

Vision of St. Stephen

May 2026

*As one whom his
mother comforts, so
I will comfort you.*

ISAIAH 66:13

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
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“We love because God first loved us”. 1 John 4:19

When I was a little kid, I remember learning this song in Sunday School. Do you know it?

Love, love, love, that’s what it’s all about.
Cause God loves us, we love each other,
mother, father, sister, brother,
everybody sing and shout,
cause that’s what it’s all about.
It’s about love, love, love.

At this point in my life, I see a need for us all, across the world, regardless of our religious beliefs to approach the people around us and our planet with an attitude of love. This is not some wishy-washy Hallmark greeting card kind of love—this is the fierce, truth telling love of interventions and intentional conversations.

God loves us, yes, indisputably -- always and forever.

Does God endorse our behaviors that are hateful? Harmful to others? Destructive of our planet? No.

God is always inviting us to do better, to get out of our reflexive judgements, to listen with curiosity, to learn more about others, to marvel at complexity, and to be generous and to love all well—and to love in such a way that it brings out and encourages others to love better, too.

I think of Jesus’ encounter in John 8 with the woman caught in adultery, who is on the verge of being killed by stoning by the crowd. Jesus doesn’t put the woman on trial, asking questions about the situation or trying to figure out the circumstances. Jesus turns to the people with rocks in their hands, who think they are about to do God’s will, and Jesus says---“You who are without sin, you throw the first stone”. And the crowd melts away, because Jesus’s challenge to them reveals their own issues. We often then focus Jesus’ words to the woman, “Neither do I condemn you, but go and sin now more”. But what about the crowd? I wonder how this event affected them in the days and weeks after. Did they ponder this? Did it change how they saw themselves? Did they become more hesitant to condemn others? Did they become more open to see the complexity of situations and to work to change people and situations through love, not force or judgement?

How can we love ourselves and others into more closely following Jesus’ way of radical acceptance? How can we hear Jesus’ words as a challenge—to not sit on our laurels and congratulate ourselves on being “nice”—but to stretch ourselves and continually work on our own behavior—challenging ourselves again and again and again to imitate this love of God that claims and holds us forever?

Working on this with you,

Pastor Beth

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Spiritual Growth

Welcome, New Members

On Sunday, May 3rd, we'll be welcoming new members into the life and ministry of our congregation! Look for more information about them, with a photo and an introductory paragraph in our next newsletter! But in the meantime, please plan to stay after worship on the 3rd for a time of fellowship and food!

Wednesday Bible Study

Our Wednesday Bible study has wrapped up its look at Isaiah. Beginning in May, we'll be looking at "The Lord's Prayer". You're invited to join in—no experience needed and all questions are welcome—just come to the library here at church on 11:00 a.m. on Wednesdays!



Gathering Space

Our Sunday morning educational opportunity meets at 9:15 each Sunday in the library, to the left of our main doors. During May, we'll be taking a look at the book of Revelation. Dave Haddix will be leading this study of a interesting book of the Bible. Please join in for this 4-week opportunity!

Summer opportunities for Youth

Summer retreat at Hopewell Pines (6th-12th grade). This mini-retreat is from June 28-July 1st for Lutheran youth and friends from all around Ohio! See Pastor Beth if you're interested—see also the website <https://hopewoodoutdoors.org/program/ohio-synod-youth-summer-retreat-oysr/> (as you scroll down the page you'll find detailed info about the daily schedule, available activities, etc.). The cost is \$150 per youth, adult leaders are free!

ELCA National Youth Event

The 2027 ELCA Youth Gathering is more than an event — it's a movement where young people and leaders come alive in faith, grow in hope and move with purpose. This is where the church comes to life.

We come together every 3 years to celebrate, learn and serve together. In the past, St. Stephen has paired with youth from Olivet and Hope Lutheran. This time, we'll be traveling to Minneapolis for the gathering of several thousand rising high school youth from June 28-July 2! If you're interested, check out the website: <https://www.elca.org/gathering> and let Pastor Beth know of your interest, as plans will be starting to form this fall. There is a cost but we will do fundraising to help our youth to attend.



The Chosen Bible study

We're taking a summer break, but plan to return to view and discuss Season 5 after Labor Day. We'll be announcing the start date in the This Week bulletin insert.

Activities

Happy Birthday St. Stephen!

St. Stephen is celebrating its 57th birthday on May 4th! May the force of God's love continue to strengthen and sustain us in our life and ministries!



