

Volume 12, Issue 2
February 2021

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

The Church Year is divided into 2 major sections: The Festival Half (all those major themes and festival times: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Pentecost) and then the Non-festival Half (all those weekends starting from the week after Pentecost and running until Advent). As we move from the Epiphany Season into Lent, we transition with the Transfiguration of Jesus (February 14), and then Ash Wednesday (February 17) leads us into the 40 days of Lent (not counting Sundays).

The Transfiguration is that transitional account of Jesus meeting with Moses and Elijah on the mountain where He was transfigured before His three closest disciples – Peter, James, and John. Jesus' appearance changed, and His glory as God the Son was clearly seen.

And then there is this from Luke's account of the Transfiguration: Jesus, Peter, James, and John have come down from the mountain; they've rejoined the other disciples, and Luke writes, "as the time approached for Jesus to be taken up to heaven, He resolutely set out for Jerusalem." Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem... the last leg of His journey to the cross has now begun.

So, as these days in late winter/early spring began to lengthen, Jesus' time on earth now grows shorter. The Savior, the Messiah, our Lord, as the King James puts it, "now sets His face toward Jerusalem." The Rabbi who taught His disciples to die to themselves in order to truly live will Himself die in order to win eternal life for all of us.

And as Jesus embarks on this difficult, painful journey, over mountains and through valleys, it is a journey which is filled with the stench of sin and yet also the sweet aroma of grace. Now we know that without the shedding of His blood there could be no forgiveness; this was God's plan from eternity. In order to save us, Jesus would have to shed His own blood.

And so, Jesus' journey to a bloodstained cross, and from there into the heart of a tomb, has begun. But it is a journey that will touch the heart of God and touch our own. And we, with the disciples, have been invited along on this journey. We begin that walk, that journey this month – to a cross, to a tomb, and, ultimately, to the joy of the resurrection. We've got 40 days to go on this spiritual journey, and there will be time each day to read God's Word, to do a little reflective thought, and to pray.

There are traditions in the season of Lent of fasting and of giving something up for the 40 days of Lent (again excluding Sundays that are never fasting days but feasting days). We do these things to remember that our Savior willingly gave up His life in order to cover our sin, make us His own, and set us free. That fasting and feasting in Lent brought to mind a great point that Pastor Darrell Stuehrenberg shared in one of Bethlehem Lutheran's Newsletters that went like this:

During Lent...

Fast from fear.... Feast on faith.
Fast from despair.... Feed on hope.
Fast from depressing news... Feed on prayer.
Fast from discontent... Feast on gratitude.
Fast from anger and worry.... Feed on patience.
Fast from negative thinking.... Feast on positive thinking.
Fast from bitterness.... Feed on love and forgiveness.
Fast from words that wound... Feast on words that heal.
Fast from grave thoughts... Feast on the promise of eternal life!!

February Voter's Meeting

The February Voter's Meeting will be Sunday, February 28th at 9:15 a.m. on Zoom. The Voter's Meeting will be in place of Adult Bible Study classes. We will be reviewing and voting on the annual fiscal budget. We will have ways to attend on campus if you do not have a computer or are not comfortable with Zoom. Please contact Lori Schwan if you need assistance.

Zoom code: 394-621-4364

Password: smlcs

Pastor Jon

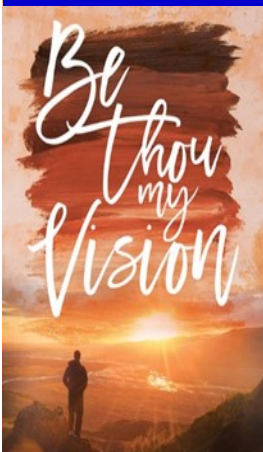
*From the Director of Little Saints**Stacie Thompson*

Winter Day was such a blast as always. Our one and two-year-olds enjoyed snowball fights, ice skating, snow shovel relays, playing in the snow and ice, and a warm sweet treat of hot chocolate. Watch for the pictures of our special day at Sunday services in February.

Little Saints will not be hosting the Father-Daughter Dance this February. Unfortunately, COVID has once again put a damper on our plans and yearly events; we will miss seeing all those little girls dressed up with their Daddies.

