

Vision of St. Stephen

February 2023



St. Stephen Lutheran Church
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Crosses—of Ash and of Water

As I talk with people preparing for their own baptism or for that of their kids, I try to remember to tell them that all the baptized are walking around with an invisible tattoo on our foreheads. Yeah, that's right I have one there... and you likely do too....

During the baptismal service, the pastor dips a finger in the water and makes the sign of the cross on the forehead of the baptized and says these words....."You have been sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ...forever".

On Ash Wednesday we see those baptismal crosses revealed—for a few hours or so—when I, as pastor, make the sign of the cross in ashes on foreheads and say these words..."You are dust and to dust you shall return". Both of those sets of words are true, true and real.

According to scientists, we (and our planet) are made out of stardust, perhaps from the Big Bang itself. We know that whether we're buried or cremated, our bodies return to dust after we die. That is the reality of what it means to be alive and to die.

It is also true and real that God promises to be with us forever. Throughout our life, with all our sorrows and joys, in the living of these days, we are forever marked with the cross of Christ.

Ash Wednesday, February 22nd, marks the beginning of Lent this year. At our worship that day, you'll have an opportunity to hear these words spoken to you. To have the cross marked on your forehead. To be fed with bread and wine, Christ's body and blood. To be reminded that this life is finite; it is precious; it is a gift. To be reminded as well that behind this gift is God's incredible love for us, which never, ever leaves us.

Perhaps you are a regular attender of Ash Wednesday worship services; perhaps you've never been. Either way, I encourage you, this year, to mark your calendar and come...be reminded of the sacredness of this journey we call life.

God's peace to you,

Beth Ferne Johnson, pastor

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Spiritual Growth

GATHERING SPACE

Gathering Space is an open group—just bring yourself! No Bible expertise is expected—just an openness to learning together! It meets at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday morning in the large classroom to the north of the Fellowship Hall. Coffee and treats are available beginning at 8:50 a.m. to enjoy during class and the rest of the morning.

During the first weeks of February, Dave Haddix continues a class on Paul and his writings to the early church in Corinth (1st and 2nd Corinthians).

On February 19th, Mr. Steve Swaggerty, principal at Highland Elementary, will be here for a session. Mr. Swaggerty has been a part of the Sylvania School system for quite a while, having served as principal at Northview and now Highland. He'll be sharing some insights about what life is like for the younger people among us these days. During an earlier Gathering Space session, we collected some questions and asked him to respond to them. If you have an additional question you'd like to ask, please send it in an email to the church office.

A new 5 week session will be introduced by Nancy Pfau on February 26th. At the time of this writing, she was mulling over a couple of possibilities. If there's something you'd like to learn about in this format, please contact her.

SOUPER BOWL

We'll be gathering cans of soup and financial gifts for the Lutheran Social Services Food Pantry in the weeks leading up to the Super Bowl. You're invited to bring in cans of soup and set them up in the narthex or to write a check (made out to St. Stephen, with LSS in the memo line) or put some cash in the soup pot on the 12th itself! On the 12th we'll gather for lunch in the fellowship hall after worship. If you would like to bring a soup to share there is a sign up list on the Narthex bulletin board, or call the church office. However you chose to participate, it's the hungry families in our community that win!

JOY Lunch

Our JOY Luncheon for next month will be February 14th at 12:00 PM at Rick's City Diner! Please sign up in the Narthex and feel free to ask Cathy Gustafson or Pastor Beth for more information!

JEREMIAH BIBLE STUDY

On Wednesdays in February we'll be meeting on Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m. for a discussion of the Old Testament book of Jeremiah. The prophet Jeremiah has a challenging job in reminding the people of God's intense love for them and of God's desire for them to remain faithful in the midst of geo-political upheaval. During his time, the kings of Judah were seeking alliances with surrounding countries to protect the people from regional empires. God is asking that the people rely on God, rather than playing games with these alliances. It's a challenging time to be in Jerusalem! You're welcome to learn and participate on these February Wednesdays—the 8th, 15th, and 22nd. All are welcome—no prior Bible knowledge is needed!

ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP

Hearing the words, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return", as a cross of ashes is placed on your forehead is a focus of our annual Ash Wednesday worship. We'll be worshiping together on February 22nd at 12 noon and 7:00 p.m. While communion and ashes will be available at both services, the noon service will be spoken, without music. For many folks, this is their favorite worship service of the year. If you've never experienced it, please consider coming this year for worship.

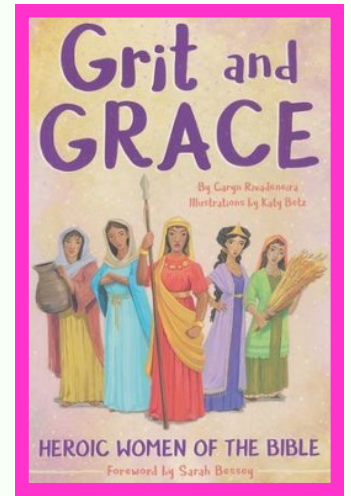
Youth and Family

YOUTH EVENT

A Youth Event will be held on February 19th at 11:30 a.m. Our junior high and high school girls are looking at the book, Grit and Grace - Heroic Women of the Bible, together. Along with this book discussion, we'll be working on an art project together.

NATIONAL YOUTH GATHERING

Every three years, thousands of high school youth and their adult leaders from across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America gather for a week of faith formation and fellowship known as the ELCA Youth Gathering. Through inspiring speakers, conversations with partners, Bible study and being immersed in the host city, young people will be inspired, challenged and called to live out their faith in their daily lives. Additionally, young people will have opportunities to explore their vocation and discern where they are being called into this world. If this sounds like something you'd like to be a part of, please let Pastor Beth know. We'll be in New Orleans from July 16-20 in 2024! We plan to partner with Olivet Lutheran's youth group and experience this together. Please speak with Pastor Beth if you're interested. Youth and young adults aged 18-25 are able to participate, with separate tracks for those in high school and those who are out of school.



Thank You

CHRISTMAS GIFT

Thank you all for the wonderful Christmas gift that I received during worship on Christmas day! In addition to a gift of money, I received a Larry Golba painting! I had been admiring this painting of the Marblehead Lighthouse during Larry's show this fall and am really thrilled to have it as my own! Thank you so so much for our partnership together in ministry here at St. Stephen!



Celebration of Marriage

CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

We will be honoring those celebrating significant milestone anniversaries on February 12th. We'll be remembering them in prayer that Sunday in worship as well as delivering a "porch present" to them that week-end. We're looking for bakers and for delivery drivers to gift these folks with their present on Saturday the 11th. If you'd like to volunteer, please speak with Janell. Thanks!

Outreach

Souper Bowl

Souper Bowl Sunday is February 12th. We're doing our part to support Lutheran Social Services and their food pantry. We're looking to gather cans of soup and monetary donations! We are collecting the cans on the circular table in the Narthex. Monetary gifts can be placed in the offering box in the Narthex. Thank you so much for your generosity and support!



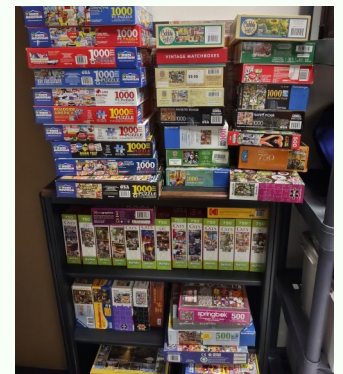
Salem Non-Food Pantry

Our ongoing collection for Salem Lutheran non-food pantry could use an infusion! They are always in need of any baby supplies, natural hair care products, dry laundry detergent, toothpaste and toothbrushes, lotions, and hair styling products! They always appreciate our donations and it really makes a difference to people in need in our community!



Puzzle Exchange/Give Away (First 2 Weeks of February)

Some of our puzzle enthusiast members have dropped off puzzles to share. We are giving them away! There will be a table in the narthex full of puzzles of various sizes. Please help us reduce our stash and feel free to bring in, by then, any you would like to share. One rule: you may not return the puzzles to the church when you are done with them. Please give them away to friends, family, Assisted Living Facilities or resale or used goods give away centers. Thank you and happy puzzling.