Muffins with Mom on Mother's Day

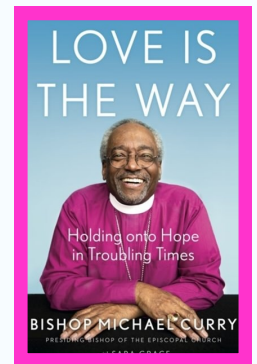
We'll celebrate the women in our lives with muffins after worship on Sunday, May 10th. Please plan to stay after worship for a bite in the narthex as we enjoy our time together.

JOY Club

Women, would you like to go to lunch together? Mark Tuesday, May 19th on your calendar and sign up on the narthex bulletin board as we head out to Tekela, 5147 Main Street, Sylvania for a noon lunch together!

Book Group

On May 28, Love Is the Way, by Bishop Michael Curry, will be our focus. Bishop Curry is the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church—you may have heard his sermon on love preached several years ago at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. In this book, Bishop Curry writes about the power of God's love to transform lives—including his own—and he invites the reader to see the way of love as the path to live in this world and address the problems and pain, as well as the joys, that are part of our world. Our discussion group meets at 7:00 p.m.—all are welcome to come and participate!



Food Pantry Drives

Thank you to all who brought in boxes of Macaroni and Cheese for the Lutheran Social Services food pantry! We collected 373 boxes (thanks to the Pfau's for their Thrivent Action Team). Our next focus is Peanut Butter and Jelly—as many school age kids are food insecure during the summer months. Thank you to the Marvin's for obtaining a Thrivent action team that will provide \$250 worth of PB and J! We'll be collecting peanut butter and jelly through the end of the month.



Outreach

Diaper Drive

In honor of Mother's Day, we'll be collecting diapers for the Norf End neighbor group that is based at Salem Lutheran Church. Each year they hold a drive for diapers that helps those in the community who are in need. Any size diapers are most welcome! Our diaper drive will run for the month of May and any diaper donations can be left on the table in the Narthex!

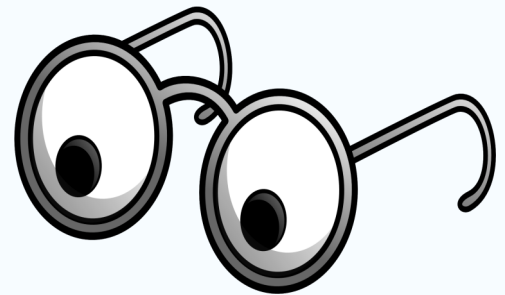


Unwanted Firearms Disposal

During this event, held at Monroe Street United Methodist on June 13 from 11 am-3 pm, volunteers will shepherd gun donors as they drive through a prescribed process. Trained safety experts will handle the guns. The guns will be chopped up into parts, which can then be made into art pieces. Donors will receive Kroger or Meijer gift cards: \$50 for long guns, \$100 for handguns, \$200 for assault rifles, with a limit of \$300 per donation. This event is only open to volunteers, gun donors and the trained safety experts, not the general public. The event is coordinated by the Multifaith Coalition to Reduce Gun Violence, Moms Demand Action and Sisters 4 Unity. For more information, see the flyer on the narthex bulletin board.

Glasses Collection

Do you have any old prescription glasses that you no longer need or from a past prescription? The Lion's Club collects them throughout the year to be sent to people all over the world who may not have access to optometrists or the ability to have glasses they need made for them. Feel free to leave them in the basket in the office to donate!



Gathering Space

Do you shop at Kroger? Did you know that you can earn dollars for our church's outreach merely by shopping as you normally do? Visit the "Serve" Tab on our website and once there, sign up to have your Community Rewards directed to St. Stephen! If you would like assistance in signing up for this program, please contact the office.

Prairie



As our prairie begins to wake up from its winter rest, we're gathering our team of interested people to think and plan for the summer season. If you'd like to join us, we're meeting on Thursday, May 14th at 7:00 p.m.

Administrative News

DIRECTORY UPDATE

We are in the process of updating our member directory! Please make any changes on the Narthex copy you would like to see, or email any changes to Janell at sslcsecretary@buckeye-express.com, including any updated photos! Thank you!

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!!

THANK YOU!

