

Vision of St. Stephen

June/July 2026



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This land is your land, this land is my land, from California to the New York Islands....

When I was in 2nd grade, my family went on a 3-month cross country camping trip. It was an adventure! From engine troubles in a small Louisiana town during Mardi Gras season, to building sand castles on the beach at Padre Island, to Easter sunrise worship over the Grand Canyon, to celebrating my birthday in California's red wood forest—it was an amazing experience that left me with a profound appreciation and love for the diversity of people and places in this nation.

As we celebrate the 250th birthday of our nation, I've been thinking about love of country. It's interesting because I don't think this is biblical concept. The people of the Old Testament were to love God with all their heart, mind, and strength—nothing about love of the country. In the Gospels, Jesus talks about loving God and our neighbor—never his country—and Jesus certainly didn't come to make Israel a military geopolitically recognized superpower—even though some people hoped he would.

And yet, here in the US, some Christians see that love of country is tied to their love of God. And for some, this love of country often seems to be equated with "America can do no wrong". This concept is difficult for me to accept.

As Christians, Jesus instructs us to "forgive as we have been forgiven". And that forgiveness starts with admitting that we "are in bondage to sin...we have sinned...by what we have done and left undone, we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves" (LBW, Pg 56). It's by being honest about our flaws, failures, and sin that we can ask for forgiveness and grow in our knowledge and ability to do better the next time around. We are not and can never be perfect people.

As Christians who happen to citizens in the US, I believe it is important to talk about the flaws, failures and sin that are part of our shared history. From the horrors of slavery to the slog of Vietnam, from environmental disasters like the Exxon Valdez to the scandal of Watergate and the Tea Pot dome, to ignoring treaties and taking native lands, we have much to repent from as a nation. Having a complete understanding of our history helps us to analyze the past, repent and learn from our mistakes, and more completely live into the inspiring words in our Declaration of Independence.

So we celebrate this anniversary, let us renew the commitment we make in baptism, to work for a world where all people are truly seen as beloved children of God, "to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people, following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth".

*God's Peace to you,
 Pastor Beth*

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Spiritual Growth

Gathering Space

Our Sunday morning time of learning and discussion will return after Labor Day as Dave Haddix continues our look at the fascinating Book of Revelation.

Wednesday Bible Study

We'll be completing our look at The Lord's Prayer in June. In July, we will not be meeting but look for our new August topic to be announced in the This Week bulletin insert.

FUTURE EVENTS!

The Chosen Bible study resumes in September with Season 4.

Look out for our End of Summer indoor picnic date which will be announced after July!



Piki-Piki Update

We welcomed Pastor Sarah Schaaf from our Northwestern Ohio synod staff to St. Stephen on May 17th. She was fresh from a synod trip to Tanzania where they dedicated 43 motorbikes (piki-piki's). Last fall, St. Stephen provided donations for 3 of these bikes, that were matched by an anonymous giver (so 6 bikes!). These will be used by pastors and lay evangelists as they go from village to village sharing the gospel message and sharing God's love. Some of these gospel workers were walking 3 or 4 hours in between isolated village communities—the piki piki's have provided more time for ministry and more energy for this work as well. They've also been used to help oth-

ers--some evangelists have used their motorbikes to take people to the hospital in emergencies. The synod is working to produce a video with interviews of these evangelists—we'll be sure and let you know when it is available!

Peanut Butter and Jelly

In May, we collected 201 jars of Peanut Butter and Jelly for the Lutheran Social Services food pantry! Thank you for your support and donations!

Activities

JOY Club Lunch

Women, would you like to go out for lunch? We'll be trying out Scrambler's at 6819 Central Ave. on Tuesday, June 16th at noon. On July 21st, lunch will be at Sidon's at 4625 W. Bancroft. Please sign up on the bulletin board. Save the date for lunch on July 15th. We'll announce that location in our Sunday bulletin insert.

Lutheran World Relief School Kits

Did you know that in many parts of the world, kids cannot attend school if their parents can't provide the needed school supplies? That means students can lose an entire year of education simply because they don't have a pencil or paper. To help this situation, LWR has for many years been providing a school kit to families in need. We'd like to help in this effort. For the school kits we will need 200 : 70 sheet count spiral notebooks. Each bag needs 4. Either wide or college ruled is fine. This amount will fill 50 school kits. With back to school sales coming up we would appreciate any donations. If there are extra notebooks we will either save them for school kits next year or donate them to Salem if they have a need!

Mudhens

Play Ball! Would you like to go to see the Mudhens play with a group from St. Stephen? We're planning to attend the game on Friday, August 7th and Saturday, September 19th. For more info, see the bulletin board to sign up. The cost per game is \$14. To pay for your tickets, please write a check to St. Stephen or enclose cash in an envelope clearly marked Mudhens by each RSVP date. We hope you can join us!

