

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



Pastor Jon Zehnder



Saint Michael Lutheran
CHURCH • DAY SCHOOL • FOUNDATION

Weekend Regular Worship

Sat: 5:30 pm	Informal
Sun: 8:00 am	Traditional
10:45 am	Blended

The Messenger

From the Pastor

Rev. Jon Zehnder

Living with Hope, Trusting in Jesus

Well, this Coronavirus has certainly made things “different”! (I can tell you it is weird preaching to an empty church!) But even though our pews may be empty for now, but we know that we are never alone on this journey – our Savior has promised to be with us wherever we are, in whatever we happen to be going through. And the Holy Spirit has brought us into the Family of God, the Church. And as I mentioned, this is presenting us with opportunities to not just “do Church”, where worship is participating and receiving, but where we can “be the Church” as we seek out new ways to care for, serve, communicate, pray, and bless those around us.

It is the relationships that the Holy Spirit has brought us into, where first we are the very children of God because of His grace through our faith in Jesus (a vertical one) and then secondly, we are brought into the Church (a horizontal one). And having received God’s love, grace, forgiveness, and mercy, we love Him back with all our heart, soul, mind, body, and strength AND love our neighbors as ourselves.

And the way that is lived out in the midst of a pandemic and social distancing is that first we “Pour out your hearts to God, for He is our refuge” (Ps 62:8). Check out “The First Song of Isaiah” by Jack Noble White based on Isaiah 12:2, “Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD Himself, is my strength and my defense; and He has become my salvation”. God is present with us and He will comfort us during this war we are waging with an unseen viral enemy.

That brings us to the second thing, and that is the comfort, hope, and strength we have received from God we want to share with others. Galatians 6:2 says, “Carry each other’s burdens and in this way you will fulfill the Law of Christ” – that “law” of loving and serving others.

In light of that, now may be a great opportunity to get to know other members of our Saint Michael family (Church, School, and Seasonal Guests) ... even though they can’t be physically with each other. Maybe a phone call or e-mail or text just asking, “How are you doing? Do you need anything? Do you have internet access? Anything I can pray for you about? Would you mind if I call you again next week?” Or maybe we can reach out to our neighbors, share our name and phone number with the invitation to call if that neighbor needs any help or just would like someone to talk to or even to pray with.

Let’s take the opportunity that this “crisis” presents us with so we can seek new ways to bring the Presence of Jesus to others!

Holy Week and Easter. Unless a miracle would happen, with current restrictions of assembling in place (through April 15), we are looking at ways to celebrate these services on-line as well as provide enrichment materials to bless you, your family, and those around you.

Pastor Jon

Director of Music Ministry**Vicar Colton LaMay**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus,

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus! Concerning Covid-19 and our musical groups at Saint Michael, we are going to suspend these rehearsals until after this has cleared up and we are able to safely meet together once again. We are currently planning to offer the same worship times/styles during this time and continue to explore ways for us to be the church to our neighbors and the people God places in our lives. At this time, we are still able to meet with a small crew to make worship live from the sanctuary. On Saturday, we continue the informal setting with Pastor leading worship one or two vocalists, piano (after the 28th), someone running the production booth, and me leading with guitar. At 8:00, Walter will lead the hymns from the organ, Pastor will lead worship, Shea will run the equipment, and I will help with congregational singing parts. At 10:45, the band will play as long as everyone is in tip-top shape and we remain spread apart in the band area. We will also continue to stream the Lenten midweek service and Chapel on Wednesdays for the school children. The most direct link to the livestream services is:



<https://www.livestream.com/smlcs>

If you need the bulletin, insert, or prayer pages, please visit <https://www.smlcftmyers.com>

In the upper right section, you will see a banner that says “**Media + Resources.**” Clicking there will drop down a menu where you may access “**Church Bulletins and Newsletters**”

Please let me know if I can be of assistance in any way or if you just need some musical ideas for home! God’s richest blessings to you and may the peace of Jesus that passes all understanding be with you always!

Blessings in Jesus,
Vicar Colton

This month’s newsletter format is a bit different than normal as our sudden school shutdown and move to online worship took us all by surprise. Some of the articles previously submitted were no longer relevant as many of our events and activities had to unfortunately be cancelled or postponed.