In February, the two-year-old rooms will study community helpers. We won't be able to have any outside speakers this year for our community helper day, but luckily, we will still have a visit from our resource officer, Deputy Penny. The kids really respond well to Deputy Penny and love interacting with him.

Please continue to pray for our staff as we work hard to keep everyone safe and healthy this year.

*From our Principal**Kati Miser*

We have all used the phrase, "Actions speak louder than words." The month of February is a good time to focus on putting our love and faith into action ... turning those words into verbs, not just a statement of what we believe. **Our mission at SMLS is to educate children and touch families' lives with the awesome love of Jesus Christ!** Both "educate" and "touch" are verbs. Especially during these difficult times, we see both verbs in action through the examples of our students and school and church staff ... and all because of their faith in the "love of Jesus." Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent when we focus on *God's love in action* through the cross. Our theme - "Be Thou My Vision" - reminds us to love and serve others with the eyes of our loving, active God.



In February and March, I want to highlight three staff people who put their love and talents into action, serving students, parents, and staff ... leaders who faithfully and so ably serve alongside me in the workings of Saint Michael School. You know **Holly McCord** as that smiling face at the reception desk in the front office. Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, she is a veteran Saint Michael parent and has served as a volunteer in a variety of positions since 2002 such as serving on PTL and helping in the classrooms and library. Holly became a full-time SMLS administrative assistant specializing in admissions and financial aid in 2014. Both her children attended SMLS from preschool through eighth grade, and she has been married to husband James for 26 years. Holly has a special interest in reading, puns and corny jokes, and all things sparkly. Next month we will highlight Jeanie Free and Stephanie Bellino. Your notes of encouragement are always welcomed by our staff.



February is traditionally the month for Grandparents Day and National Lutheran Schools Week. Watch for updates about those events. Check out our SMLS 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 at 239-939-1218 if you want to arrange to see our school first-hand. Applications are now available for the 2021-2022 school year.

*From the Director of Caring Ministries**Julie Berchtold***Five Gifts I Want to Keep After Quarantine**

By Janel Breitenstein

**1. Parents at home and families together.**

I relish the long family dinners, simplified by food shortages, and evenings where absolutely nothing is scheduled. I love my husband working from home, even his presence changing the atmosphere. He's made memorable lunch breaks with the kids and picks up a football to toss with them after zero commute. I love my daughter's sudden lack of school-related anxiety. My son's mellowed attitude away from his peers and his self-disciplined workouts and schoolwork. Of course, all this love hovers around a smushed-together family with more time to bicker and pick at each other, who've disobeyed, and whose disrespect continues to rear its ugly head. But there's some good stuff when families come together. My husband is now contemplating working more regularly from home. Some families wondering what it would be like to have a child schooled virtually next year. In Luke 1, the prophecies about John the Baptist spoke of turning the hearts of fathers back to their children (verse 17)—to prepare the way for Jesus.

2. Simplicity of schedule and stuff.

Studies are showing the coronavirus is changing the way we spend our money. We're reducing our discretionary spending. So along with less activity, most of us are buying less—prioritizing our spending and even our groceries to the essentials. (The candy aisles here have remained well-stocked, but it was a little touch-and-go there for a while on TP, bread, and eggs.) And yes, I know massive economic fallout from this threatens on the horizon. But there's also something to be said for a season of living with less, of being able to teach our kids simplicity. In His parable of seeds sown in various soils, Jesus articulates, "And as for what [seeds] fell among the thorns, they are those who hear [God's Word], but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature" (Luke 8:14).

3. Our need for community.

I've read the good old-fashioned telephone call is back in popularity. We've all realized the internet isn't enough to make us feel "connected. We can't wait to throw our arms around each other, share a cup of coffee, have friends for dinner. The God who came and dwelled among us (Jn. 1:14) is not a God who social distances. He liked walks with his image-bearers in the cool of the day (Gen. 3:8). And even before people, our triune God was a God in tight-knit community.

He made us for each other. After all, it's not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). As much as we love our independence, life without true friendship is spiritual dysfunction.

4. An eye for the most vulnerable.

In a world that values moneymaking, a nonstop lifestyle, activity—we as a collective people have valued the vulnerable among us during quarantine. This was despite a profound toll on employment, despite canceled weddings and graduations, despite the need for our kids to be well educated. And we did it for the elderly, for those with medical conditions, for sometimes-marginalized people groups.

