

Vision of St. Stephen

September 2025



St. Stephen Lutheran Church

7800 Erie St. • Sylvania, OH

(419)885-1551

www.ststephenlutheran.church

Pastor: Rev. Beth Ferne Johnson

sslcpastor@buckeye-express.com

Ah, the start of a new school year—the stores have displays of crayons, markers, pencils and pens. The colors of markers and the sheen of 3 ring binders fill those pop-up displays.

For me, the start of the school year was an exciting and somewhat anxious time—who would be my homeroom teacher? Who would be in my class? The school year stretched out before me.... some parts the same (yes, I would likely hate gym class and love English) and yet some things could be different.

I'm not sure who began this tradition we have of covenanting. Whoever first had the idea—connecting it to this time of back to school way inspired.

In much the same way, this re-covenanting gives us the opportunity to make a fresh start. To think about different ways we might want to relate to our faith and to this community. To commit to doing something new for us. To stay with the activities we love. To be reminded that living out our faith in the world is conscious choice.

As we think about this covenant, we're invited to think about the promises we made in baptism or when we were confirmed (when we affirmed our baptism). These promises are printed on the covenant itself, but they're worth seeing here, too.

You have made public profession of your faith. Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in holy baptism:

*to live among God's faithful people,
proclaim the word of God and share in the Lord's supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
and work for justice and peace in all the earth?
I do, and I ask God to help and guide me.*

These promises are so big, so overwhelming, that we can't begin to accomplish them on our own, and yet—we cannot ignore them or pretend it's someone else's job to be working on them. No matter what or when or where we find ourselves, we have always needed people from a variety of backgrounds to speak a word of love, of peace, of hope, and of healing to our world. And as Christians, this calling is our reason for being. Even as others share this work, we bring something unique in that we speak these needed words out of the context of Jesus's life-giving act on the cross.

So, you're invited to think about these things, about God's calling, and to prayerfully consider your response to God's invitation and bring your signed covenant forward during our worship together, placing it on the altar. If you'd prefer, you can also mail or email your covenant back to St. Stephen as well. I give thanks that, together, we're on the start of this new year in faith.

Peace, Pastor Beth

September Contents

Spiritual Growth	2
Activities	3
Outreach	4
Bishop's Report	5
Financial News	6
Administrative News	6
Prayer	7
Fun	7
Council	8
Steve's Bulletin Board	9
Celebrations	9
Calendar	10

Spiritual Growth

RECOVENANTING

During September, you're invited to consider your ongoing participation in the life of St. Stephen. If you get your newsletter by email, you'll find a covenant attached. If you receive this newsletter in the mail, you'll find a paper copy included. We also will have paper copies on the bulletin table in the narthex. During the month of September, you're invited to bring your signed covenant forward during the hymn of the day, placing it in the basket on the altar.

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY

We will be concluding our look at the ELCA social message, "Government and Civic Engagement in the United States, Discipleship in a Democracy" on September 10th. Stay tuned to our This Week bulletin insert as we decide on a next topic. This group meets each Wednesday at 11 a.m. with great discussions. New people are always welcome to join in!

"The Chosen" BIBLE STUDY

Our Chosen Bible study group continues to meet on Tuesday nights from 6:30-8:00 as we watch episodes from Season 3 and discuss them. Many thanks to Jamile Shibley, a member of Epworth, who is leading our discussion. If you'd like to join in and are worried about getting caught up on the episodes, speak with Pastor Beth—The chosen DVD's are at the library and available online for free!

GATHERING SPACE

Our Sunday morning time for learning returns on September 7th. Nancy Pfau will be leading a 5 session discussion focused on "Revitalizing your spiritual life". This group will meet in the library at 9:15 a.m. New people are most welcome to attend—no prior experience or expertise is required!

ALMOST END OF SUMMER PICNIC

You're invited to an indoor picnic after our worship together on Sunday, September 14th! You're also encouraged to invite a friend to join us for lunch and worship. Everything will be provided thanks to a Thrivent Action team. On the menu are subs from Jersey Mike's, macaroni salad, and cookies! As part of the day, we'll also be assembling our LWR school kits!

LWR QUILTS AND SCHOOL KITS DEDICATION

We'll be dedicating our quilts and school kits during worship on Sunday, September 28th before bringing our items to Bethlehem Lutheran in Pemberville where they are loaded onto a semi bound for Baltimore, MD. From this warehouse, they're sent to people in crises around the world and here in the US as well. Last year, people like us provided 370,818 quilts and 140,117 school kits!! And we've been about this work for 80 years! That's a lot of love reaching our neighbors across the world!

CHURCH COUNCIL GOAL

One of our church council goals for 2025 is to partner with other churches in the area to share resources and strengthen bonds. We're talking with our neighbors at Olivet Lutheran to explore some of these opportunities, including Bible studies, young adult groups, youth events. Stay tuned as we explore these opportunities!

