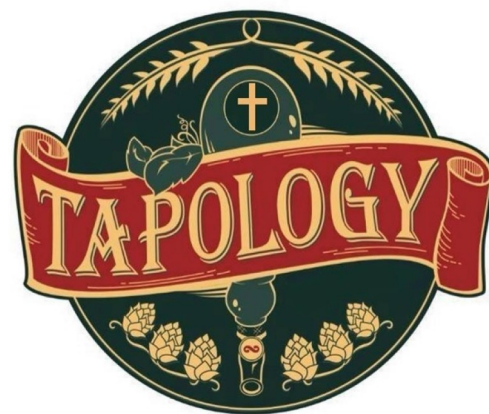
# HOME

Remembering my father's sermon on the windows of St. Stephen (specifically the window with Jesus' arms open as if to receive us, saying *Come to me, put your yoke upon my neck for my burden is light*) made me realize it was time to come back to my St Stephen family.

Even though the congregation has changed with lots of new people and a new pastor, it still feels like home. Like the saying *Home is where the heart is*, so too is St Stephen because in all the years of being away and all the struggles that have defined who I am, my heart never left the congregational home in which I grew up.

It feels good to be home. †

*Neal Warfield grew up as a member of St. Stephen but now lives outside the area. When worship services moved online during the pandemic, Neal began attending again. Late this summer, Neal formally rejoined the congregation as a member (fittingly, via an online service).*



**TAPOLOGY**, where we gather to talk about issues and theology that matters, has temporarily moved online. Visit our Facebook page for the latest information.

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*Tapology was founded in 2017 by two local churches: St. Paul Lutheran Church in Carlisle and St. Stephen Lutheran Church in New Kingstown. Since then, more and more people have joined to enjoy food, alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages, friendship, and fellowship. Each month, we discuss a different topic related to faith. We invite the questioners, the doubters, the believers, and all people from all walks of life, denominations, and faith traditions to join for this monthly event. Find details about upcoming events and more at:*

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