

Deadline for submissions is the 15th of each month for the following month's newsletter. Send to: smlcspublications@gmail.com



Pastor Jon Zehnder

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Weekend Regular Worship

Sat: 5:30 pm	Informal
Sun: 8:00 am	Traditional
10:45 am	Blended
Sun: 9:15 am	Education Hour: Kids Sunday School & Bible Classes.

The Messenger

From the Pastor

Rev. Jon Zehnder

As we prepare for the celebration of our Savior's birth, let me share this devotional from Max Lucado.

"It's Christmas night, the house is quiet, even the crackle is gone from the fireplace. The last of the carolers appeared on the ten o'clock news; the last of the apple pie was eaten by my brother-in-law; and we've turned off the last of the Christmas music... it's Christmas night.

"The midnight hour has chimed and I should be asleep, but I'm awake; I'm kept awake by one stunning thought – the world was different this week. It was temporarily transformed. The magical dust of Christmas glittered the cheeks of humanity ever so briefly, reminding us of what is worth having and what we were intended to be. We forgot our compulsion with winning, wooing, and warring; we put away our ladders and ledgers; we hung up our stopwatches and weapons; we stepped off our race tracks and roller coasters and looked outward toward the star of Bethlehem.

"It's the season to be joyful because, more than at any other time, we think of Him; more than in any other season, His Name is on our lips. And the result? For a few precious hours, He is beheld – Jesus Christ the Lord! Those who pass the year without seeing Him, suddenly see Him; people who have been accustomed to using His Name in vain, pause to use it in praise; eyes, now free of the blinders of self, marvel at His majesty. All of a sudden He is everywhere – Immanuel – He is with us. God came near!


"It's Christmas night, in a few hours the cleanup will begin. Soon life will be normal again. But for the moment, the magic is still in the air. Maybe that's why I'm still awake, I want to savor the spirit just a bit more. I want to pray that those who beheld Him today will look for Him in August. And I can't help but linger on one fanciful thought – if He can do so much with such timid prayers lamely offered in December, how much more could He do if we thought of Him every day?"

Have a Blessed Christmas!!

Top Events for

- 12/2 — *Senior Christmas Social*
- 12/3 — *Church Council Meeting*
- 12/4 — *Middle School Youth Night*
- 12/5 — *Midweek Advent Dinner, 6pm; Worship, 7pm*
- 12/8 — *LWML Meeting, 10:30am*
- 12/10 — *Board of Human Care, 7pm*
- 12/10 — *Adult Basketball*
- 12/11 — *Middle School Youth Night*
- 12/12 — *Midweek Advent Dinner, 6pm; Worship, 7pm*
- 12/18 — *SMLS Christmas Band/Choir Concert, 7pm*
- 12/18 — *PTL Meeting, 6pm*
- 12/19 — *Midweek Advent Dinner, 6pm; Worship led by K & 1st grades, 7pm*
- 12/20 — *School Board Meeting, 12pm*
- 12/24 — *Christmas Eve Services: 5:30, 7:30, 11pm*
- 12/25 — *Christmas Day Service: 10am*
- 12/29-30 — *Pickup Offering Envelopes*
- 12/31 — *New Year's Eve Service: 5:30pm*

Offering Envelopes will be available after Christmas this year so that we can utilize all of our available seating during the Christmas Eve services. Please stop by the little chapel **Dec. 29-30** and **Jan. 5-6** to pick up your envelopes! They will be labeled and sorted alphabetically. If you do not currently have offering envelopes but would like to receive some, please contact the church office at 939-1218.

Cookie Extravaganza! This event will be held **Dec. 8th & 9th**. The members of our LWML ministry will be selling a variety of delicious homemade cookies and bars. If you have questions or want to contribute any baked items, please call Paulette Mueller at (239) 677-6688 or Nancy Jackemeyer  (239) 851-8476.

Advent Midweek Services

- December 5, 6:00-7:00 pm Soup & Sandwich dinner; 7:00-7:45 Advent Worship
- December 12, 6:00-7:00 pm Soup & Sandwich dinner; 7:00-7:45 Advent Worship
- December 19, 6:00-7:00 pm Soup & Sandwich dinner; 7:00-7:45 Advent Worship,
led by SMLS Kindergarten and 1st Grade Classes

Christmas Worship

- December 22, 5:30 pm Saturday Night Worship
- December 23, 8:00 & 10:45 am Sunday Worship
- December 24, Christmas Eve**
 - 5:30 pm – Family Christmas Eve Worship**
 - 7:30 pm - Candlelight Carol Worship**
 - 11:00 pm - Candlelight Carol Worship**
- December 25, Christmas Day 10:00 am Worship**

