

Vision of St. Stephen

November 2025



St. Stephen Lutheran Church
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Dear Beloved Members of St. Stephen,

As we prepare to gather for our annual congregational meeting, I want to pause and give thanks for the Spirit that moves among us, for the joy of worshipping together each week, and for the many ways we all continue to support the life and mission of St. Stephen.

Each Sunday, we are renewed by the warmth of community and the beauty of shared praise. We are especially blessed by Pastor's Beth's faithful leadership and the spiritual depth she brings to our journey. Scott's musical direction lifts our hearts and enriches our worship, helping us experience God's presence in powerful ways.

But the true heartbeat of St. Stephen is found, not only in our sanctuary, but in the work we do beyond these walls. Whether it is serving neighbors in need, supporting one another through life's challenges, or sharing God's love in quiet, everyday moments, you are the church in action. Your time, talents, and possessions, offered in joy, have made this ministry possible, and we are deeply grateful.

To those who have not yet had the opportunity to support the church financially, we invite you to prayerfully consider beginning this practice. Giving is more than a transaction; it is a spiritual discipline that connects us to God's abundance and empowers the work we do together. Every gift, no matter the size, helps sustain our worship, outreach, and care for one another.

Please join us at our annual congregational meeting on November 9th to celebrate what God has done and dream together about what might be next. Thank you for being part of this vibrant, faithful community. May we continue to grow in love, generosity, and purpose as we bring glory to God in all we do.

With gratitude and hope,
Beth Madden

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Spiritual Growth

INQUIRER'S CLASS

Interested in belonging to St. Stephen? Please speak with Pastor Beth about how to become a member of this congregation.



ALL SAINTS SUNDAY

During our All Saints worship on Sunday, November 2nd, we'll be reading the names of those who have died in the faith before us. If you have a name of someone you'd like to add to our Book of the Dead, you're welcome to write in that name yourself during the week of October 26th or on Sunday, the 2nd. If you won't be here in person to write the name yourself, please call Janelle in the church office and she can add that name to the book. As we do this, we give thanks to God for these people who have made an impact on us.

GATHERING SPACE

During November, our Sunday morning study is focusing on angels in the Bible. We're discovering the multitude of descriptions and jobs the angels have and the ways in which they interact with humans in biblical stories. You're invited to join in our discussion. We meet at 9:15 Sundays in the library, next to the double entrance doors

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY

We're continuing to look at the story of Joshua in our 11:00 a.m. Wednesday Bible study, as we look at how Joshua was called by God to lead the people into the land. New people are most welcome—no prior experience is necessary to join in the conversation!

CONFIRMATION

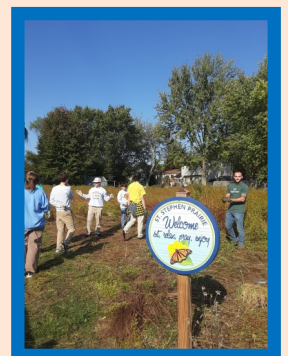
Look for photos of our confirmands on their special day in our December/November newsletter!

YOUTH FUN FRIDAY

Our youth are invited to a night of games, crafts, and stories on Friday, November 14th from 7-10ish. We'll be making Christmas ornaments to share with our shut-in members and to decorate your own tree! We're inviting teens from Olivet Lutheran and Sylvania First United Methodist to join us as well.

PRAIRIE

Our prairie is beginning to sleep now for the winter. On Saturday, October 4th, a group of volunteers from Outdoor Sylvania and the Toledo Zoo Teens came and helped to pull some of the tickweed sunflowers out of the prairie. They replaced them with native plants and seeded the area as well. We didn't have much advance notice of the specifics of their offer to help out—next time, we hope to have more notice to invite you to come and help.



Gathering Space: Sharing Our Thoughts

During the month of September the Gathering Space participants focused on revitalizing our spiritual lives. We all agreed that we have times of “spiritual dryness” when our relationship with God doesn’t feel the same. Our society emphasizes taking care of our bodies (exercise, diet) and yet our souls actually demand as much attention as the body. Unless the soul is fed and exercised daily it remains discontented, confused and restless . . . the soul was made for God.

We focused on four areas of our spirituality (prayer, our gifts/talents, community and worship). We shared our current practices and discussed ways to release old routines and create new ones. We hope our St. Stephen faith family will find our class suggestions helpful.