LWR Quilting

There will be an afternoon of quilting on Monday, February 20, from 9:30 AM to 3:00 PM. Please feel free to come anytime you would like, and if you would like to eat lunch here, bring a packed lunch. If you have any questions or concerns you can reach out to Libby Boldt, 419-356-6244, or Lboldt@bex.net



Church Finances

KROGER REWARDS

We received the Kroger community rewards from Aug 1 – Oct 31st, 2022. 25 households participated. Total rewards to St. Stephen were \$95.29 This will be going to St. Paul's Community Center Thank you to all who participated.

ONLINE GIVING

For those who are comfortable using technologies to contribute, Vanco services provides us with a smart phone app (Vanco Mobile Faith Engagement) that we can use to make our donations. You can use this app to make a one time gift to St. Stephen or an ongoing gift. If you would prefer online giving without an app, use this link: <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-Z8XP>. If you have any questions please contact the church office!

2022 GIVING STATEMENTS

The year end giving statements will be available for pick up in the Narthex starting on February 5! Please review your statement, and if there are any issues don't hesitate to contact Janell in the office! If you need your statement mailed to you, please contact Janell as well.

Administrative News

WINTER WEATHER

A reminder that if Lucas County would happen to be at a Level 3 snow emergency on a Sunday morning, we will not meet for worship. Instead, Pastor Beth will attempt to livestream her sermon on Facebook from home. In case of a Level 1 or 2, we will hold worship and if our tech people can get here, we will livestream as well—but feel free to watch from home!

SMALL GROUP INTEREST SURVEY

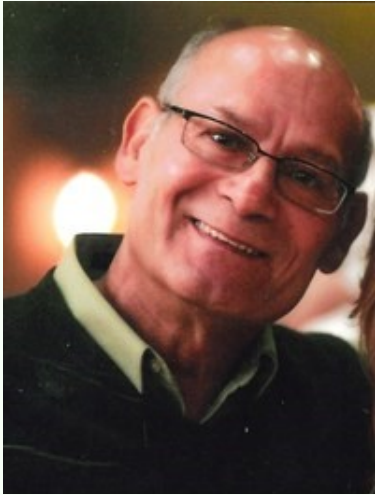
Interested in joining a small group? Wishing to make connections with folks outside of worship? We're wanting to find out what kind of group you would want to join/explore. If you get our newsletter by email, please fill out the attached electronic survey. If you get our newsletter through the regular mail, you'll find a paper survey in this envelope. We'd love to get your responses back by February 6th, so that we can get these groups meeting as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please speak with Marilyn Scuralli or Pastor Beth.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

As always our newsletter deadline for anything you want to be added is the 2nd Tuesday in the month. So for **March 2023** Newsletter please have all your items submitted by **February 14**.



In Loving Memory



Conrad J. Helton

Conrad came into this world on October 4, 1954 in Cincinnati, Ohio with his twin sister Connie. He subsequently moved to Toledo, Northern Maine, and eventually settled in Sylvania, Ohio. He passed away peacefully on November 23, 2022 at Flower Hospital in Sylvania, with his loving wife and daughter by his side.

Conrad had many passions throughout his life. He had a strong faith in God. In his younger years he played softball, bowled, and fished. He loved art and all genres of music. Animals and nature were important to him; he had the most loyal squirrels on the block! He enjoyed various cultural events, especially musical theater and The Purple Rose in Chelsea. He was a true blue Michigan fan, and he played golf whenever there wasn't snow on the ground. An ideal day for him would start with a round of golf, followed by a few games of pool at the Moose Lodge, then a nap before dinner with his beloved cat Paris.