Book Group

The St. Stephen Book Group will be meeting again on September 24th to discuss The Borrowed Life of Frederick Fife, by Anna Johnston. If you'd like to join in the conversation, please mark 7:00 p.m. on your calendar! In October we'll be reading, The Gales of November, The Untold Story of the Edmund Fitzgerald by John U. Bacon.

Toledo Pride 2026

If you're interested in walking with the Better Together group of members and friends from 30+ local congregations, please let Pastor Beth know or sign up on the bulletin board. The parade will be held in downtown Toledo on Saturday, August 15th. If you'd prefer not to walk, but to help out in other ways, please note that too, as there is a need to provide staffing for an information table at Trinity Episcopal church. In past years we've had green and purple T-shirts—and each year we're adding a different color to form a rainbow. This year, the t-shirts will be hot pink—and if you'd like one, they are \$20 and will be available for purchase after June 15th.

Unwanted Firearm Disposal

Turn guns into Art! If you have an unwanted gun, would you like to dispose of it in a creative responsible way? Following the motto of Isaiah 2:4, which speaks of turning guns into plowshares, at this event, you can turn in an unwanted firearm. It will be chopped into parts that will be used to create art pieces and you will receive a gift card. This event will be held on Saturday, June 13th from 11 am-3 pm at Monroe Street United Methodist Church in Toledo. The *Multifaith Coalition to Reduce Gun Violence* is a grassroots network of more than 30 faith communities across Northwest Ohio working together to promote education, awareness and action around gun violence prevention. Additional partners include *Sisters 4 Unity*, a local support group for mothers who have lost children to gun violence, as well as the Toledo chapters of *Moms Demand Action* and *Parents of Murdered Children*. Technical assistance will be provided by *Disarmory Ministries*, a Michigan-based nonprofit that provides safe firearm disposal solutions.

Outreach

Diaper Drive

Our Diaper Drive for the Norf End Neighbor Group that is based at Salem Lutheran Church has so far collected 1,537 diapers for those in need in our community! We had individual donations as well as a Thrivent Action Team to support this diaper drive! Thank you for your generosity!



Donuts with Dad

Donuts with Dads! On Father's Day, June 21th, you're invited to celebrate the men in your life during our fellowship time after worship!

Let's Build Beds

Have you heard about Let's Build Beds? This is an effort to provide free wooden frame beds and a new coil mattress to kids aged 3-17 who live in an hour's radius from Waterville. During events, volunteers cut lumber and work on getting the bed frames ready to be assembled when they are delivered to the requested home. No experience is necessary. Safety equipment and supplies are provided. We will gather as a group to assist with the Masonic Lodge Fort Build a Bed Event, on June 13th from 9am to 12 PM at 5025 Secor Rd.



Lutheran Social Services Cleaning Day

You're invited to come and help restock, organize, and clean at the Lutheran Social Service Food pantry on Saturday, August 8th. We'll work there at 2149 Collingwood Avenue, Toledo, from 10 a.m. until around 11:30 a.m.

Welcome New Members!

Linda Blaesing

I was married to my high school sweetheart for 52 years (together for 59) prior to Carl's passing in 2023. We have 3 children, 5 grandchildren and 1 shih tzu, I'm a retired RN from UTMC. I was introduced to St. Stephen's by a member to help out with LWR quilting as I've been a quilter for 16 years.

Jennifer Davis & Michael Gouchenour

I'm a mother of two, Elyse and Evan, and love my family very much. I enjoy being outside, walking, exercising, spending time with family and coloring!

My name is Michael and I have been attending St. Stephen for 35 years. I am a plumber and I have 2 children. Jennifer Davis has been my partner and soulmate for 13 years. We are both overjoyed to be becoming members of the church. We love our church, our congregation and our pastor. God bless.

Ella Dudek

I love to cook! I've turned a childhood punishment into a passion for filling people with love through food. I've cooked for the Legends & Stars of the entertainment industry. I was blessed to be to cook for the people who fell from the stars, the Homeless on Skid Row in DTLA, in the city of Angels, where the population is 8k-11k human beings. If I could teach one lesson in life it would be, "When you think you can't, you can and when you need to, you will." Peace & Light, Ella.

Vinnie Graber

I moved here recently from Iowa to be closer to family. I like to read and enjoy walks.

Mary Hanson

Mary was born and raised in Cleveland and has a BS in Business Education. She has 2 amazing, married daughters, along with 2 equally amazing grandsons. She has done some teaching and was a legal secretary, a Pastor's wife for over 46 years and has lived in 6 states. Mary loves to sing, do various arts and crafts, including calligraphy, which she also taught.

