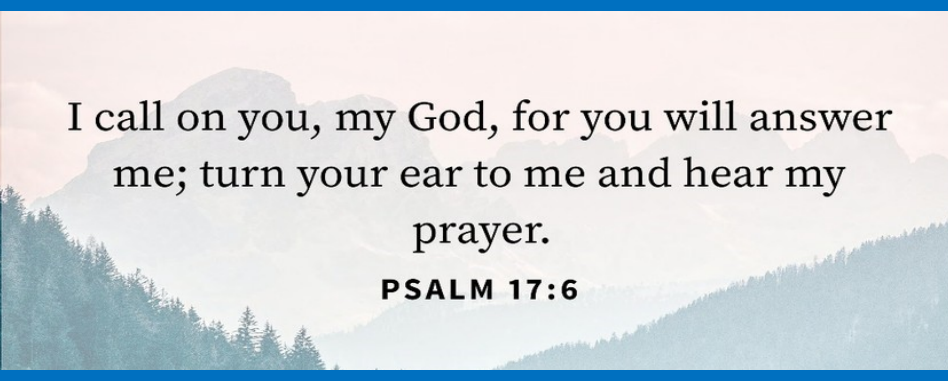


Vision of St. Stephen

June/July 2024



I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer.

PSALM 17:6

St. Stephen Lutheran Church

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Nostalgia = a sentimentality for the past, typically for a period or place with happy personal associations.

My family's text group was buzzing recently when one of us took a picture of a ½ gallon of milk sitting on a grocery shelf. Why, might you ask? Now, it's not just any kind of milk—it's Star Wars blue milk. Star Wars fans might remember Aunt Beru pouring Luke Skywalker a glass of blue milk in his childhood home on Tatooine—right before Luke meets Obi Wan and goes on his quest to learn more about the Jedi.

So, now I am on a hunt to buy this blue milk myself. Yes, I know this is a nostalgic gimmick. And Yes, I'm falling for it--Star Wars played a role in my childhood—from envying my cousin's action figure collection to classroom debates about if Luke and Leia were really twins.

Nostalgia can be fun—but it can also be misleading. Nostalgia can blind us to what the past was really like. For many of us in the church, we're nostalgic about the 1950-60's when churches were booming. I was recently at Epiphany Lutheran and saw a panoramic photo of their entire Sunday School program in the 1960's. There are 900 kids on the front steps of the church! Epiphany needed 2 sessions to accommodate them and even then, some classes were meeting in odd places like the boiler room!

And while that history is accurate, what we fail to see is how that 20-year period fits within the story of American church attendance. Throughout most of American history, about 20% of the population attended worship every Sunday—even during the American Revolution and during the Civil War—both very scary and traumatic periods. So why were so many people in weekly worship in our recent past? People have theories—perhaps in thanksgiving for surviving WWII, perhaps because it was “the thing to do”, perhaps, with blue laws, there wasn't much else to do on Sundays, and attending church it was a way to participate in the Cold War against “those godless” communists. As these factors changed, so did church attendance. We in the church are nostalgic for something that was an outlier.

So, what do we do about this? Wishing that the past would magically recreate itself seems improbable. However, there are actions we can take. Here are some: Be faithful. Live what we believe. Be people who are curious about other people's lives. Say to friends, “I'm so thankful to God for you because.....”. Ask others if you can pray for them. Be real about your own doubts and questions about God and about faith. Be open to the work of the Spirit. Welcome people when they come for worship. Tell others what difference it makes for your week when you're in worship on Sunday. Be people of resurrection hope. Live out the reality of God's love for you and for all people—no strings attached.

Peace, Pastor Beth

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Spiritual Growth

Worship Committee

Our worship committee will be meeting on Sunday, June 2nd after our worship together. We'll be talking about the current flow of our worship service, as well as the use of glass cups during communion.

Wednesday Bible Study

Our Wednesday Bible study has been studying Tobit, one of the books of the Apocrypha. As we wrap that up in early June, we're then turning to the book of Judith, also in the apocrypha. Judith, a beautiful widow, uses her charm to kill an Assyrian general who is besieging her town. This action saves the nearby city of Jerusalem from destruction. We meet most Wednesdays at 11:00 (with some gaps due to Pastor Beth's schedule). New people are welcome to join in our discussion of these interesting stories.