New Year's

- December 29, 5:30 pm Saturday Night Worship
- December 30, 8:00 & 10:45 am Sunday Worship
- December 31, 5:30 pm New Year's Eve Worship**



From the Director of Caring Ministries

Julie Berchtold

Ways to Pressure-Proof Your Holidays

By Mary May Larmoyeux

Feeling the holiday pressure?" a greeting card asks, "Relax! It'll be gone before you know it." Have you ever felt like a hamster caught on a spinning wheel when it comes to celebrating the holidays? I sure have. When I asked some friends what they do to prevent stress around the holidays one told me, "The last three out of four years I ended up sick over Christmas. I honestly don't know if there is a way to reduce holiday stress when your life is already full and busy and then you add in all the holiday stuff.

Another said, "So much is expected of us, even when we have a full-time job. I would love to go see special Christmas musicals, drive to places that have pretty lights, but we rarely have time." Can you identify? What should be one of the most special times of the year is often packed with unrealistic demands that wreak havoc on relationships— between husbands and wives, parents and their grown children, singles and those they love.



Here are four tips to protect you, your marriage relationship, and your family from holiday pressure:

1. **Pray.** Feeling holiday stress, many years ago Kit enlisted God's help. She sensed Him saying, *Trust me with your celebrations. Give me your hopes and dreams for this special time of year. I know your needs. Allow me to fill them.* Another friend told me that she asks God for spiritual protection during the holidays. While she and her family center Thanksgiving and Christmas around their God-given blessings and the birth of Christ, many in her extended family do not. She realizes that family disagreements can easily crop up during the holidays. She also prays that she will respond in a godly way when loved ones don't understand her family's Christian faith. She asks, *Lord, guard my mouth constantly.*

"Pray without ceasing" 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

2. **Plan.** Jillian and her husband ease holiday stress by planning. They decide where they will spend the holidays as much in advance as possible. "By doing this," she says, "loved ones can process and get used to our plan and that protects against hurt/disappointed feelings." As a working mom, Linda says that she doesn't handle anything to do with Christmas until after Thanksgiving weekend. She avoids feeling overwhelmed by scheduling one major task at a time. (For example: First week after Thanksgiving, write Christmas letter and address Christmas cards.)

"Those who plan peace have joy" Proverbs 12:20b.

3. **Determine realistic expectations and communicate them clearly.** When Trena looked at her December to-do list, she felt a knot in her stomach. How could she get everything done? Then she heard a radio program about the holidays and realized that *she* was the cause of her own stress. "I lowered my expectations of myself and the festivities and focused more on the true meaning of Christmas than on the gifts that I gave."

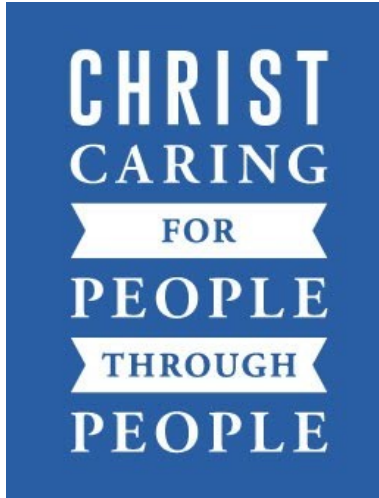
"May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed" Psalm 20:4.

4. **Don't try to do everything.** There's something comforting about traditions, especially around Thanksgiving and Christmas. But can family traditions become a source of stress? I have only to look in the mirror at myself to answer that question: Yes! Let's face it: People are different. Recognizing this, and relaxing with the differences, can ease holiday pressure—both inside and outside the home. Sometimes visions of homemade Christmas decorations, gingerbread houses, helping the needy, cutting a fresh tree, etc., dance through my head—so our family can have the "perfect Christmas." But there's a problem: People in the same family often value traditions differently. What's comforting for one may actually be stressful or totally meaningless for another. Deb suggests talking with your spouse and each child about what makes the holiday special for them. Keep the most meaningful traditions and discard the rest.

"Let us know among ourselves what is good" Job 34:4b.

From Stephen Ministers

Gifted To Care



Spiritual gifts are gifts to give away. God gives them to us, and we use them to serve others. How are you using your gifts right now? Are you looking for a new way to use them? If your spiritual gifts include one or more of the following—faith, mercy, teaching the faith, encouragement, or knowing—consider **Stephen Ministry**, our congregation's one-to-one caregiving ministry. This may be just what you've been looking for! A new training class will be offered in **January 2019**. If you would like more information about Stephen Ministry, please contact Stephen Leader: Janet Marderness, 645-8999.