Many Thanks to all who contributed to our Easter celebration! Thanks to all who contributed flowers for the altar, who arranged the flowers, who brought in food for our Easter breakfast, who set up and decorated the fellowship hall, who sang with our choir, who donated candy and helped with the Easter egg hunt, who set up and cleaned up for communion! Thank you for making it a great day!

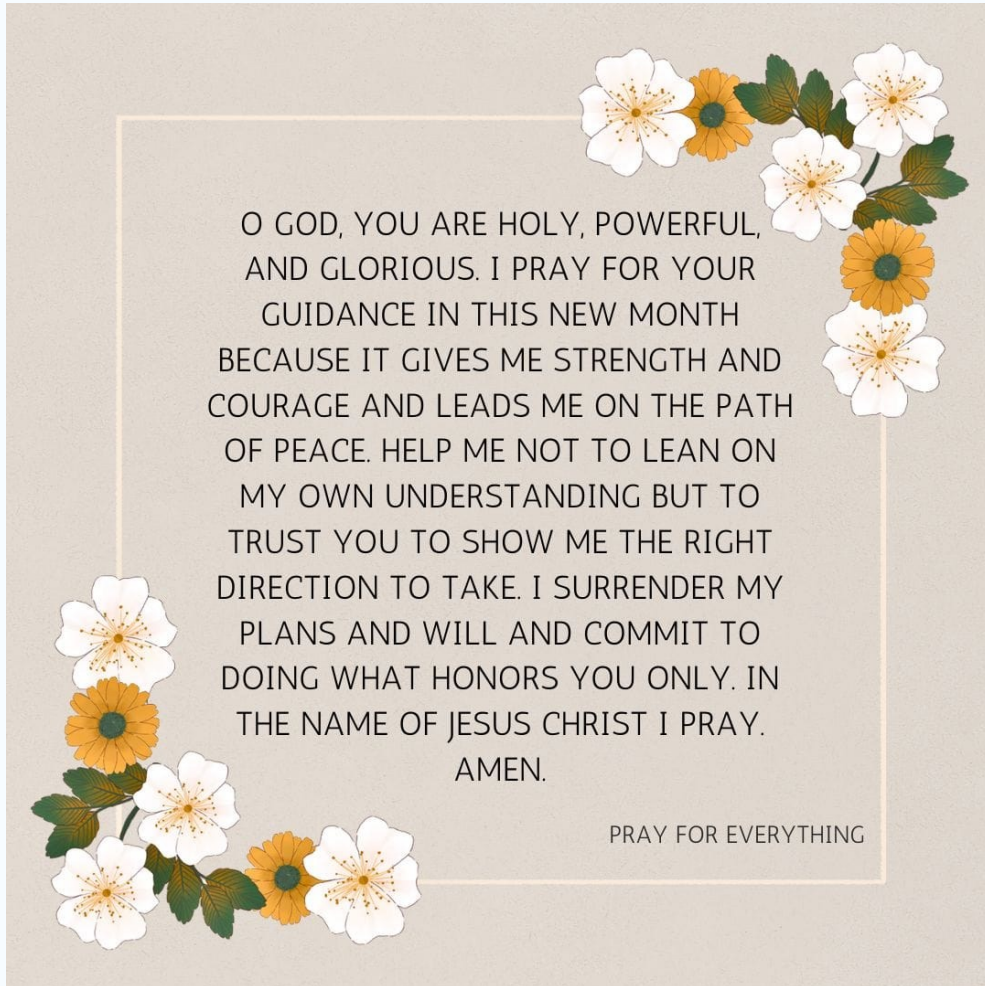
NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

As always our newsletter deadline for anything you want to be added is the 2nd Tuesday in the month. So for **June/July 2026** Newsletter please have all your **items submitted by May 12.**