Synod Assembly

Marilyn Scuralli and Pastor Beth will be spending Saturday, June 1st at our Northwestern Ohio synod assembly. At this all day event, they'll be learning more about the current work of our synod, participating in some small groups, and voting on resolutions. Because this is an all day event, the next day, June 2nd, our Sunday sermon will be provided through a video by Pastor Marcus Lohrmann.



Youth and Family



Vacation Bible School

Do you have some elementary school students in your life? Look for more information to come in June, as we get ready for our Vacation Bible School, which will likely be held on Thursdays during mid July and early August. If you'd like to help with this event, please speak with Pastor Beth

Activities

The Needler's

Our knit/crochet group is busy making personal projects and prayer shawls. What is a prayer shawl? As the person makes it, they include prayers for healing. Those who receive it are wrapped in prayer. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month at 1:00 p.m. (June 3, 17, July 1, 15) New folks are most welcome any time!

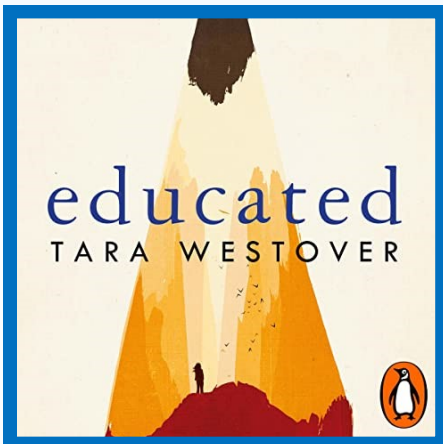
Prairie Group

Our prairie group will be meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 2nd to celebrate the new shoots that are coming up and to talk about possible signage and other items (benches, paths) as the prairie takes root.



Fellowship Meals

Our Fellowship Meal event will be returning on Wednesday, September 11th, with an opportunity to enjoy a soup supper and guided conversation.



Book Group

Our Book Group is meeting on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:00 p.m. In June, we'll be discussing the book, Educated by Tara Westover. The group is taking a break for the months of July and August but we will resume our conversations in September.

JOY Club

We'll be gathering at Kathie Tefft's house on June 18th for a meal. Kathie is providing salads and light sandwiches—to help her plan, please sign up asap on the bulletin board. You can find Kathie's address on the bulletin board, in our church directory, or by calling the church office. In July, we'll be lunching at Sylvania Te'kela, 5147 Main Street, at noon on July 16th. Neta Schmidt is acting as our host for this July meal.

Outreach

Recent Donations

Thank you for your gifts of baby items for our May collection for Salem. We were able to drop them and the other personal care items we had collected—they filled the Golba's vehicle! Salem's personal needs pantry distributes all kinds of items that people need and yet can't be purchased with SNAP benefits.



Father's Day Celebrations

On Father's Day, June 16th, we'll be having a time of fellowship and donuts before and after our worship service called "Donuts with Dad!" You're invited to arrive early or stay a little later and enjoy some conversation, coffee, and sweets in the narthex.

Volunteer Day

Would you be interested in a group volunteer event at Sylvania Area Family Services or Lutheran Social Services? We're exploring the possibility of having a St. Stephen Day to help out by organizing food pantry shelves, doing some yard work, or what ever else might need doing at these locations. Stay tuned for more information!



"Bread Drive" For Lutheran Social Services

In late July and August, our gospel texts focus in on Jesus being the "bread of life". In celebration of that good news, we're collecting "bread" items for the LSS pantry from after the 4th of July through the end of August. You're invited to bring in donations of crackers, granola bars, cake mixes, corn-bread mixes, etc. as we celebrate Jesus as the bread of life that nourishes and sustains us always! (Unfortunately, we can't gather actual loaves of bread, because they are not shelf-stable in our time frame).

LSS Update

Impact LSS made in 2023 is staggering



TRACIA JAKSETIC
Vice President of LSS

The impact our services had on people and communities in 2023 is quite staggering when you stop and think about it.

Our clients are fortunate that we're here to help fill unmet needs. The majority of them cannot afford the necessities, like housing, childcare, food and transportation.

Many of our clients are at or near the US Poverty threshold, which is just more than \$31,000 for a family of four. It's our mission to help lift them up by providing whatever services we can.

For our clients who don't fall within the poverty guidelines, many are in the ALICE population — an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. Those people are what you could call the "working poor," people with full-time jobs — and sometimes multiple jobs — who live paycheck to paycheck.