We also made a change by sending the newsletter via email to all households who have an email address listed in our database. We mailed paper copies only to those without an email address in our system. If you received a paper copy but wish to instead receive by email only, please send that request to eileen.ohara@gsmlcs.org

Useful links:

You can view our worship services online here: <https://www.livestream.com/smlcs>

You can download newsletters and bulletins here: [Publications](#)

You can support our ministry through online contributions here: tinyurl.com/SMLGiving
(You may also mail your offerings to our church office: 3595 Broadway, Ft. Myers, FL 33901)

Our office hours are currently Monday - Friday, 10:00am to 1:00pm

From the Director of Caring Ministries

Julie Berchtold

10 Ways Christians Can Exemplify Faith and Peace during COVID-19

By Joel Ryan *Crosswalk.com Contributing Writer*

In just a few short weeks, classification of the coronavirus (COVID-19) escalated from outbreak, to epidemic, to global pandemic; and President Trump declared an official state of emergency for the United States and its citizens. And as anyone reading this knows, the impact of this kind of global crisis extends far beyond the sickness itself.

There is not a person on this earth who hasn't been impacted by the coronavirus, in one way or another, and right now, many people are anxious, on edge, and afraid. Some have even gone to the extreme, bunkering down and "panic purchasing" toilet paper, respiratory masks, and bottled water in preparation for the "end of the world."

Everyone will react to crisis and fear in different ways, but in trying and uncertain times like these, how should Christians respond? When the rest of the world is afraid and loses hope, how can Christians still bring the life and love of Jesus Christ to a sick and dying world?



Here are **10 things Christians can do in faithful response to COVID-19:**

1. **Stay Informed and Only Spread Truthful Information.** It doesn't take a lot to cause a panic. It takes even less for people to fall into fear or turn to their own self-preservation. Right now, we're seeing a lot of reacting, and not all reactions are positive or even rational.
2. **Do Not Surrender to Fear.** While the world lives in fear, Christians must look to the peace and power of God and be the living hope found in His name. Faith can be an antidote to fear, and nothing strengthens a believer's faith like the promises of God.
3. **Practice Personal Hygiene.** This seems like the most obvious response to fighting an infectious disease, but knowing what steps the [Center for Disease Control](#) *actually* recommend can go a long way to help prevent sickness and dramatically reduce the spread of COVID-19.
4. **Choose Compassion over Personal Convenience.** As mentioned before, a global pandemic like the coronavirus impacts more than just our physical health and well-being. To reduce the spread of the virus, most event centers, sporting arenas, and public gatherings have been temporarily closed and their events canceled or postponed.
5. **Don't Buy What You Don't Need.** In being willing to sacrifice for the good of others, Christians should also be considerate and not buy more than they need. It's wise to prepare for the future (Proverbs 6:6-11), but that doesn't mean Christians should stockpile supplies that are *desperately* needed elsewhere. "Panic purchasing" and stockpiling has led to the kind of shortages we've seen in recent weeks.
6. **Donate to Shutdown Schools and Contribute to Employees Out of Work.** With most schools shut down and many businesses closed, a lot of people are out of work for the foreseeable future, and many parents, who would normally be working, are now forced to stay home to take care of their children.
7. **Don't Isolate Yourself from the Body of Christ.** Our church announced that it was canceling Sunday services for the foreseeable future. While my wife and I hope this is only temporary, shutdowns like this do not mean that the church must cease to be the Body of Christ.
8. **Be the Church.** In the midst of fear and uncertainty, Christians have a tremendous opportunity to be the salt and light of the world ([Matthew 5:13-16](#)). Imagine what the next few months could look like if the church took the lead on giving, compassion, and community care during this trying season. What an impact we could make and what a light we could be.
9. **Unleash the Power of Prayer.** There are many ways to react to a public health crisis like the coronavirus. But in this season, Christians have the power to do more than react. Now is the time for Christ's followers to truly go on the offensive and unleash the power of prayer.
10. **Put your Hope and Trust in the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.** While the coronavirus may impact our health, our economy, and our very way of life, we serve a God who is bigger and stronger than any sickness, fear, darkness, or weapon of the enemy, and He has a plan ([Jeremiah 29:11](#)). Our God is Healer ([Psalms 30:2](#)), Provider ([Philippians 4:19](#)), and King ([Psalms 47:7](#)).