5. The nearness of our own mortality.

In a recent podcast with FamilyLife, John Piper reflected on God's possible purposes in COVID-19. Piper, always unflinching, points out the proximity of death and how it opens conversations for our need for God—how disaster flays open simplistic, vacuous worldviews. It's barely tolerable to consider our mutual end. But as all of us reconsider the frailty of our bodies—felled at any moment by microbes—this, too, is a gift. Times like these beg of us to reevaluate not only how we're spending our lives—but on what we bank our hopes. Paul writes, "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19). Because we don't buy into YOLO (you only live once), into a white-knuckled grip on living the now, on fearfully protecting every asset. For us, to live is Christ. To die is ... (wait for it) ... gain (Phil. 1:21).

Life after Quarantine: Grief, and Goodness, Have Been Here

This latest gift list is just the beginning of the richness I'm unearthing at the end of quarantine. Tragedy has been here. But also God's kindness.

From the Ministry Coordinator

Lori Schwan

United We Stand in Freedom

In the midst of all the disconnectedness, Pastor Jon has a vision for us to unite during Lent this year (whether in person or virtually) as we study God's word together, given first to the Galatians and then to all believers who are freed from the slavery of sin through Christ's death and resurrection. **We encourage you to join us on this 40 Day Journey starting on Ash Wednesday, February 17th in one or more ways:**



- Read one chapter of Galatians each of the six weeks, allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal insights to you into His character and what He longs for us.
- Participate (either in person or online) in the midweek Lenten services where the chapter's theme will be launched each week. We will be in person at Noon and 7 PM only on Ash Wednesday and then at Noon for the remaining five weeks (which can be watched at your convenience online).
- Attend weekend worship services in person or virtually to wrap up the chapter for the week.
- Expand your insight through the internet-based, free, study of the book of Galatians offered through RightNow Media titled *The Book of Galatians* by Kyle Idleman. In this study, Kyle 'dives into the book of Galatians, one that contains some of the clearest explanations of the gospel in the New Testament. Through biblical study and engaging lessons, Kyle shows that true freedom is found in surrender, not self-dependence. Because our gospel is not one based on our works, but faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.' The joy of this study is that it can be done in a small group in an in-person or Zoom Bible Study class setting, or in your own home personally or along with your family. Study questions are available to download for free. If you've not yet used this free resource, see the instructions below to sign up. **To join an existing Bible Study, please contact that leader as found listed in our worship bulletin, page 6 of this newsletter, or call the church office (239-939-1218) for their contact information.** If you would like to start your own small group, please contact Lori Schwan at lori.schwan@smlcs.org or 239-939-1218, extension 237.
- Discuss chapter themes each week with various ages: families will be given simple resources to explore applications of Galatians that will build on the weekly Sunday School, Youth Group, and Confirmation studies.

RightNow Media sign up instructions: Go to the church website at www.smlcftmyers.com. Go to the "media + resources" menu at the top, and select the external online resources option from the dropdown menu. On that page under the paragraph titled 'Online Bible Studies & Christian Programming for Children - Adults', you will see the link for RightNow Media. When you click on this, you will be taken to the registration page. Once registered, you will be able to access any of their free content at any time at www.rightnowmedia.org. Search for the "Galatians by Kyle Idleman." Weekly videos and downloadable material can be accessed there.

Sunday School

During Lent, we will be intertwining the Galatians chapter each week into our Sunday School class. Join us on Zoom or in the music room live from 9:15-10:30 AM.

Thrivent Financial Members

If you own a Thrivent Financial Product, with the start of the new year you can give \$250 two times without giving any of your own money. Contact Lori Schwan to see how you can partner with a fundraiser, service project, or an educational Thrivent Action Team. Those who have Choice Dollars can also direct them for 2020 up until March 31, 2021.

Women's Bible Study

Join Lori Schwan on Thursdays from 10:00-11:30 AM on Zoom to study the Scripture together. We are wrapping up Ruth and will be studying Galatians together during Lent.

*From the Director of Christian Education**Jack Proctor*

Saint Michael Youth Ministries

Jesus is at work in the lives of our Saint Michael Youth! It's a joy in my life to be able to be a part. Ever wanted to be a part of discipling young Christians? Let's talk! We also know that there are plenty of youth in our community that need to experience God's love through a community rooted in Jesus. Know any youth outside of the church? Please pass along the invitation that they are wanted and welcome to join in on anything we are doing!