Activities

JOY CLUB

Our women's lunch group, Joy Club, will be heading to Voodoo Brewing Company on Tuesday, September 16th. Kathie Tefft is organizing this noon meal at 7050 West Central Ave. Please sign up if you can make it!

BOOK GROUP

After a summer break, our Book Group reconvenes on Thursday, September 25th at 7:00 p.m. We'll be discussing the book, The Lion Women of Tehran, by Marjan Kamali. According to Good Reads, it is an "evocative read and a powerful portrait of friendship, feminism, and political activism" (People) set against three transformative decades in Tehran". Sounds interesting? Please join in for a group discussion—new folks are most welcome!

PET BLESSING

Our annual blessing of pets will be on Saturday, September 27th! A general blessing and individual prayers for pets will be available at 12, 12:30, and 1:00! We're in the process of inviting some rescue groups to bring dogs that are available for adoption.

LWR School Kits

Thanks to your generosity we have all the supplies we need to assemble 50 school kits! You're invited to help with putting the items in each cloth drawstring backpack. We'll be doing this as part of our "Almost end of summer" picnic and invite a friend Sunday on September 14th! Again, thanks to your generosity, we have gathered enough money to pay the costs of shipping both these school kits and our quilts to their final destinations! (The cost to send each quilt is \$2.80; the cost for a school kit is \$2.85)

PROJECT PIKIPIKI

Did you know that the Lutheran church in Tanzania is growing by leaps and bounds? Part of the growth in the church stems from the work of lay evangelists, who walk from village to village, typically 12-20 miles apart, to preach and provide pastoral care to these emerging communities of faith.

We've been a synod companion with the Dodoma Diocese in this African nation for many years. During this time, we've helped with various projects. They suggested and we agreed to see if we could help by providing motorbikes, to save hours of walking and help these evangelists be more effective in their ministries! Enter Project Pikipiki! Each pikipiki (pick-key/ pick-key) costs \$1,600 (including motorbike and regular maintenance). Currently, the Global Mission Board will match donations dollar for dollar for this project! Look for a video about this project to be shared in worship on September 7th. We'll collect donations for this project on September 14th and September 21st! We're hoping to reach the goal of \$1,600 which, with the matching money, would provide 2 pikipiki's!

Outreach

Young Adult Group Interest

Several of our area pastors, including Pastor Beth, are thinking about beginning an area group for people in their 20's. This group would likely meet monthly and focus on developing friendships and connections with others through board games and discussions. While still in the early stages, if you or someone you know would enjoy this group, please share their name with Pastor Beth.



Lutheran Social Services Servant Event

Do you enjoy cleaning? Organizing? We'll be having a group clean and organize at the LSS food pantry on Saturday, September 6th from 10:30 until around 12ish. All supplies will be provided!

Praying for the Congregation

Our annual praying for the congregation leaflet is available now. In it you'll find that each day has been assigned a person's name or a prayer request. You're invited to pray for that person by name as we hold each other and our world up in daily prayer together. Booklets are available in the Narthex!



Peanut Butter/Jelly Drive Results

Earlier this summer, we collected peanut butter and jelly for the Lutheran Social Services food pantry—here are the numbers: You gave 102 jars of peanut butter and 37 jars of jelly! In addition to what was collected on the round narthex table, a Thrivent Action Team member purchased several cases of peanut butter and jelly that went straight from the store to the food pantry. Thanks for your generosity to our neighbors! Rich Cornell wrote a Thrivent Action Team for September for fruit cocktail and instant potatoes

Bishop's Report

ELCA Church Wide Assembly (July 27-August 2, 2025) report from Bishop Daniel Beaudoin

Our days in Phoenix, AZ were marked by inspiring worship, experiential learning, faithful deliberation, great food, and the 112 degree heat of Phoenix. But it's a "dry heat" they say.

I was delighted by the election of Bishop Yehiel Curry from the Metro Chicago Synod to serve as our next Presiding Bishop. I have served with Bishop Curry for the past 6 years and find him to be a humble, kind and mission-minded leader with a gift for articulating vision for our Church. His time as a mission developer, pastor, and synod bishop, is a gift to our church. I look forward to attending Bishop Curry's installation as the fifth Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on October 4, at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.



At the assembly we also elected and installed Pastor Lucille Mills as the new Secretary of the ELCA, overwhelmingly approved a new social statement (Faith and Civic Life), approved the Lutheran-Orthodox Common Statement on the Filioque, and adopted a number of important memorials that were sent to the Churchwide Assembly from Synod Assemblies.

For a more detailed daily account of the 2025 Churchwide Assembly by the Living Lutheran, see the link below. For a deep dive into all the deliberations and decisions made at the 2025 Churchwide Assembly explore the 24 page Summary of Actions, see the second link below.