From the Ministry Coordinator

Lori Schwan

Children's Ministry

Sunday School

During this season of Lent, we were learning about the events during Holy Week. We started looking at all the places we saw a lamb in the story. We learned on Palm Sunday that the people who were traveling there were coming to celebrate Passover, to remember how God gave them a way through the blood of lamb on their doorposts to be saved. We also learned the gate through which Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday was called the sheep's gate. The perfect Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world was coming to be sacrificed like the Passover lamb.

We kept looking for a lamb and found the lamb the next day in the temple being sold to the foreigners who had traveled and needed a lamb for their worship. The kids were surprised that Jesus got angry at how people were cheating others in the temple instead of helping them worship and that he did not sin – he was angry for the right reason!

We were all lined up to see the Lamb in the Passover and have a pretend Passover with matza and much more when we had to cancel Sunday School. I would encourage you these weeks to check out [the events of Holy Week](#) and play a game as a family. Instead of asking, "Where's Waldo" (you might need to your kids what this means), ask, "Can you find the Lamb?" Look for the lamb in Jesus' Last Supper. See if you can notice any Old Testament prophecies about the messiah being pierced for our sins and not having any broken bones come to fulfillment on Good Friday. Connect how Jesus' blood being shed allows the angel of death to Passover us when it comes to eternity. I would love to see any pictures you guys create that challenges people to "find the lamb."

Ray Boltz sings a song with powerful lyrics called "Watch the Lamb". It imagines what parents might have gone through as they spent time in Jerusalem that Friday. [The video](#) is good too. Perhaps view as a family until the image of Pontius Pilate and then just listen as Jesus' body could be too graphic. The kids in the song have a line about not understanding what is happening. Talk about when our faith gets confusing. It's hard to know what God is doing sometimes until later. Try naming as many things as you can about how God is bringing good out of this time of being separated. Pray together that you can trust God even when you don't understand because He promises to work all things together for good!

5th – 7th Grade Mother-Daughter Retreat Apr. 24-25 – At this point it is uncertain if the retreat will need to be postponed. Watch your email for more information.

Family Ministry FAMILY VBS from 5:30-8:00 PM will be Monday – Thursday, June 15-18. Climb aboard for mountains of fun at Rocky Railway! On this faith-filled adventure, kids discover that trusting Jesus pulls them through life's ups and downs. This FREE adventure is for the whole family with dinner and service projects! Registration will begin in April. Contact Lori Schwan if you are interested in volunteering on our team; there is a place for everyone (behind the scenes or with families) 939-1218, ext. 237 lori.schwan@smlcs.org.



Women's Bible Study

We might be separated but we are still "meeting" electronically through email and other means. Email me if you want to "join" us for our study by Max Lucado *Traveling Light* that expands our understanding of Psalm 23. We are using *Right Now Media* to watch his great videos. lori.schwan@smlcs.org



From the Director of Christian Education***Jack Proctor******Saint Michael Youth Ministries***

A message from **Megan Pearce**, a child of the congregation and a current DCE student at Concordia University Texas:



“Hello again, Saint Michael Lutheran Church, this is Megan Pearce! It’s been a while since I’ve last written in to thank you all for your financial support and prayers for my time at Concordia University Texas in Austin. This past year has flown by so fast, but at the same time so much has happened. I am now happily engaged to the love of my life and partner in ministry Noah Scott. We met the summer before my freshman year at another event that your support sent me to called Missional Youth Retreat. Ever since meeting we have been best friends and stuck by each other’s sides through it all. Eventually, we realized that God was calling us to be more than friends, and after lots of discussion and prayer, here we are, two months away from our wedding day! Since this past summer, I got a job nannying for two amazing kids down the street from my university, I’ve done a ton of wedding planning, I’ve worked online for St. Michael by sending emails for updating the church’s website (church360), and have just about finished up my Junior year of college. Next year my fiancé and I start practicum (placement at a church for fieldwork) at a plant church called Acts Church Leander, where we will have the opportunity to learn how to work together and see how plant churches are run, as we are both considering working for a plant church in the future. I will be working with the large children’s ministry as well as helping out with some of the adult ministries there. The coolest part about being placed at Acts Church is that former St. Michael members, Krissy and AJ Vega, were recently called to the church, so I will now be working alongside them and once again be attending church with my high school mentor! God has been doing amazing things in my life, and none of it would be happening without the support you all have given me the past three years, and for that, I will forever be grateful.”