These workers often struggle to keep their households from financial ruin while keeping our

local communities running. In 2021, 13 percent of Ohio's 4.8 million households were living in poverty, while an astounding 25 percent fell into the ALICE category. Counties throughout northwest Ohio all fall above the 20 percent margin for ALICE households, including Lucas (24 percent), Hancock (22), Ottawa (24), Sandusky (27), Seneca (26) and Wood (21).

For information on ALICE, visit unitedforalice.org.

Chances are, we all know someone who fits this demographic. A huge number of people who walk through our doors could be categorized this way.

We are a bright light in many of our client's days when we can assist them with their needs and offer support services that can help.

It might be an occasional trip to our food pantries in Toledo and Findlay, just to help make ends meet. It could be regular visits with one of our behavioral health professionals to get their lives back on track. No matter what, we are here to serve people and communities throughout northwest Ohio.

We will continue to be the light that shines for those we serve.

We appreciate your support in referring individuals to our services or supporting those services throughout 2023.

We are off to an amazing start in 2024, and with your help and support, the momentum of our service continues to grow.



Church Finances

KROGER REWARDS

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? Feel free to find directions to register your card to help give back to St. Stephen. This quarter (February-April) we received \$97.46. Thank you to all who participated. These funds will go to the Lutheran World Relief Quilting Group. If you'd like to no longer receive these, please contact Janell in the church office. You may receive one or two additional mailings because of the way the company sends them out.

PASTOR'S DISCRETIONARY FUND

We have a fund here at St. Stephen that Pastor Beth uses to help people, members and non-members, with expenses—sometimes a check to cover utilities, sometimes to pay a health-related bill. That money is also used to keep some Kroger gift cards on hand to provide some groceries or fuel. Currently that account has \$379. If you'd like to help refresh that account, please write/note Pastor's Discretionary fund on your check, envelope or online donation. Thank you!

Administrative News

PASTOR BETH AT LAKESIDE AND VACATION

Pastor Beth will be attending the Lutheran week at Lakeside Chautauqua from June 17-21 as part of her continuing education. The speaker this year is Dr. Jon Pahl, a professor at the United Lutheran Seminary in Pennsylvania. One of his books has the interesting title, Shopping Malls and other Sacred Places: putting God in Place. She will be on vacation from June 24th through July 4th at the family cottage in the UP. If you're in need of pastoral care during this time, please call our church office or a member of church council who can put you in touch with a local Lutheran pastor.

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.

Little Miracles Update

We are excited to share with you we have worked with Little Miracles to expand their presence in the building two-fold. First, they will expand their childcare offering to include summer months. Kids from K-5th grade will now be here for summer fun from 6 a.m.-6 p.m. In addition, Little Miracles will also expand their program this fall, adding full day opportunity childcare in addition to the current before and after school program. This additional use of our facilities was reviewed and approved by both the Finance and Council teams. St. Stephen will see an increase in income from \$925 per month to \$1,850 for summer 2024 and \$2,000 per month for the 2024-25 academic year. Not only is this a substantial financial increase to meet our budget but also additional opportunities to interact with the children and share God's love for them.

In preparation for this opportunity of a pre-K and Montessori classroom in session during the school day (nice to see them back fulltime as they were pre-covid), some building changes will occur due to recent state requirements for childcare facilities. To meet these legalities, we have approved the wall between 2 of the classrooms (green and blue) to be removed to create a larger classroom space (this space used to have an accordion style divider there a number of years back). Quilting items will have a larger dedicated storage space in the back classroom. Current items stored there will be moved to the fellowship hall large closet. (Little Miracles items will no longer be in that storage space). All permits, architect fees, and the work itself is being covered by Little Miracles. On the weekends and evenings, the enlarged classroom will be available for our kids to use for classes.

Since Little Miracles was last here during the school day, our quilting group has expanded in size and in their workspace. As some of the quilters will be in rooms next to the children and passing them in the hallway, state regulations necessitate that our volunteers be vetted through background checks to be in compliance, keeping everyone safe. Little Miracles is reimbursing each of our volunteers for this expense.

Beginning again this fall, Pastor Beth will hold chapel services with these children (with their parents' permission), sharing Bible stories and songs. If you have questions or concerns, please speak with Pastor Beth or any member of church council. We thank God for the opportunity to not only improve our financials but reach out to others of God's love for each other. We look forward to this closer relationship with Little Miracles who have been a strong partner in working together to use this building to benefit the larger community.