Conrad is survived by his wife Karen, daughter Victoria (Kevin) Levesque, grandchildren Caleb and Sophia Leveque, brother-in-law and sister-in-law Dennis and Terri Kowalski, their son Brian (Ruthanne), many siblings, nieces, nephews, and good friends. [Questions please contact the church official.](#)



Darlene Winter

Darlene Winter, 79 of Toledo, passed away Wednesday, December 21, 2022 surrounded by her loving family. Darlene was born February 5, 1943 in Chicago, Illinois, the daughter of the late Albert and Julia (Strippleman) Kuitko.

She worked as a secretary at Ford Motor Company in the Chicago area, and joined their golf league. She met Thomas Winter, the PGA golf pro, while golfing in the league. Darlene and Thomas Winter were married on November 27, 1965, and they enjoyed over 50 years of marriage until his passing in 2016.

Darlene was an avid quilter, and loved attending the Quilt Fan-Attics, a Monday morning quilting group when she lived in the area. In addition to quilting, she enjoyed knitting, gourmet cooking, gardening and fishing with her husband. In the community, she served in the United Methodist Churches of Addison, Illinois – Perrysburg, Ohio and Fleming Island, Florida. She is survived by her daughters, Kim (Jon) Waltz of Toledo, OH and Kris (Ken) Gillaspay of Fleming Island, FL, grandchildren, Grace, Alex, Josiah, Joy, Andrew, Gideon and Mercy. She was preceded in death by her sister, Gertrude Just.

Prayer

FEBRUARY PRAYER

DEAR LORD,

WE ARE ABLE TO KNOW LOVE BECAUSE WE
KNOW WHAT LOVE LOOKS LIKE. WE KNOW
WHAT LOVE DOES. WE KNOW WHO LOVE IS.
BECAUSE YOUR SON SHOWED US WHAT IT
LOOKS LIKE TO LOVE BY LAYING DOWN HIS
LIFE FOR US, WE CAN NOW LOVE BY
LAYING DOWN OUR LIFE FOR OUR WIVES.
LORD, PUT YOUR LOVE IN OUR HEARTS.

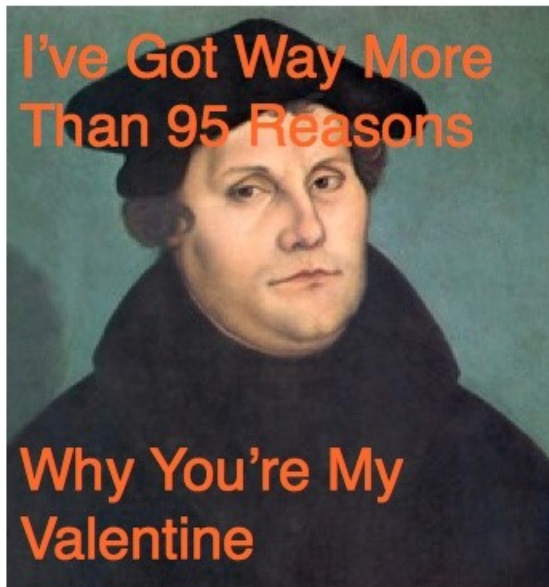
IN JESUS NAME AMEN!

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

Carrie—Healing
Alice—Healing & Comfort
Chris—Peace & Comfort
Patrick—Comfort & Healing
Vietch Family—Comfort & Peace
Imber Family—Comfort & Healing
Jill—Comfort, Strength & Peace
Joe—Strength and Recovery
Chelsey—Healing & Peace
Those with Cancer—Healing
Greg—Healing & Comfort
Olivia—Healing & Comfort
Shannon—Comfort & Peace
Dave—Healing & Comfort
Devon—Healing & Recovery
COVID Sufferers
Afghanistan Refugees
Ukraine
Victims of Gun Violence

Fun

ALL IN GOOD FUN



BIBLE QUIZ

Where do we get the ashes for Ash Wednesday?

(Answer page 8)

- A. blessed fireplace ashes
- B. Ordered by mail
- C. Burning palms from Palm Sunday
- D. Burning acacia wood

ARE YOU OKAY?

If you find yourself in need of emergency supplies or in need of someone to talk to, please don't hesitate to call the church office and we will assist you however we can or direct you to resources that may be able to help.

