

Deadline for submissions is the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month for the following month's newsletter. Send to: smlcpublications@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*

## *A 40-Day Adventure*

That's really what Lent is – a 40-day spiritual adventure. The Lenten season this year began on February 17<sup>th</sup> as we celebrated Ash Wednesday. Originally, Lent was a celebration that lasted only 40 hours – the length of time that Jesus was in the tomb. It ended with an Easter service at 3:00 a.m.! Later the season was extended to 6 days and was called Holy Week. From there, it was expanded to 36 days as a tithe (10%) of the 365 days God gives us each year.

Finally, around 731 AD, Lent was extended to 40 days, the same number of days Jesus was tested in the wilderness. Sundays in the season of Lent are not considered part of the 40-day observance, which is good news for those of us who choose to follow the tradition of “giving something up” for Lent to remember our Savior’s sacrifice and giving up His life for us. That means whatever you give up in that observance can be enjoyed on Sunday! Sundays are always feasting days, not fasting days!

So Lent is a time of reflection and preparation, a time to concentrate on Jesus’ suffering and death, which was more than enough to cover our sins so God could declare us righteous in His sight. It is a special time of prayer and meditation.

I hope you have already joined us in our Lenten walk together as we read and study the book of Galatians. We will continue to have **Lenten Midweek Services** in-person at Noon only. Come and join us for **Holy Week:**

March 27-28, **Palm Sunday Weekend** (Saturday 5:30 pm; Sunday 8:00 and 10:45 am; Brunch between the Sunday services)

April 1, **Maundy Thursday** (Noon and 7:00 pm)

April 2, **Good Friday** (Noon and 7:00 pm)

April 3-4, **Easter** (Saturday 5:30 pm; Sunday 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 am)

## From our Principal

Kati Miser

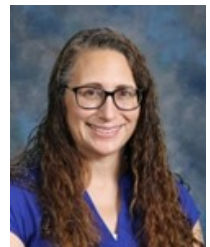


In the church season that we call Lent, we focus on the death of Jesus on the cross for our salvation. This somber season is followed by the joyous celebration of Easter when Jesus rose from the dead to complete God's plan of salvation. **Our mission at SMLS is to educate children and touch families' 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. Our theme – “Be Thou My Vision” – reminds us that our sharing God's love means to love and serve others with the eyes of our loving, active God.



In March, I want to highlight two staff people who put their love and their talents into action, serving students, parents and staff ... leaders who faithfully and so ably serve along-side me in the workings of Saint Michael School. **Jeanie Free** grew up on a farm in Ohio but lives here now with her husband Bill and two adult sons. After volunteering in so many areas at SMLS (including PTL secretary for six years), she has served as an administrative assistant in our school office for twenty years. The beach, boating, fishing, quilting, and golfing are among her favorite things – plus spending time at their trailer on a lake in Grayling, Michigan.

Serving as another administrative assistant – in the church office, but SO connected with the school as well – is **Stephanie Bellino**. She and her family, husband Adam and three sons, have been at Saint Michael for six years. Stephanie is the one you know as the editor of the monthly church newsletter, weekend bulletin and more. Her family enjoys camping and going to the beach. Your notes of encouragement are always welcomed by our staff.



Let's create a BUZZ around town about our wonderful school! Post SMLS reviews on Facebook, Google, and other websites to help prospective families learn about Saint Michael. Thank you for all the personal referrals to families, friends, and acquaintances. Give me a call at 239-939-1218 if you want to arrange to see our school first-hand.

Did you know that all our SMLS families commit to 20 volunteer hours of each year to help with school functions? Have you heard that our biggest fund-raiser – the BID FOR KIDS Auction – takes place on Saturday, March 20<sup>th</sup>? Last year over 250 guests helped raise over \$65,000 to benefit our children. You do not have to be a school family to volunteer or even to come to the auction. Tickets are available at the school office. This year's theme ... “Havana Nights Remix” ... is an excellent and fun opportunity to invest in Saint Michael Lutheran School.



## Palm Sunday Changes

We will NOT have one service and a BBQ on Palm Sunday. Instead, we will have our regular two services at 8:00 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. in the sanctuary with a fellowship breakfast being served from 9:00-10:30 a.m. where you can sit inside (taking off masks once we are at tables) or outside. We will have a modified form of an Easter Egg Hunt for the kids which will run at various times during the breakfast.



*From the Director of Caring Ministries**Julie Berchtold***Laid Off: Moving Forward After Job Loss**

By Carlos Santiago

It had been three weeks since I was laid off, and I was still trying to figure out how to cope with my job loss. Conventional wisdom said I should get out of the house. So I joined a new men's group at church. But as soon as the first guy asked what I did for a living, I wanted to leave. What did I do? What was I? A job hunter? Unemployed? Officially, I didn't "do" anything anymore. As if on autopilot, I heard myself give the answer I had given a thousand times before: "I work in IT." But this time, it was a lie. My problem continued as I found a table to join. During our "get to know each other" time, we shared our names and—you guessed it—what we did. I never realized how important having an answer to that question was. It was as if no other information could be processed without first knowing which bucket I belonged in: blue-collar, white-collar, manager, or owner.