Prayer

Giving Thanks for Summer

Father, Creator of all, thank You for summer!
Thank you for the warmth of the sun
and the increased daylight.
Thank You for the beauty I see all around me
and for the opportunity to be outside
and enjoy Your creation.
Thank You for the increased time I have
to be with my friends and family,
and for the more casual pace of the summer season.
Draw me closer to You this summer.
Teach me how I can pray
no matter where I am or what I am doing.
Warm my soul with the awareness of Your presence
and light my path with Your Word and Counsel.
As I enjoy Your creation, create in me a pure heart
and a hunger and a thirst for You.

- Author Unknown

COMMUNITY PRAYERS

Alice—Healing & Comfort
Chris—Peace & Comfort
Those with Cancer—Healing
Greg—Healing & Comfort
Olivia—Healing & Comfort
Victims of Gun Violence
Sean—Guidance
Tom—Healing
Tracey—Healing
Wolf—Stomach Cancer
Richard—Healing
Dave—Comfort & Healing
Lisa—Peace
Jessica—Answers & Healing
Gary—Stroke & Recovery
Tre—Healing
Laura—Healing & Comfort
Noah—Upcoming Surgery
Chelsey—Healing & Answers
Marsha—Healing & Comfort
Al—Healing & Comfort
Richard—Healing
Terry—Comfort & Healing
Archer—Healing & Comfort
All victims of trauma and war

Fun

ALL IN GOOD FUN



BIBLE QUIZ

How many loaves of bread did the Israelites keep on their altar at all times?

(Answer page 10)

- A. One
- B. Three
- C. Twelve
- D. Thirty

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

2024 Council Members

<i>President</i>	Marilyn Scuralli
<i>Vice President</i>	Tom Dangelo
<i>Secretary</i>	Lin McKelvey
<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>	
<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

Thank You

Going away for vacation? Looking for a place to worship on Sunday? In addition to watching the St. Stephen livestream, you can use the ELCA website (www.elca.org) to find a congregation near you. Simply click on the "find a congregation" in the black banner, enter the zip code or town of your vacation area, and it will provide information for you!

WEDDING CONGRATULATIONS!

Tristan Bonde and Heather Brimmer will be exchanging wedding vows on Friday, July 5th at Nazareth Hall. Pastor Beth will be conducting their service. Tristan is serving in the army, stationed at Fort Liberty, while Heather is a high school English teacher. Vickie Veitch is Tristan's proud grandmother! If you'd like to send a card, you'll find their address posted on our bulletin board.

Eloise Baptism



Word in Season

The Word in Season for July, August, September are now at the church! If you can't make it to the building to pick one up, call the office and Janell can send you one!

Bible Quiz Answer:

C. Twelve

June Celebrations

Baptismal Birthdays

6/1 Sarah McCoy
6/4 Christine Kahan
6/6 Jenny Troutman
6/10 Peggy Scholl
6/14 Dave Davis
6/23 Ryann Fox

Birthdays

6/5 Lynn Golba
6/13 Karen Bogdan
6/14 Carol Brown
6/15 Joan Haddox
6/21 Carol Haddix
6/25 Ashley Senci
6/27 Evin McCoy
6/28 Jettie Sansbury

July Celebrations

Birthdays

7/13 Doug Paxton
7/14 Scott Ballard
7/16 Marilyn Scuralli
7/20 Ken Marvin
7/23 Steve Ziegler
7/24 Dave Haddix
7/29 Herb Hoehing

Anniversaries

7/14 Jordan & Kristi Shepler

June 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 9:30 AM Coffee and Conversation Assembly
2 10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship 11:30 AM Worship Committee 7:00 PM Prairie Group	3 1:00 Knit/Crochet	4 3:00 PM Com-munion	5 11:00 AM Bible Study	6	7	8 9:30 AM Coffee and Conversation
9 10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship	10	11 4:00 PM Com-munion	12 11:00 AM Bible Study	13	14	15 9:30 AM Coffee and Conversation
16 Father's Day 10:00 Donuts with Dad 10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship 11:30 Donuts with Dad	17 1:00 Knit/Crochet	18 12:00 PM JOY Club 3:00 PM Com-munion 7:00 PM Council Meeting	19	20	21	22 9:30 AM Coffee and Conversation
Pastor Beth @ Lakeside						
23 10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship	24 LWR Quilting	25	26	27 7:00 PM Book Group	28	29 9:30 AM Coffee and Conversation
Pastor Beth on Vacation						
30 10:30 AM In-Sanctuary/Online Worship Pastor on Vacation						

July 2024

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