**STEPHEN
MINISTRY
TRAINING**

From the Saint Michael Lutheran School Principal

Kati Miser

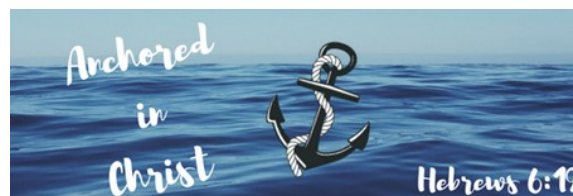


"They look like angels!" we often hear people say about children in the Christmas Eve pageant! By definition, an angel is a messenger, and often, yes, our children are the best messengers of Jesus' love! Another familiar quote is "A little child shall lead them." What do we want their message to be ... to whom do we want them to lead others? Here at Saint Michael **our mission to educate children and touch**



families' lives with the awesome love of Jesus Christ! Here they learn a powerful, life-giving message and the encouragement to share it with all with whom they come into contact. And the Christmas season may be the most obvious time for children - and all of us - to share the joy that came through the Baby Jesus born in Bethlehem – God's greatest gift to the whole world! **A BLESSED CHRISTMAS TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY!**

Check out the SMLS reviews on our Facebook page where Saint Michael families share their stories about the impact Saint Michael Lutheran School has had on their family. Give me a call if you want to see our school first-hand. We are also beginning enrollment for the 2019-2020 school year.



From the Ministry Coordinator

Lori Schwan

Children's 5:30 Family Christmas Eve Worship

Two year olds-elementary children will be practicing our Christmas Eve songs for the month of Dec. during our Sunday School openings 9:15-9:30 in the church sanctuary. Get your practice CD. *Elementary Children* should join us on Sat., Dec. 22 from 10:00-11:30 in the sanctuary for practice, followed by a family Happy Birthday Jesus pizza party ending at noon. A final practice for 2 year olds –5th grade will happen on Dec. 23 during Sunday School. All children should come to the band room at 5:00 PM on Dec. 24. If you want your elementary child to have a speaking part or to help with technology or if you want to assign and rehearse lines or prep the party, contact Lori.



Sunday School Nursery

Contact Lori if interested in volunteering with infants and one-years-old's once a month!

2 Year Olds - Preschool Sunday School

Christmas is really all about celebrating Jesus' birthday. Each week the story unfolds: Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and angels all celebrating the birthday of Jesus' God's son as He came to save the world.



Elementary Sunday School

God's compassion for sin-stained people led to the greatest act of love the world has ever seen: God sent His only Son as a Savior. This month we'll undercover the aspects of the Christmas story and reflect that compassion when we care about others, reflecting how much God loves them.



Kids Serving

The 38 **Flood Buckets** will be such a blessing to victims! Thanks to all who participated in October and to Six Mile Cypress Lowe's for donating 25 buckets and lids!

Because of the generosity of donors across the world, **Operation Christmas Child**, a project of Samaritan's Purse, collected more than 11 million shoeboxes packed with toys, school supplies, hygiene items, and prayer to children suffering from poverty, disasters, war, and famine. Thanks to our families who helped in Nov. create 31 boxes.

In Dec. our Sunday School kids will organize our biggest **Jammies for Jesus** project, buying PJs for the kids in over 30 families, who are being served by Lutheran Services of Florida in effort to help families stay intact. All PJs should arrive no later than Dec. 16.

Thrivent Financial Members

If you own a Thrivent Financial Product, don't miss the Dec. 31 deadline to give \$250 or \$500 without giving ANY of your money. Contact Lori Schwan to see how you can partner with Thrivent Action Team.

Women's Bible Study: The Christmas Experience

God chose each individual in the Christmas story for a specific purpose. What happened then changes everything now. Join Lori Schwan on Thursdays from 10:00-11:30 AM in the Joy/Youth Room.

From the Director of Christian Education *Jack Proctor*

Saint Michael Youth Ministries



National Youth Gathering ~ July 10-16, 2019

The 2019 national youth gathering will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota! 25,000 high school youth will be gathering together to connect with our “Real. Present. God.” Please be praying for our NYG team.



Confirmation

7th/8th grade students & parents

Bring your Small Catechism and Bible with you each week in Room 48 from 9:15-10:30 AM.

Sunday School 9:15 - 10:30am

High School: in the Youth Room

6th grade: in room 47

Sunday School offers age appropriate teaching and community.

Middle School Youth Nights

We play games, enjoy snacks, build community, and learn more about God together! We meet on select Tuesdays from 6-7:30 PM in the Joy/Youth Room! **December Meetings: 4th & 11th.**

High School Revive

Revive is a community of high school students coming together to support, encourage, learn, and laugh together centered on the truth of Christ. Join us on Wednesday nights from 6-8 pm in the Youth Room!

