



**ST. STEPHEN**  
Evangelical Lutheran Church

Congregational Communication

Reverend Joel Petruschke

*Our Mission: We respond to Christ's love by feeding those who hunger in body, mind, and spirit.*

Thursday, June 6

**4:30 pm** – Community Assistance

Meal

Sunday, June 9

**11:00 am** – Worship Service (Hybrid)

**Harvest Host**

Monday, June 10

**Harvest Host**

**7:00 pm** – Boy Scouts

**7:00 pm** – Council Meeting

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### **Pastor's Perch**

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

For the past couple weeks PBS has been running a very interesting series called “Pompeii—The New Dig.” I really enjoyed it, and I would highly recommend it to you. If we are not aware, Pompeii was an ancient Roman city that was destroyed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in the year A.D. 79. What is so fascinating is that the city was covered in pumice and ash, such that it was very well-preserved, including numerous frescoes in many buildings. So in excavating Pompeii, archaeologists have learned a tremendous amount about the Roman culture of that time.

It was noted in one of the episodes of the series that the Roman Pliny the Younger provided a firsthand account of the eruption in his letters. He was visiting his uncle at the time of the eruption and was sitting some distance from Mt. Vesuvius when it literally blew its top. His uncle was killed in the eruption, but Pliny the Younger lived to tell about it.

It is speculated that the people living around Mt. Vesuvius, including those in Pompeii, didn't even know it was a volcano. They likely thought it was just a mountain, until that fateful day in A.D. 79. One can only imagine the horror in the city of Pompeii at the time of the eruption, the question people had of whether to drop everything and leave or to stay and ride it out. Many people died as a result of either not being able to leave or because of the unfortunate decision to stay.

I want to highlight also the interesting fact that Pliny the Younger is also famous for one of earliest accounts of Christianity outside the Bible. You see, Pliny was an administrator for Rome, and he was sent as part of a commission to the province of Bythynia and Pontus, which was a Roman province located on the southern edge of the Black Sea, in what is now the northern part of modern-day Turkey. The province had brought charges against two successive governors serving there indicating something was very wrong with its affairs, both political and financial. Pliny was sent there by the Emperor to tour the towns, write reports on his findings, and settle lesser problems on the spot.

While touring the area, Pliny learned of rumors circulating about a strange group of people called Christians. He began to investigate. And in a letter to the Emperor, this is what Pliny says about the Christians: “...they (the Christians) had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses

alternately amongst themselves in honor of Christ as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery, and adultery, to commit no breach of trust and not to deny a deposit when called upon to restore it. After this ceremony it had been their custom to disperse and reassemble later to take food of an ordinary, harmless kind; but they had in fact given up this practice since my edict, issued on your instructions, which banned all political societies” (*The Letters of the Younger Pliny*, Penguin Books, 1969, p. 294).

From this sketch, we get the idea that these Christians were meeting on a certain day of the week (Saturday?, the Sabbath Day, or Sunday?, the day of resurrection). They chanted verses, maybe like we do with the Psalms in worship. They seemed to recite the Ten Commandments, committing themselves to those commandments, so as not to steal or commit adultery, etc. And they partook of Holy Communion, which was seemingly rumored among the locals to be some sort of act of cannibalism (the body and blood of Christ) but was really just ordinary food. The Christians were also seen to be a political society, a group that undermined the authority of Rome. Certainly, Christians were speaking of God as their “Father” and Jesus as their “Lord,” which were designations of the Emperor.

So this person Pliny the Younger collected many of his letters for publication, which has come down to us over nearly 2000 years. In those letters, he discussed many things including as I said his observations about the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius as well as information about the infancy of Christianity in the province of Bithynia and Pontus.

In Christ,  
***Pastor Joel Petruschke***

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### **Youth Corner**

We are on our last bin for accepting donations of small, mixed Legos for our upcoming Lessons and Legos community program! We are so close to starting to develop some after school programming for the local kids. Our first program will be the monthly, Lessons and Legos program, where kiddos will listen to a brief story and then build a Lego creation around the theme of that story to be displayed for that month, inside the church. If you haven't donated any Lego's yet, please consider donating just 5 lb's to help fill the last tub on the stage in the Fellowship Hall. We will take care of the sanitation, just dump your Legos in the tubs! Contact Mrs. B with questions.

**Nawakwa/Kirchenwald Summer Camp registrations** are out and can be found in the pocket under the **Communication Board** in the **Fellowship Hall**. Scholarships available. Contact the church office with scholarship questions.

**Attention Families!** St Stephen Church, New Kingstown, will be holding their Fuse Meetings on the 3rd Sunday of each month, at 1PM. A lunch meal is always served. Bring a side dish to share! This meeting is for kids of any age, 0-18, and the adult spiritual influencers in their life, in whatever form that is (parents, grandparents, neighbors, friends, older siblings, extended family, etc.). You don't need to attend St Stephen Church to attend Fuse! Anyone is welcome! We will have a meal, do some activities and learn a lesson. So come Fuse with us.

**I am taking names of individuals** that would be willing to help with making the breakfasts for the Senior High Summer Camp Week. Please see or email me, if you have interest in helping out in this area!