Eric & Heidi Johnson

Heidi, a retired RN, is married to Eric, a retired merchant marine, in 1998 on the 4th of July—we get to see fireworks every year for our anniversary. Heidi enjoys quilting, knitting, crocheting and cuddling with her dogs, Sammy & Toby, and when able, doing yardwork. Eric enjoys playing with Sammy & Toby, taking care of the yard, and enjoying the occasional cigar. We don't have any children, but enjoy spending time with our nieces and nephews.

Faith Lumbrezer

My name is Faith Lumbrezer. I worked many years as a hair stylist and have since retired. I live in Berkey with my husband, John. We have been married for 41 years and have raised 2 daughters. We have been blessed with 4 grandchildren and enjoy babysitting, watching them grow and attending many activities. I look forward to becoming a member of St. Stephen and getting to know everyone.

David & Diana Newton

Dave worked as a Product Development Chemist for 35 years. Much of his life has dealt with solving puzzles of work and he still loves an assortment of puzzles and games. Dave says "I have always tried to maintain the curiosity and attitude of my 14 year old self." Dave and his wife Diana have a life-long love of travel. Much of our life in Toledo focuses on the activities of our young adult grandchildren. Our favorite vacation spot is near N. Myrtle Beach.

Diana is a retired Special Needs Teacher. She enjoys cooking and baking. She loves to celebrate birthdays, holidays, and just about all family get-togethers. She always thinks of others before her own needs. Her hobbies include reading, photography, volunteering, and playing card games. Her favorite past time is traveling, especially close to the ocean. She has an uncanny ability to remember birth dates.

Arnie & Felicia Page

Felicia (retired teacher) and Arnie (retired engineer) married in 1988. We have 1 daughter, Abigail, and 1 son, Andrew. Abby has 2 sons, Eddie and Malechy. Eddie is Married to Mikaela and they had our first great-grandchild—Oliver (3/30/26). Thanks to many prayers for his health, he is progressing well. Andy is married to Elizabeth and they have 2 children, Evelyn and Henry and they live in Columbus. Abby and her boys live in Sylvania/Toledo. Felicia likes to sew/quilt. Arnie keeps busy with projects around the house. We have a dog, Libby, that walks Arnie daily!

Property Update



We've had a busy few months for our property crew! We've had Greg Stillwell with Blades trim our big maple trees in the front yard and remove the two overgrown evergreens at the front corners of the building. Down the road, we may look into adding smaller plantings to those corners, once the roots have had a chance to disintegrate. The toilets in the Sunday School/Little Miracles hallway were not flushing cleanly, so we had the drains cleaned out and discovered that tree roots were to blame. The narthex men's bathroom exhaust fan is in the process of being repaired. The east side of our electronic sign had a stripe in it where the module had gone bad; a new module was installed by Toledo Sign. Our narthex drinking fountain's motor was going bad—a new unit one was purchased. Michael Gochenour and Marty McKelvey installed the new one!

In a few weeks, once a part arrives, you'll be able to use a handicap "button" to open one side of the front doors on Sunday mornings and during weekly activities!

If you'd like to help with property items, please let Tom Schmidt know of your interest!

Administrative News

PASTOR BETH'S VACATION

Pastor Beth will be on vacation in two chunks this summer. She'll be away beginning Friday, June 26th through July 9th. During this time, she'll be in the UP with family and also attending the ELCA Rostered Leader's conference in Indianapolis, an event that happens every 3 years at various cities across the country. On Sunday, June 28th our worship will be led by Pastor Martin Billmeier, who recently retired from serving many years at St. Lucas Lutheran. Marilyn Scuralli will be leading worship on July 5th. For her next vacation, she'll be away July 18-25 to either Michigan or the Chatauqua Institute in New York. Dave Haddix will be preaching and leading worship on July 19th. If you're in need of pastoral care during these times, please call either the church office or a member of church council to arrange a visit with a local Lutheran pastor.

LITTLE MIRACLES UPDATE

Little Miracles will be here in our building for their summer program this summer. We're happy to provide a childcare location for kids over these months so that parents can work, knowing that their kids are safe and having fun! The kids will be going on field trips many afternoons, but they will be in the building from 7-5:30ish!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY: COOKIE COORDINATOR!

For many years, Pat Hoehing has served as our cookie coordinator. What's that you ask? When there was a need (typically for a funeral or for our annual celebration of marriage), Pat would email an established list of bakers, asking if they would be able to bring in so many dozen on a specific date. The bakers would email back to let her know if they could bake for this specific event, what they'd make, and how many cookies they would provide. Pat is stepping away from this role, so we're looking for someone else to serve in this capacity! Please contact Pastor Beth for more information or to volunteer for this job. If you'd like to be added to the list of bakers, please let Pastor Beth know that as well!