**Being laid off brings feelings of failure, but you don't have to face it alone**

Searching for a job after being laid off is exhausting. Each day followed a similar pattern: Wake up early. Identify possible positions. Customize resume to fit that role. Write a killer cover letter. Apply. Hear nothing. Land an interview? Still hear nothing. Rinse and repeat. Each failure chipped away at my confidence and fed the seeds of self-doubt. Eventually, even a simple "How's the job hunt going?" from my wife felt like scathing criticism. I knew **she was trying to be supportive**, but after a long day of failures, it felt like she was screaming, "You're letting us all down! You need to do more!" As a man, I felt the pressure to provide for my family. But how could I be a provider without an income? When I felt myself slipping down the spiral of negativity, I spent more time reading my Bible. And I was reminded of some fundamental truths:

- I was chosen by God (Eph. 1:4-5)
- I am not alone (Ps. 34:18).
- Jesus will not allow me to be broken (Isa. 42:3).
- Jesus will give me rest (Matt. 11:28).
- He will use this struggle for my good (Rom. 8:28).

The more I read God's word, the more I realized I didn't have to carry the weight of job loss alone. He had already provided me a helper (**Gen. 2:18**). My wife and I were accustomed to sharing burdens, but my unemployment stretched us further out of our typical roles to make ends meet. She took extra hours at work, and I took over school transportation, homework assistance, and random household chores. Working outside of our natural abilities gave us a greater appreciation for each other and helped us feel like a real team.

**Job loss also brings opportunity for change**

After the layoff, God made it clear He wanted me to pursue full-time ministry. But a switch like that takes time. I had a lot to learn, and I needed to go back to school. Without my wife's help, I would have been tempted to abandon God's calling and find a job in my previous field just to make ends meet. Thankfully, we were able to stretch my severance package to cover our finances. But it was my wife's support that gave me the confidence to press on, even when it got hard. I'll never forget one interview I went on. After explaining my calling to the pastor, he said, "No one is going to pay you to do that." His blunt honesty was shocking. But what was more shocking was my response. "It doesn't matter; God called me to do this. I'm going to do it with or without you."

I went home and shared the news: I wasn't getting the job. "Honey, I don't know what to do," I told my wife. "I feel like I'm driving this family off of a cliff." Without skipping a beat, she lifted her arms into the air and yelled, "Weeeeeeeeee!" She could have broken my spirit at that moment. But her support gave me the strength to press on.

**God provides in the waiting**

It's easy to see a job as provision, but God is not limited to such obvious means. After my layoff, we endured a 90% reduction in household income. By all accounts, we should have been devastated. Instead of quickly blessing me with a new job, God blessed me with a four-year-long journey into ministry. During that time, I was able to:

- Learn to trust in God's provision.
- Simplify my life and eliminate unnecessary stressors and expenses.
- Strengthen relationships with my kids before the critical teenage years.
- Establish a daily routine of Scripture reading.
- Start daily "coffee-time" dates with my wife.
- Finish my bachelor's degree after a 20-year break.
- Complete a master's degree.
- Strengthen my marriage.
- Answer God's calling on my life.

If you find yourself out of work, by all means, look for a job. But while you do, take care not to miss all the ways He is providing for you today.

## From the Ministry Coordinator

Lori Schwan

### United We Stand in Freedom

We are two weeks in uniting during Lent as we study the book of Galatians together. If you have not joined in one of the following areas, it is not too late to do so.



- Read one chapter of Galatians each week, 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 meet in person at Noon (or watch 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. This study can be done in a small group in-person or Zoom Bible Study 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 or contact the church office (239-939-1218) for their contact information.
- Use the two kid-friendly discussion questions to apply a key verse of each chapter. These are sent to families once a week.

#### RightNow Media sign up options:

rightnow MEDIA

- Text "RightNow SMLCS" To 41411
- Click on [this link](#) to register
- Go to the church website at [www.smlcftmyers.com](http://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.
- QR Code
- Once registered, you will be able to access any of their free content at any time at [www.rightnowmedia.org](http://www.rightnowmedia.org). Search for "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 will be studying Galatians during Lent.