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/tag/2025-elca-churchwide-assembly/>

https://elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/Summary_of_Actions_2025_CWA_d.pdf

Financial News

KROGER REWARDS

Do you shop at Kroger? Did you know that if you sign up to do so, Kroger will give a portion of your purchases to area nonprofits—including St. Stephens? During the last quarter, St. Stephen members and friends designated our congregation as their reward recipient—which generated \$58.97. This money will be gifted to St. Paul’s Community Center. Interested in doing this too? On the Kroger app, look for the rewards tab under the “my info” tab and choose “St. Stephen Luthern” (yes, it is spelled wrong in Kroger’s system!).



Administrative News

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

This group met on Sunday, August 24th. Together, we looked some components of our worship service. One thing we discussed was the passing of the peace. Since Covid, we have invited people to share the peace sign while seated. Now, we'll be inviting people in the sanctuary to stand and either continue to show the peace sign to others or to shake hands as people share the peace of the Lord with each other. We will recall people to their seats, asking them to prepare their hearts and minds to receive communion. We also agreed to keep the Kyrie Eleison in place throughout the season of Pentecost.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

As always our newsletter deadline for anything you want to be added is the 2nd Tuesday in the month. So for **October 2025** Newsletter please have all your **items submitted by September 19.**



Prayer

SEPTEMBER PRAYER NOTES



COMMUNITY PRAYERS

Wolf—Stomach Cancer
Laura—Healing & Comfort
Ann—Healing & Comfort
Steve—Healing & Comfort
Alice—Comfort & Peace
Joe —Recovery
Ali—Guidance & Comfort
Mark—Cancer
Peggy—Comfort & Peace
Mark—Comfort & Guidance
Bill—Recovery & Strength
Troy—Healing
Amy—Healing
Diane—Healing & Comfort
Libby—Insight & Peace

All Victims of Trauma and War

Fun

ALL IN GOOD FUN



BIBLE QUIZ

How many days was Lazarus buried in his tomb before Jesus resurrected him?

(Answer page 10)

- A. 1
- B. 4
- C. 6
- D. 14

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

Volunteer Sign Up Sheet

If you would like to help with worship, a new volunteer sign up is available in the Narthex on the bulletin board! Thank you!

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 12th---Soup potluck meal

November 9th—Our Annual Congregational meeting and Chili cook-off!

November 15th—Kerry Clark concert from 2-4 p.m. Free will donations of canned goods or money for LSS food pantry are suggested.

One Sunday morning, the pastor noticed little Alex was staring up at the large plaque that hung in the foyer of the church. The plaque was covered with names, and small American flags were mounted on either side of it. The seven-year old had been staring at the plaque for some time, so the pastor walked up, stood beside the boy, and said quietly, "Good morning Alex." "Good morning pastor," replied the young man, still focused on the plaque. "Pastor McGhee, what is this?" Alex asked. "Well, son, it's a memorial

to all the young men and women who died in the service." Soberly, they stood together, staring at the large plaque. Little Alex's voice was barely audible when he asked, "Which service, the 9:00 or the 11:00?" (Submitted by Ruth)

Bible Quiz Answer:

B. 4

September Celebrations

Baptismal Birthdays

9/1	Marty McKelvey
9/17	Marilyn Scuralli
9/28	Joan Haddox
9/30	Niel Johnson

Birthdays

9/2	Darrell Staup
9/5	Patrick McCoy
9/25	Ruth Moeller
9/28	Jackie Cornell

Anniversaries

9/2	T & J Dangelo
9/6	L&K Tefft
9/8	S&A Senci
9/8	C&P Scholl
9/9	S & M Ballard
9/14	J&K Bork
9/27	S&K Ziegler

September 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<i>1</i> Labor Day— Office Closed	<i>2</i> 6:30 “The Cho- sen” Bible Study	<i>3</i> 11:00 AM Bible Study	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i> 10:00 AM LSS Event
<i>7</i> Re-covenanting 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30 AM In Sanctuary/ Online Worship	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i> Newsletter Deadline 6:30 “The Cho- sen” Bible Study	<i>10</i> 11:00 AM Bible Study	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i> 9:30 AM Coffee and Conversation
<i>14</i> Re-covenanting 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30 AM In Sanctuary/ Online Worship 11:30 AM End of Summer Picnic/Assemble School Kits	<i>15</i> 5:30 PM Coun- cil Meeting	<i>16</i> 12:00 PM JOY Club @ Voo- doo’s 3:00 Walk-Up Communion 6:30 “The Cho- sen” Bible Study	<i>17</i> 11:00 AM Bible Study	<i>18</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i> 9:30 AM Coffee and Conversation
<i>21</i> Re-covenanting 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30 AM In Sanctuary/ Online Worship	<i>22</i> LWR Quilting	<i>23</i> 6:30 “The Cho- sen” Bible Study	<i>24</i> 11:00 AM Bible Study	<i>25</i> 7:00 PM Book group	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i> 12:00 PM Pet Blessing
<i>28</i> LWR Dedication Re-covenanting 9:15 AM Gathering Space 10:30 AM In Sanctuary/ Online Worship	<i>29</i>	<i>30</i> 6:30 “The Cho- sen” Bible Study				