PRAYER:

- Choose a time each day which allows YOU some quiet time with God.
- Practice the acronym ACTS (adoration, confession, thanks & supplication).
- Daily prayer books/booklets focus on Bible verses (what God may be trying to tell us/teach us).
- Allow time for silence/meditation/listening; set a timer if this helps.
- Try journaling...dating prayer requests allows you to see when prayer was answered and HOW.
- Memorize Bible verses for your “go to” when times are difficult.
- Set aside one day per month for increased prayer time.
- Change your prayer location (move outdoors, stop in at church).
- Stay in the moment and pray “throughout” the day
- Remember: what we have prayed for may not have changed...BUT we have!

GIFTS/TALENTS:

“We have different gifts according to the grace given to each of us.”

Romans 12:6

- We’ve all been given a gift (a talent, skill, a divine spark, an anointing)...call it what you will.
- Know your gift and do not neglect it. Use your “**You-ness**”
- Not sure what your gift is . . . take the Spiritual Gifts class offered by our church. Try self-reflection. Ask others or listen to what someone suggests may be your gift. What energizes you?
- Try something new and if you find out it’s not a good match, then move on!
- Our divine gift makes us an essential part of the world; as a spiritual being we radiate that to others through our actions and words.

COMMUNITY:

The class agreed that we live in several communities throughout our lifetime ... our family community, our faith community and the world community. We flourish in community. Early in the book of Genesis God informs us that it is not good for man to be alone. The Covid pandemic taught us that connection isn’t just life affirming, but life sustaining.

Former U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, in combatting the public health epidemic of loneliness in the U.S. stated. . . “When we help other people, we establish an experience or a connection with them, but we also remind ourselves of the value that we bring to the world.”

- The Bible is full of stories, lessons, etc. that define community (Ps. 82:4, Heb. 13:16, Phil. 2:4, Gal. 6:2, John 13:34, Matt. 7:12, Prov. 3:27, Prov. 19:17, James 1:27, Luke 10:25-28) Did you look these up?
- We feel the least comfortable in our “world” community . . .we’re seen as strangers, our busy culture doesn’t do “abiding” well, we don’t linger long in one spot, our media paints a scary world, we don’t normally share with strangers.

Sharing Our Thoughts

- We probably feel the most comfortable within our “family” community (family as in blood relation or whom we define as “family”). This group allows “me to be me”, they know my history, my fears, my likes and dislikes, my moods. If we are fortunate to see them often we are able to give and receive the best of who we are. However, sometimes the “family” community is not so rosy. . .politics, finances, generational differences, distance, unsolicited advice can cause separation.
- Our “faith” community can be a mix of the former two. . .the big factor is how long have we known one another? Does our faith environment make it easier to share/feel comfortable? Do we see God’s people as a body, functioning together, concerned for one another? Are we practicing God’s love? Faith is central in this community, growth in a relationship with Christ, a shared spiritual journey. We’re presented opportunities . . .classes (attend & welcome someone), a place to use our “gifts”- volunteer, prayer partners, encouragement, sharing life stories, trying something that makes you uncomfortable (team up with someone to learn).

WORSHIP:

The Advent booklet available prior to Christmas had an interesting statement in its 2024 publication: We should come to Worship expecting to be changed. The class wondered if this meant we’ve become numb to worship, disinterested, bored? Is worship just a habit, a social outing, just what we do each Sunday? Could we see it differently? Could it be a change in our spiritual life? Proverbs 4:20-23 and Genesis 2:2-3 had the answers for us. Sabbath’s purpose is to allow us “rest” and to be “blessed.” The Sabbath is holy, sacred, set apart from the ordinary, set apart for God’s use. The Proverbs’ quote addresses the importance of God’s words, how they are life and health to those who find them. Words? Our worship service is overflowing with words... prayers, hymns, greetings, Pastor’s sermon, responses. Our senses are in full use. . .we listen, we speak, we sing, we see, we touch when we share the peace and we taste when we partake of Communion! When believers come together in worship, divine power flows. Jesus graces us with His presence. Some class thoughts:

- enter church early to prepare for worship
- look at the drawing on the front of the bulletin to determine if you know the Bible lesson for this Sunday
- focus on the words we speak and sing; adverbs can be very educational
- listen to how Pastor links the Old and New Testament readings of the day; how she gently reminds us that we all fall short but God continually blesses us, nourishes us and CHANGES us during WORSHIP to go and do His work.

So, did the Gathering Space class conclude that we can revitalize our spiritual life? Of course, we can. We can reframe our thinking/practices but it won’t be easy. Look at what you are allowing to steal your time/your peace with God...the internet, 24/7 news, hobbies, laziness? See Jesus’ presence in life’s ordinary events, practice confidence with God. . .it’s okay to be gutsy, annoying and persistent (Abraham, Hannah, Jeremiah and Jesus Himself were). We all need to take more time listening and asking ourselves how our spiritual walk is going. We might be very surprised at what God reveals to us! Thank you for allowing our class to share some ideas with you, our Faith Community.