Prayer

MAY PRAYER

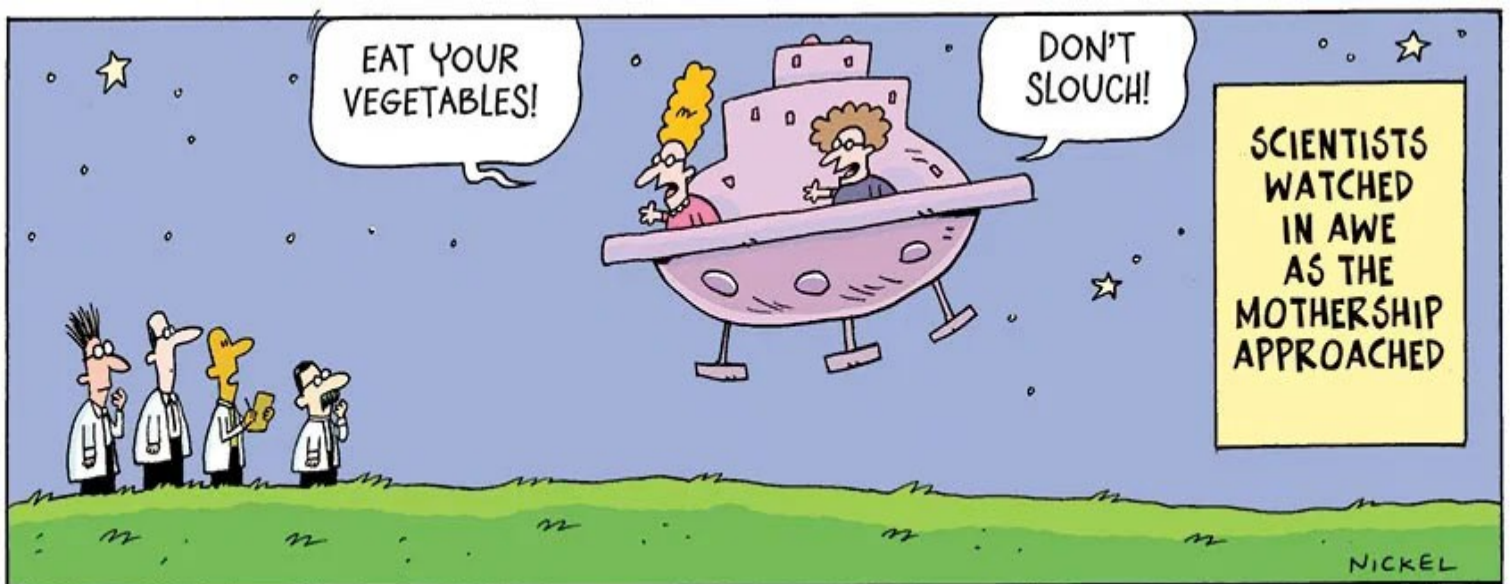


COMMUNITY PRAYERS

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

All Victims of Trauma and War

Fun



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

Application Deadline

If you would like to apply for a St. Stephen academic scholarship, the deadline is May 31st! Applications can be e-mailed to you or obtained from the church office!

Water Bottles

If you are missing one of these water bottles please pick it up in the kitchen!



There have been 3 things found in the sanctuary recently! They are being kept in the church office, and if you see something that belongs to you, feel free to pick it up or contact Janell if you need more details!

May Celebrations

Baptismal Birthdays

5/1 Sue Kahl
 5/2 Garry Ward
 5/5 Eloise Bogdan
 5/11 Beth Ferne Johnson
 5/16 David Aldrich
 5/16 Kathy Aldrich
 5/16 Jessica Klimesh
 5/18 Jordan Shepler
 5/19 Tristan Bonde
 5/25 Cathy Gustafson
 5/26 Mike Bogdan
 5/29 Sue Marvin
 5/29 Sharon Sorensen

Birthdays


5/2 Joyce Cunningham
 5/4 Debbie Lock
 5/6 Tristan Bonde
 5/7 Ryann Fox
 5/18 Jordan Shepler
 5/22 Chelsea Troutman
 5/28 Lynn Tefft

Anniversaries

5/6 Chase & Amber Mercer
 5/7 Jake & Andrea Bogdan

Have we missed your celebration?
 Please contact the church office so our list can be updated and corrected!

May 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30 AM Worship/New Member Reception	4 Happy Birthday St. Stephen	5	6 11:00 AM Bible Study	7	8	9
10 Mother's Day 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30 AM Worship/Online Worship 11:30 AM Muffins with Mom	11	12 Newsletter Deadline	13 11:00 AM Bible Study	14 7:00 PM Prai- rie Meeting	15	16
17 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship	18 LWR Quilting 5:30 PM Council	19 12PM JOY Club	20 11:00 AM Bible Study	21	22	23 9:30 AM Coffee and Conversation
24 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30 AM Worship/Online Worship	25  Office Closed	26	27 11:00 AM Bible Study	28 7:00 PM Book Group	29	30 *Synod Assembly in BG
31 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30 AM Worship/Online Worship *Scholarship Application Deadline						