Progressive Dinner Servant Event

On Dec. 16 from noon – 6:00 PM middle school and high school youth will have an opportunity to adopt the 10-17-year-olds at LSF Oasis Youth Shelter. We will tour their facility and shop for Christmas gifts for the youth at the shelter. Gifts are purchased through donations. Please consider donating to make this a special Christmas for a teen at Oasis!

Game Show Night - 1/19

The 2nd Annual Game Show Night Fundraiser! Be on the lookout for tickets going on sale. Dinner and entertainment for the whole family! Various favorite game shows being played and exciting “mini games” (trivia, bingo, and more!). Invite friends and family for this fantastic night of fun and cool prizes! All the money raised will support our youth doing great things through trips like the National Youth Gathering. **Game Night: Saturday, Jan. 19th from 6:30-9:00pm.** Dinner provided.

Middle School Youth Gathering

Our group was blessed with many amazing experiences at the MSYG!

Thank you for your support!



Usher Schedule	
8:00 A.M.	10:45 A.M.
<p><i>Please contact Marge Bennett if you are unable to serve as scheduled, or secure your own replacement. If YOU would like to serve as an usher, please contact Marge Bennett at 560-4159, and indicate which service you prefer.</i></p>	
December 2	
Kathy Royston Bob Richardson Nila Little Tom Schlotterbeck	Ken Fritsch Judy Ward Neil Meador Marge Bennett
December 9	
John Hoffmann Bill Truax Kathy Royston Nila Little	Leroy Waldren Ken Fritsch Neil Meador Brian Bottorff
December 16	
Tom Schlotterbeck Kathy Royston Bob Richardson Bill Truax	Tom Kosteno Jacob Haycook Roy Hendry Diane Hendry
December 23	
John Hoffmann Bill Truax Kathy Royston Nila Little	Leroy Waldren Ken Fritsch Neil Meador Brian Bottorff
December 24 — Christmas Eve	
<p>4 volunteers are needed for each service: 5:30pm, 7:30pm & 11:00pm Contact Marge Bennett 560-4159 to sign up!</p>	
December 30	
Tom Schlotterbeck Kathy Royston Bob Richardson Bill Truax	Tom Kosteno Jacob Haycook Roy Hendry Diane Hendry

Church Greeters for December Sunday Services	
Dec 2	8:00 a.m. Tom & Jo Zeller 10:45 a.m. Paul & Brenda Hughes
Dec 9	8:00 a.m. Rob & Anna LeSueur 10:45 a.m. Tom & Diane Robertson
Dec 16	8:00 a.m. Gwen Schaaf and Harry Pietras 10:45 a.m. Gary & Jan Goedecke
Dec 23	8:00 a.m. Ron & Dee Engel 10:45 a.m. Ken & Darlene Fritsch
Dec 30	8:00 a.m. <i>Need Volunteer</i> 10:45 a.m. Pete & Lisa Lowe

Holiday Services	
Dec 24	5:30 p.m. Need Volunteer 7:30 p.m. Bill & Polly Bryden 11:00 p.m. Ruth Hallerberg
Dec 25	10:00 a.m. Norm & Sharie Libby
Dec 31	5:30 p.m. Paul & Brenda Hughes

We have openings
in our
December 2018
**Acolyte and
Crucifer** schedule.
Sign up today using
[SignUpGenius.com!](http://SignUpGenius.com)







St. Michael Lutheran Church
3595 Broadway, Fort Myers, Florida 33901

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Permit #97

Return Service Requested

Sunday School & Bible Study Opportunities
9:15-10:30 AM

Sunday School

9:00 – 9:15am “Excite” (games)
9:15 – 9:30am “Engage” (opening)
9:30 – 10:30am

Individual Grade level Activities

Toddlers- 2 year olds
Preschool
Elementary
6th-8th Grade
9th-12th Grade

Adult Bible Studies

Bible Focused Friends
Parents of High School Students
Marriage Enrichment
Family Enrichment
Moms In Prayer
Pastor Zehnder’s Adult Bible Study

Weekly Bible Study Opportunities

7:30 am Tuesday Men’s Bible Study,
.....6835 Porto Fino Cir, Suite #2, Mike Roach, 275-9233

8:00 am ThursdayMoms In Prayer,
.....Little Chapel

10:00 am Thursday Women’s Bible Study,
.....led by Lori Schwan, in the Youth Room

8:30 am Friday Men’s Bible Breakfast,
.....Pastor’s Conference Room

9:00 am SaturdayMen’s Ministry/Bible Study
..... Education Bldg., Art Room. Call Lee Berchtold,
872-8999

9:15 am Sunday Pastor’s Bible Class,
..... Cafeteria