Megan Pearce

I am so proud of Megan as she pursues the calling God has given her to go into ministry. Please join me in praying for her and Noah as they prepare to be joined in marriage! It is easy to see how Jesus is working in Megan’s life and He is working in the lives of our other youth here at St. Michael through the youth ministry.
- Jack Proctor

Current circumstances may change how it looks but will not stop us from connecting as a fellowship of believers! We will be using online means to continue to connect with one another.

Contact Jack.Proctor@gsmcls.org for specifics on how we will be connecting virtually for 6th Grade Sunday School, 7-8th Grade Confirmation, High School Sunday School, Middle School Youth Night, and High School Revive.

Jack Proctor, Director of Youth Ministries

Jack.Proctor@gsmcls.org

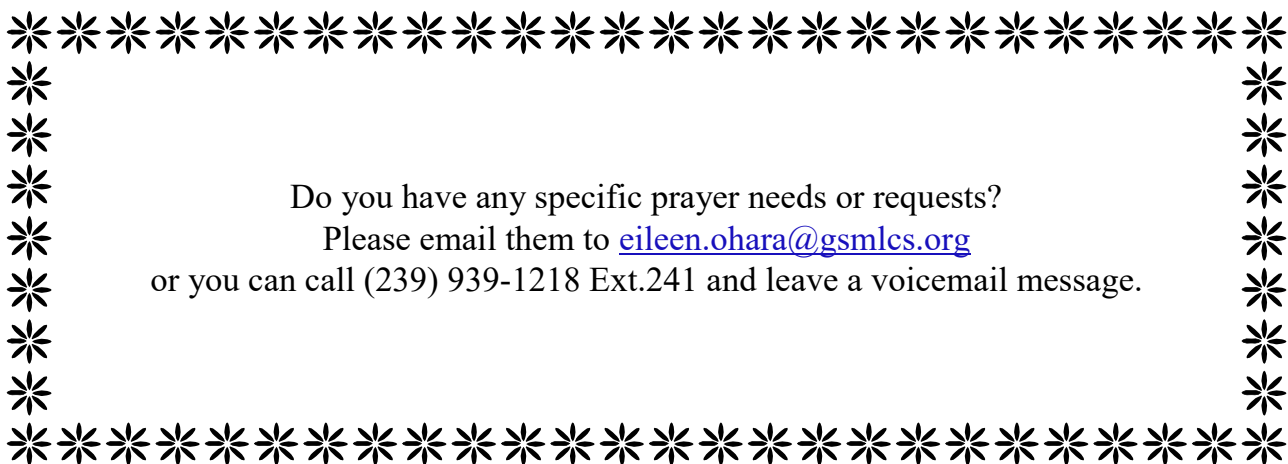
239.939.1218 ext. 224

St. Michael School News

What’s new in our school?

Our school kids have to stay home until at least April 20th, but they are making the best of it! Our amazing teachers were able to switch gears on very short notice and are now providing a daily e-learning experience through videos, shared Google documents, emails, texts, and other creative communications. Our students are even still able to “attend” chapel service each Wednesday by viewing the Livestream from home! We are staying as connected as possible during this time of social distancing, but the teachers and students are all missing each other very much. While nothing can truly replace hands on learning and face to face interaction, our teaching staff is sure doing their best to provide an awesome alternative and they are working hard to keep our students on track. And some of them even have to do this *while* providing at-home instruction for their own kids!

Please join us in praising God for our gifted teachers and for their ability to continue to provide a nurturing and caring learning opportunity for our students. We also want to pray for our parents and students, for their patience and adaptability as we all get through this adjustment together. We pray that we all stay healthy and can gather together again soon, both in worship and in education.



 Do you have any specific prayer needs or requests?

 Please email them to eileen.ohara@gsmlcs.org

 or you can call (239) 939-1218 Ext.241 and leave a voicemail message.