Council

2023 Council Members

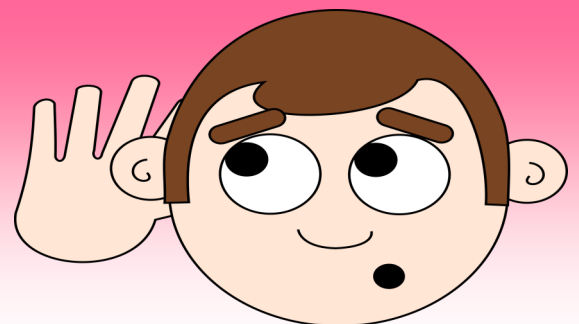
<i>President</i>	Marilyn Scuralli
<i>Vice President</i>	Tom Dangelo
<i>Secretary</i>	(Lin McKelvey beginning in March)
<i>Treasurer</i>	Bob Housel

Ministry Liaisons were established as follows:

<i>Christian Education</i>	Pastor Beth
<i>Finance</i>	Marilyn Scuralli
<i>Prayer, Praise, Worship</i>	Pastor Beth
<i>Property</i>	Tom Schmidt
<i>Staff Support</i>	Marilyn Scuralli
<i>Stewardship/Evangelism</i>	
<i>Technology</i>	Tom Dangelo
<i>Youth & Family Ministry</i>	Lin McKelvey
<i>Social Ministry</i>	Joan Haddox

HEARING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

Hearing assistance equipment for up to 8 users available for anyone who needs help hearing the service better. Please ask Jeremy Hopkins or anyone who uses the equipment for assistance.



Steve's Bulletin Board

Our Sanctuary furnace has been repaired! Thank you to Tom Schmidt, Herb Hoehing, and Janell Heller-Garcia for their work with the repair company and with keeping our sanctuary as warm as possible when that furnace was not working!

Recycling Styrofoam in Lucas County

If you feel guilty throwing Styrofoam in the trash, Lott Industries has a service you need. You can take your clean white rigid Styrofoam packing materials to them for recycling. Fee: \$5.00 Cash. (per car-load—you can give more if you like) There are information sheets on the bulletin board in the narthex or you can google "Lott Industries Styrofoam Recycling. They also do document shredding!

Easter Flowers



Please be on the look out for more info in the "This Week" pamphlet as we get closer and closer to Easter.

Bible Quiz Answer:

C. burning palms from
Palm Sunday

February Celebrations

Baptismal Birthdays

2/1 Jim Boldt
2/8 Kathie Tefft
2/8 Lynn Tefft

Birthdays

2/2 Mollie McCoy
2/3 Dave Aldrich
2/5 Nancy Pfau
2/7 Michelle Tebary
2/19 John Lock
2/23 Tricia Kunkel
2/25 Joan Paxton
2/28 Jeremy Hopkins

February 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4 9:30 Coffee and Conversation
5 9:00 AM Gathering Space 10:30AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship	6	7	8 11:00 AM Jeremiah Bible Study 5:00 PM Walk Up Communion	9	10	11 9:30 Coffee and Conversation
12 Souper Bowl Sunday Celebration of Marriage 9:00 AM Gathering Space 10:30AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship 11:30 AM Soup Lunch After Worship	13	14 Newsletter Deadline 12:00 PM Joy Lunch	15 11:00 AM Jeremiah Bible Study 5:00 PM Walk Up Communion	16	17	18 9:30 Coffee and Conversation
19 9:00 AM Gathering Space (Guest: Steve Swaggerty) 10:30AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship 11:30 AM Youth Event	20 12 PM LWR Quilting 6:00 PM Council Meeting	21 7:00 PM Bible 101	22 11:00 AM Jeremiah Bible Study 12:00 PM Ash Wed. Worship 7:00 PM Ash Wed. Worship	23	24	25 9:30 Coffee and Conversation
26 9:00 AM Gathering Space (Led by Nancy Pfau) 10:30AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship	27 7:00 PM Parkinson's Support	28				