*From the Director of Christian Education*

*Jack Proctor*

## **Saint Michael Youth Ministries**

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



### **Welcome Baby Proctor!**

Jack and Jazzy welcomed Noah Maxwell Proctor on Tuesday, 02/16/2021 at 1:17pm, weighing 7lbs and measuring 19.5 in. long! Congratulations to the newly expanded Proctor family! Mom, Dad, and baby are doing well. Jack will be taking some much deserved family leave to help care for Mom and baby. We are so thankful to the amazing Youth Ministry volunteers who are stepping in to continue Youth Ministry during this time. "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith." - Hebrews 11:7

### **Palm Sunday Easter Egg Hunt**

There will be an Easter Egg Hunt during the fellowship breakfast on Sunday, March 28th. You know what that means! We will have some plastic eggs to prep the week before, and we will need your help! When we all pitch in, it's a fun time of hanging out and doing something to serve the younger students of our congregation and community. Be on the lookout for more information on date and time.



### **A Message from Megan Pearce Scott**

Hello, again Saint Michael family! A lot has changed since the last time I wrote to thank everyone for their continued support in my Christian Education here at Concordia University. As some of you may have known me as Megan Pearce, I now officially go by Megan Scott as I got married to my best friend, Noah Scott, on May 21, 2020. My husband and I are so blessed and thankful to have the support from Saint Michael Lutheran that we do, whether that be through financial means or prayer. For a further update on my life and time at Concordia, I am now in my final semester of college and officially set to graduate in the Spring! Noah and I have been interviewing with many churches for a youth and family ministry DCE internship position all over the United States and look forward to being placed in just a few weeks. If the internship is a good fit for both the congregation and us, it could turn into a call to continue our ministry beyond the 12 month internship. As of right now, there is still so much uncertainty of where we are going and what God is doing in our lives, so your prayers of discernment and guidance are much appreciated. I miss my Ft. Myers family and hope to come back for a visit here shortly. Stay safe!

HIS peace, Megan Pearce Scott

### **Thank You - For the Love of a Baby**

The Board of Human Care would like to thank everyone who supported the February diaper and clothing drive. What an amazing response! We are always so overwhelmed by the generosity of our congregation, and this time was no exception. J'Ann Tharnstrom coordinated a diaper drive in her community. Greenbriar Village at Hideaway Country Club collected over 2,500 diapers, 2,400 baby wipes, and other baby necessities. Thank you, Greenbriar Village, and thank you, St. Michael congregation!

*Director of Worship and Music*

*Pastor Colton LaMay*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus,



It's hard to believe that it has been a year since our way of life abruptly changed, and I know that it has been quite the year of challenges for many folks. But despite all of these challenges, I hope and pray that during these struggles, God has drawn close to you by the power of His Holy Spirit to bring you peace that only comes through faith in Jesus. Through faith in Jesus, we have faith that He comes to us as He washes our sins, claims us as His own, and gives us His Spirit in Baptism. Though we can never make things right with God on our own, He comes to us! Through faith in Jesus, we have faith that He comes to us through His Word proclaimed and heard; we have faith that we hear His forgiveness to us as we forgive those in our midst. We have faith that He comes to us in, with, and under the bread and wine of Holy Communion, where we receive freely from God's table His forgiveness of sins and the unity of faith with the priesthood of all believers, uniting His children within His body, through His very own body and blood. We have faith that He continues to form and sustain our lives until He calls us home or until He comes again with glory to redeem the whole of creation. Perhaps you've even been considering some of these ideas of faith in the promises of Jesus while we go through Galatians together. This Gospel of forgiveness and eternal life for all of God's children through Jesus sustains our eternal existence. He gathers us together as one family to hear His Word and be sustained by Him. And out of our church, it is God's desire that the light of Jesus would shine in this community through us. We pray that God would continue to sustain our faith and guide our hands to be His people in any of the ways that He is calling us to serve with the gifts that He has graciously entrusted to our possession. Each and every one of us has a special God-given uniqueness that He is using each day to sustain His creation as we walk alongside one another in the ministry that we share in the love that Jesus first showed us. May the peace of Jesus and faith in His promises sustain and keep you!

Blessings in Jesus,  
Pastor Colton

*Dominican Republic Tech Needs*



Schools in the Dominican Republic have yet to physically open, and the D.R. Department of Education has just mandated virtual learning for all students. Many students are in need of cell phones or iPads with camera capabilities. If you have a used cell phone or iPad (with or without a charger) that you would like to donate, please drop it off in the narthex by Sunday, March 21<sup>st</sup>. Leonardo will be traveling to the Dominican Republic later that week, and he will take the technology with him. Thank you for supporting this important project and helping our D.R. family.



**Easter Flowers**

If you wish to provide flowers for our Easter worship services, you can do so through Friday, March 26<sup>th</sup>. The cost is \$8.00 per plant, and you can take your flowers

after the 11:00 a.m. Easter Sunday service. Flowers can be placed in honor or in memory of a loved one. Email [Stephanie Bellino](#) in the church office to place your order or call 239-939-1218 ext. 241



Daylight Savings Time begins Sunday, March 14<sup>th</sup>!  
Remember to Spring forward and turn your clocks ahead one hour!

Blood Drive!

The Lee Health Bloodmobile will be on campus from 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 21<sup>st</sup>. Please consider donating.