Nancy Pfau

Advent & Christmas



ADVENT

Our first Sunday in Advent is November 30th, the Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend. While you're visiting with family and friends, why not encourage people to celebrate the Advent season together? In addition to our annual Advent devotional booklet, Pastor Beth will have a display of Advent resources for you to take and use yourself or share with others. Look for this display in the narthex Sunday, November 16th and following.

CHRISTMAS FLOWERS FOR THE ALTAR

Look for more information on our Christmas flowers in future publications!

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

Is there someone you can invite to worship with you on Christmas Eve? Will you be seeing this person over Thanksgiving? You're encouraged to pray about this and invite people now to put our worship times of Wednesday night, December 24th, 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. on their calendar. We'll also have some postcard invitations you can share with them as a reminder.

ELCA GOOD GIFTS

Do you have someone on your Christmas list that you just don't know what to get for them? If so, you're invited to consider the ELCA good gifts catalogue-----Look for it to appear in the narthex after our annual meeting.



Activities

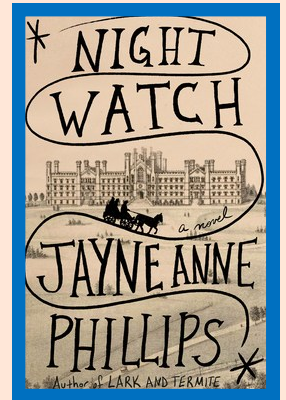
ANNUAL MEETING

St. Stephen will be holding our annual congregational meeting on Sunday, November 9th after our 10:30 worship service. At this meeting, we will be sharing our current financial situation and celebrating the things we've done during the past year. We'll be voting to approve our 2026 budget and voting on council members.

After our meeting, we'll adjourn to the fellowship hall for a Chili cook-off! If you have a great chili recipe, bring it in and we'll give it a taste! Bragging rights will go to the top 3 ranked chili's. This year's judges are last year's winners: Kathie Tefft, Carol Turvey, Sharon Mason, and Kathy Aldrich!

BOOK GROUP

You're invited to join in the discussion as our book group reads, Night Watch, by Jayne Anne Phillips. If you've read it, please consider coming to discuss this together! To avoid Thanksgiving, we're meeting on Thursday, November 20th at 7:00 p.m.



JOY CLUB

Joy Dec 11, 2025 Nativ-TEA at St. Paul's Lutheran Downtown at Heart Gallery. We will be enjoying Christmas music, a tea and extraordinary collection of Christmas trees and Traditions at St. Paul's Downtown Toledo Thursday Dec. 11. We'll leave Church at 10 carpooling and return by 2:15.. Yes, tea is served with delicious pastries. A suggested donation is \$20. **Reservations needed as this sells out. RSVP to RUTH by Dec 1** to assure we have a spot in this VERY popular event. Pastor Beth, Sharon Sorensen, Shelley Wilczynski and I attended last year! We'd love to share the joy of this Christmas focus with hymns and the art treasures collected by the Heart Studio located in St. Paul's Lutheran Church. If you wish to attend, sign up on the narthex bulletin board or contact Ruth directly by December 1st.

FRUIT AND POTATO COLLECTION

Thank you to everyone who donated to our LSS collection for fruit cocktail and mashed potatoes! Together we collected 36 cans of fruit cocktail and 37 boxes of instant potatoes! Rich Cornell also used a Thrivent Action Team to add more canned fruit to the LSS pantry shelves. Our ongoing collection and neighborhood bin are always available for any non-perishable food donations throughout the year!

Outreach

Christmas Cookies

Is your kitchen going to be filled with the delicious smells of baking cookies? Would you like to join a cookie exchange? We're planning to have one on December 14th after worship—more details to come, but keep some cookies in reserve for this!



Kerry Patrick Clark Concert

You're invited to gather for an afternoon of music featuring singer, storyteller, and songwriter, Kerry Patrick Clark. We'll be hearing him in concert from 2-4 p.m., on Saturday, November 15th. The concert is free, donations to Lutheran Social Services food pantry of canned goods or money are welcome! Please plan to stay after the concert for a reception.

Warm Winter Clothing Drive

We'll begin our annual collection of coats, mittens, scarves and hats this month. Look for the collection boxes in the narthex! Items will be shared with Sylvania Area Family Services and other local charities.