Thank you, Pat, for serving in this capacity for so many events in the past several years!!

6 MONTH STATEMENTS

The 6 month financial statements will be available for pick up the second week of July. They will not be sent out in the mail, so if you know you will want yours and will be unable to pick up, please e-mail Janell so she can send it out to you.

Prayer

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

Summer Prayer

Heavenly Father,
As we embrace the
warmth and light of this
summer season, we thank
You for the beauty of
creation and the joy of
sunny days. Please guide
us in using this time for
rest. Protect us in our
travels and activities, and
let this summer be a
season of renewal and
deep joy in Your presence.

Wolf—Stomach Cancer
Laura—Healing & Comfort
Ali—Guidance & Comfort
Diane—Healing & Comfort
Libby—Healing & Comfort
Diana—Healing
Don—Healing & Comfort
Lisa—Healing
Brenda—Healing
Julie R.—Breast Cancer
Tim—Peace & Healing
Matt—Recovery
Nancy—Healing & Comfort
Ella—Healing & Comfort
Leslie & Donny—Healing
Ryan—Healing & Recovery
Mike—Recovery & Guidance
Karam Family—Comfort & Peace

All Victims of Trauma and War

Fun

ALL IN GOOD FUN



BIBLE QUIZ

Who was the father of the apostles
James and John?

(Answer page 10)

- A. Joseph
- B. Jesse
- C. Zebedee
- D. Zacharius

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

2026 Council Members

<i>President</i>	Marilyn Scuralli
<i>Vice President</i>	Tom Dangelo
<i>Secretary</i>	Beth Madden
<i>Treasurer</i>	Kathie Tefft

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>	Beth Madden
<i>Technology</i>	Tom Dangelo
<i>Youth & Family Ministry</i>	Joan Haddox
<i>Social Ministry</i>	Kathy Aldrich
<i>Member at Large</i>	Carol Turvey

WHAT IS COUNCIL?

Church council is a group of members that regularly meet to help guide St. Stephen. If you are interested in being a part of council or learning more about it, please reach out to any member or Pastor Beth for more info!

Steve's Bulletin Board

Thank You

Thank you to Michael Gochenour and the property team for installing the new water fountain in the Narthex!

LWR Quilting Group!



Newsletter Deadline

If you have something you would like to include in the August Newsletter the deadline is July 14! Contact the office or email Janell at sslsecretary@buckeye-express.com

Bible Quiz Answer:

C. Zebedee

June Celebrations

Baptismal Birthdays

6/1 Sarah McCoy
6/4 Christine Kahan
6/6 Jenny Troutman
6/14 Dave Davis
6/23 Ryann Fox

Birthdays

6/5 Lynn Golba
6/8 David Newton
6/13 Karen Bogdan
6/14 Carol Brown
6/15 Joan Haddox
6/16 Jan Weil
6/21 Carol Haddix
6/26 Steve Kahan
6/27 Evin McCoy
6/28 Jettie Sansbury

July Celebrations

Birthdays

7/13 Doug Paxton
7/13 Heidi Johnson
7/14 Scott Ballard
7/14 Christine Kahan
7/16 Marilyn Scuralli
7/16 Santino Scuralli
7/18 Eloise Bogdan
7/20 Ken Marvin
7/24 Dave Haddix
7/29 Herb Hoehing

Anniversaries

7/5 Tristan & Heather Bonde
7/14 Jordan & Kristi Shepler

June 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 11:00 AM Bible Study	4	5	6
7 10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship	8	9	10 11:00 AM Bible Study	11	12	13 9:00 AM Let's Build Beds 11:00 AM Firearms Disposal
14 10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship	15 5:30 PM Council	16 12:00 PM JOY Club	17	18	19	20
21 Father's Day 10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship 11:30 Donuts with Dad	22 LWR Quilting	23	24 11:00 AM Bible Study	25	26	27 9:30 AM Coffee and Conversation
	Pastor Beth Vacation					
28 10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship	29	30				

July 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4 <i>Office Closed</i>
5 <i>10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship</i>	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 <i>10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship</i>	13	14 <i>Newsletter Deadline</i>	15	16	17	18
19 <i>10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship</i>	20 <i>5:30 Council</i>	21 <i>12:00 PM JOY Club 3:00 Commu- ion</i>	22 <i>11:00 AM Bible Study</i>	23	24	25 <i>9:30 AM Coffee and Conversation</i>
26 <i>10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship</i>	27 <i>LWR Quilting</i>	28	29	30	31	
<i>Pastor Beth Vacation</i>						