Confirmation

7th/8th grade students & parents: Bring your Small Catechism and Bible with you each week in the cafeteria from 9:30-10:30 AM. Contact me for Zoom information if you are joining online.

Youth Sunday School

For all 6 - 12th grade students not in confirmation class. 9:15-10:30 AM in the youth room.

PopStroke with Grace Naples!

Saturday, February 13th from 10:30 AM - 1:00 PM. We'll be playing mini-golf at PopStroke and going to lunch with our friends from Grace Naples! Email me to sign up!

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 6:00-8:00 PM in the youth room! Bring your mask.

Middle School Youth Nights

We play games, enjoy snacks, build community, and learn more about God together! We meet on select Tuesdays from 6:00-7:30 PM in the Joy/Youth Room! Check the bulletin for specific dates.

To be in the know with specifics for each week in youth ministry, contact Jack.Proctor@gsmlcs.org to be included in the weekly emails.

Jack Proctor, Director of Youth Ministries
Jack.Proctor@gsmlcs.org
239.939.1218 ext. 224

For the Love of a Baby

The Board of Human Care will be holding a collection drive this month for the Healthy Start Coalition of Southwest Florida. Due to COVID, many of the churches which supported Healthy Start are still closed. They are in need of diapers (all sizes), wipes, and clothing for babies and toddlers (new or gently used). There is a large need for girls clothing. We ask that you prayerfully consider how you can support this endeavor. As always, we are so thankful for your generosity.

Director of Worship and Music**Pastor Colton LaMay**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus,

Greetings in the name of Jesus! I am overjoyed to be writing you for the first time as one of your pastors at Saint Michael! My family and I would like to express our heartfelt thanks for your continual support and blessing. Celebrating with you both in person and online for ordination and installation into the pastoral ministry was an incredible blessing that is difficult to put into words, and we are so thankful for each of you. Within the framework of the Specific Ministry Pastoral program, I am a little over halfway completed with the courses within the SMP program. For the next two years, the ministerial formation will continue through classes focusing on in-depth Biblical studies and classes for preaching. During this time, my service for the congregation will continue to include the music ministry for the church and school while engaging in pastoral ministry to assist Pastor Jon and his future successor as Senior Pastor in the coming years. The scope of ministry will focus on worship aspects but will include any pastoral needs that arise. Please know that I am available for your spiritual needs and concerns anytime as your pastor and will always have time or will schedule time to talk with you. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for calling me to this ministry, and by the help of God we will let the light of Jesus shine in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit to be a beacon of hope and love for our community. I am looking forward to what God has in store for our ministry, and I pray His richest blessings to each of you in this coming month!



Blessings in Jesus,
Pastor Colton LaMay

Galatians Lent Bible Studies

The following Bible Study groups will be going through *The Book of Galatians* by Kyle Idleman study on RightNow Media and are open for new members. We pray you find a group and are blessed by this study!

Sunday

Family Enrichment led by Bill and Meg Minor (239-826-6505) 9:15 - 10:30 a.m. Education Building Room #49. In-person only.

Marriage Enrichment led by Lee Berchtold (239-872-8999) 9:15 - 10:30 a.m. Online only.

Women's Bible Study led by Priscilla Flynn (priscilla.flynn@gsmcls.org) 9:15 - 10:30 a.m. Online only.

Bible Study for Busy Parents led by Mandy Zehnder (mandyzehnder.inspired@yahoo.com) 7:00 - 8:00 p.m. Online only.

Monday

Young Adult Bible Study led by Jack Proctor (jack.proctor@gsmcls.org) 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. In-person only.

Tuesday

Men's Bible Study led by Mike Roach (roachmichael2@msn.com) 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. In-person only.

Thursday

Women's Bible Study led by Lori Schwan (239-292-6544) 10:00 a.m. - Noon. Online only.

Women's Bible Study led by Paulette Mueller (paulette.mueller@gsmcls.org) 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. Online only.

Friday

Bible Study led by Pastor Jon (jon.zehnder@gsmcls.org) This group is co-ed and open to all ages. 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. Online only.

Saturday

Men's Bible Study led by Lee Berchtold (239-872-8999) 9:00 - 10:30 a.m. Online only.