Sylvania Area Family Services

For many years, we've worked with Sylvania Area Family Services to provide food for Thanksgiving and Christmas and gift cards for Christmas presents. As in the past, we're helping 16 of our neighbors. Our goal is to have \$1,600 in donations by November 16th. If you'd like to participate, donations in any amount are welcome! You can put cash or checks (with SAFS in memo line) in the SAFS envelopes in the narthex card table into our offering box. If we end up collecting more than \$1,600 that extra money will be sent to SAFS to help with their work in our community.

Financial News

Noisy Offering

On the first Sunday of each month, we have our noisy offering, inviting you to empty out your loose change into the coffee can. Here's where that money goes: In October, it's shared with Salem Lutheran Church in the Vistula neighborhood of Toledo. This money is given without designation, so that Salem can use it in whatever way is most helpful for them. The October donations are combined with September, November, and December offerings. Offerings over the summer, May through August, are given to Sylvania Area Family Services. Offerings during the winter months, January through April, go to Lutheran World Relief. In October we collected \$90.39 and our next noisy offering date is November 2!

Kroger Rewards

By signing up for the Kroger Rewards program and designating St. Stephen as a recipient, you're helping to support our ministry more locally. We receive a quarterly check from this program. January-March, donations help fund expenses for our quilting group here at St. Stephen, purchasing needed supplies that go into the quilts. April-June, donations go to St. Paul Community Center, a Toledo organization that works with our unhoused neighbors, working them into housing. July-September, donations are given to Salem Lutheran Church. Then October-December, the reward check is given to Sylvania Area Family Services.

Administrative News

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

As always our newsletter deadline for anything you want to be added is the 2nd Tuesday in the month. So for **December/January 2025** Newsletter please have all your **items submitted by November 11.**



Prayer

PRAYER OF GRATITUDE FOR THE SIMPLE THINGS

Thank you, God, for
all your blessings to
me and my family;
for the strength
you give me each
day and for all the
people around me
who make life more
meaningful.
Amen.



Bible Study Tools

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

Wolf—Stomach Cancer
Laura—Healing & Comfort
Ali—Guidance & Comfort
Peggy—Comfort & Peace
Mark—Comfort & Guidance
Bill—Recovery & Strength
Diane—Healing & Comfort
Libby—Healing & Comfort
Julie R.—Breast Cancer
Izzy—Healing & Comfort
Sue—Healing & Comfort
Ella—Healing & Comfort
Nancy P.—Healing & Comfort
Mandy—Comfort & Peace
Larry W.—Healing & Comfort
Heller Family—Comfort & Peace

All Victims of Trauma and War

Fun

ALL IN GOOD FUN

**Why did the
mashed potatoes
cross the road?**

To get to the other sides.



RD

BIBLE QUIZ

Which prophet did not actually die, but
was taken directly to heaven?

(Answer page 10)

- A. Ezekiel
- B. Malachi
- C. Elijah
- D. Amos

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

2025 Council Members

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

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

Time Change

The Fall Back Time Change is happening on November 2! Don't forget to set your clocks back!



Pet Blessing 2025

Advent starts November 30 this year! We have Advent devotionals available in the office and that will be set out in the narthex later this month!

Bible Quiz Answer:

C. Elijah

November Celebrations

Baptismal Birthdays

11/3	Lin McKelvey
11/5	Angela McCoy
11/11	Becky Henderson
11/14	Joyce Cunningham
11/24	Amelia Huddleston
11/26	Kristi Shepler

Birthdays

11/2	Mary Dwyer
11/13	Michelle Ballard
11/13	Sharon Sorenson
11/19	Linda McDonough

Anniversaries

11/12	M&A Mercer
11/13	T&A Schmidt
11/21	B&S Markin
11/30	R&J Cornell

November 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 *Wedding Parking Lot Rental
2 All Saints Sunday Fall Back Time Change 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship	3	4 Election Day 3:00 PM Walk-Up Communion	5 11:00 AM Bible Study	6	7	8 9:30 AM Coffee and Conversation
9 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship 11:30 AM Annual Meeting 12:15PM Chili Cook-Off	10	11 Newsletter Deadline	12 11:00 AM Bible Study	13	14 7:00 PM Youth Fun Friday	15 9:30 AM Coffee and Conversation 2:00 PM Kerry Clark Concert
16 SAFS Deadline 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30 AM In Sanctuary/ Online Worship	17 5:30 PM Council Meeting	18 12:00 PM JOY Club 3:00 PM Walk-Up Communion	19 11:00 AM Bible Study	20 7:00 PM Book Club	21	22 9:30 AM Coffee and Conversation
23 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30 AM In Sanctuary/ Online Worship	24	25 June Ide Funeral @ Reeb	26	27 	28	29
30 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30 AM In Sanctuary/ Online Worship						