Our **Annual Congregational Day at Cherry Crest Farms** is coming up, **September 14!** A typical day at Cherry Crest has a lot to offer. There's a corn maze that covers 5 acres (2.5 miles of

paths) that can be done through easy, medium, and ultimate challenge levels. In addition to the maze there are other activities including many food eatery sites, pedal cars, apple blasters, paintball shooters, rope making, battle zone (think Nerf balls from a pressurized air guns), various strength tests, mat slides, bouncy pillows (child and adult sized), pig races, climbing area/playground areas.

For those that enjoy a slower pace, there is shopping, live shows, you can take a tour on the Stroudsburg Railroad (extra cost) takes you on a ride about 45 minutes, back to Stroudsburg station and then off into town on a guided history tour before bringing you back to where you got on.

There is also a winery and brewery on site, a petting zoo, chick hatchery, discovery barn- that teaches the history of farm equipment, life size board games, and a wagon tour. For the little kiddies, there is also Sproutsville, which is an entire town build in miniature for the little ones to play, sitting areas for resting, hanging air chairs to relax and enjoy the views, as well as other activities. You can see most of the activities at <https://www.cherrycrestfarm.com/attractions> .

We'll be meeting at the gate at **12:30PM**. We'll rent a campfire location again this year, for dinner at 5:30PM. Hotdogs, sides, and drinks provided. Fireworks will be set off at 8:30PM for those that want to stay. Cost to participate is only **\$20**, with the church covering the other half of the ticket price. Monies maybe paid to the St Stephen Church office. Scholarships available to those in need.

**Sign up by August 31**, to participate at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9DVN7BL> .

ALiVE is our annual synod middle-school retreat. **Our annual fall retreat is scheduled for September 27-29, 2024, at Camp Nawakwa.** Congregations from across our synod gather with their adult advisors and youth for this traditionally early fall weekend that includes large group gatherings with singing led by our ALIVE Alumni Band, theme-centered videos and stories, and games, interspersed with small group gatherings, where youth gather with peers and a small group leader, to converse about the theme and it's impact in their lives of faith. It's a great event for your Confirmation students and classes.

The weekend also includes crafts, games, campfires, free-time, and community-building that allows youth and their adult counterparts time to deepen existing friendships, and create new ones. Plus, inspiring outdoor worship often highlights our last morning together at Nawakwa's famous Upper Temple!

This year's theme is: 'Fingerprints'- You are a unique gift from God, marked by God with gifts that make you truly special. As a disciple of Jesus, how are you leaving a mark of Jesus' love, grace, and forgiveness on the world around you?

**+ This event is for 6th through 8th graders in the fall of 2024!**

**+ Event cost: \$139.00/person** Monies may be paid to St Stephen office. Scholarships available to families in need. Contact Mrs. B for details.

Register at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/BKQS7S6](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BKQS7S6) . **Registration deadline is September 6th!!!**

**We will be participating in trunk-or-treat this year to hand out candy and grilled hotdogs to the trick-or-treaters in New Kingstown on trick-or-treat night! Start planning your decorative trunks now!**



**Sunday worship begins at 11:00am.** This is hybrid worship, meaning that we worship both in person and online at the same time. If you worship online, please introduce yourself to others online and greet other folks that you aren't familiar with. We also invite those worshipping online to provide their own elements of bread and wine/grape juice in order to participate in communion.

**Accessing worship online -** You can attend online worship by clicking this link - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/410597064?pwd=b3lEa2hnbmtxU2kvYVhxUGN6ZWdoUT09>  
**You can also call 1-929-205-6099.** Once connected, just enter the Meeting ID - 410 597 064 and the password – 779080. You can also find the direct link for this on our church webpage – [www.ststephenlc.org](http://www.ststephenlc.org). Scroll halfway down to the link that says, "Join us online." Click the link and you'll be connected to the Zoom session.

**Worship Assistants**

Date	Usher Greeter	Cantor	Lector	Assisting Minister	Altar Guild	AV Support	Counters
6/9/24	Larry Bouchat	Lynne Immell	Roger Immell	Jadam Smith	Sue Rodgers	Cheryl Neidig Randy Neidig	Roger Immell Cheryl Neidig
6/16/24		Jadam Smith	Carol Clelland	Lynne Immell	Maxine/ Carol	Cheryl Neidig Randy Neidig	Roger Immell Cheryl Neidig
6/23/24		Lynne Immell	Pat Seiple	Jadam Smith	Sue Rodgers	Cheryl Neidig Randy Neidig	Roger Immell Sue Rodgers
6/30/24		Jadam Smith	Pat Gilmore Lee	Lynne Immell	Maxine/ Carol	Cheryl Neidig Randy Neidig	Lela Ewell Roger Immell

**Prayer Requests**

Date	Name	Connection	Request
Chronic or Long-Term Requests			
1/17/24	Tom Burson		Please pray for Tom and Kathy Burson. Tom is at Country Meadows Center continuing to recover.
Temporary Requests			
5/22/24	Lela Ewell		Lela's brother passed away suddenly

