

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

3595 Broadway
Fort Myers, FL 33901
(239) 939-1218
www.smlcs.org

Advent Midweek Services

December 1 - 7:00 p.m.
December 8 - 7:00 p.m.
December 15 - 7:00 p.m. This is our special Kindergarten / 1st Grade Advent service. This service will be in the gym.

Christmas Cantata

Sunday, December 19 - 8:00 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.

Merry Christmas

The Messenger

From the Pastor

Rev. Jon Zehnder

Sometimes in the midst of the chaos and the pace we seem to run, things can just start to seem out of control. So, here are 5 suggestions on how we might have a shepherds kind of Christmas this year – a little more peaceful and calm as we wait for the amazing announcement of the angels, *“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people – today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord.”* (Luke 2:10-11)

1. Plan your family's holiday schedule early. Choose what matters the most, mark it on the calendar, and then stick with it.
2. Stay grounded. In other words, have realistic expectations. People can lose touch with reality during the holidays, but don't worry. Life will return to “normal” on January 2nd!
3. Celebrate the four weeks of Advent. Don't cram everything into two days – Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Spread out your family time.
4. Emphasize opportunities to give (and not just receive). Make a decision as a family which charitable organizations you would like to bless as an expression of thanks for THE GIFT that God in His grace gave us in Jesus.
5. Create new, or emphasize established, family rituals. Enjoy them in the moment, and don't rush through them. For example, read the Christmas account from Luke 2:1-14; make and send cards to a retirement home; decorate cookies (and then maybe share some with a neighbor); trim the tree and discuss family ornaments; bake a birthday cake for Jesus. There are so many ideas out there; find one, borrow one, or make one up!

But most of all, don't get all caught up about Saint Nicholas coming to town because God has already come to town – to a town called Bethlehem! And God still comes to every town and to every heart! Have a blessed Christmas!!

Pastor Jon

Advent and Christmas Holiday Worship Schedule

Christmas Eve, Friday, December 24

5:30 p.m. - Family Christmas service
7:30 p.m. - Candlelight & Carol service
11:00 p.m. - Candlelight & Carol service

Christmas Day, Saturday, December 25

10:00 a.m. - Christmas Morning Celebration
5:30 p.m. - Weekend of Christmas

Sunday, December 26

8:00 a.m. - Traditional Worship service
10:45 a.m. - Blended Worship service

Friday, December 31

5:30 p.m. - New Year's Eve Worship service

*From our Principal**Kati Miser*

The Christmas story of the shepherds and their encounter with angels affirms that Jesus comes to ordinary people doing ordinary things at ordinary times. But what a change when that encounter happens! Like the shepherds, we too are driven to proclaim that Good News to anyone who will listen. Let's proclaim **our mission at SMLS: to educate children and touch families' lives with the awesome love of Jesus Christ!** Your daily prayers for SMLS are so appreciated as they continue



to share that Good News with our children, families, and community. As a matter of fact, we would encourage you during the Christmas season to send cards/notes to our staff. **A BLESSED CHRISTMAS TO YOU AND YOUR FAMILY!**

This month you can support SMLS through the following events:

- December 14 – Christmas Band and Choir Concert at 1:00 p.m.
- December 15 – Kindergarten/Grade 1 Christmas presentation at Advent Service (7:00 p.m.)

Call the school office if you would like more information.

Are you following SMLS on Facebook and Instagram to see photos and more about what's happening at SMLS? Check it out: [@saintmichaellutheranschool](#).



Applications for the 2022-23 school year are now open. Click the admissions tab at the top of our website. Give me a call if you want to invite a friend, neighbor, or family member to experience Saint Michael Lutheran School.

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

Happy holidays, everyone! This is the time of year to be thankful, and the Animal Refuge Center (ARC) in North Fort Myers is so very thankful for all of the donations again this year. They look forward to seeing us every year as we pull in with a carload packed to the roof of very badly needed food and supplies for the animals. Thank you everyone for being so generous.



Little Saints is getting ready to celebrate the holidays, and we are happy to say our family Christmas party is back on this year! We will be celebrating Christmas with our students and their families on Thursday, December 2nd from 4:00-5:30 p.m. at Little Saints. Games, dancing, cookies, and yes, Santa will be joining us this year! The families always look forward to this time with the children and spending time with each other again.

2021 has been another tough year. I want to extend a big "thank you" to all of the staff at Little Saints for working so hard every day to give the best care and education to the children and families while dealing with the extenuating circumstances COVID has thrown our way. We simply could not do this without all of you; you are a blessing to our school.

May God's blessing be upon you in the New Year.

No Sunday School or Adult Bible Studies on Sunday, December 26th

Due to the way the calendar falls and the floors being re-finished in the Anderson-Eichler building, we will not have any classes on Sunday, December 26th.

From the Ministry Coordinator

Lori Schwan



Keep Sunday School Simple...

Children's Ministry

Simply Loved Sunday School - Both PK3 - Kindergarten and 1st - 4th will study the Christmas story. Contact Lori Schwan if you are interested in volunteering with the kids or behind the scenes.



Children's 5:30 Family Christmas Eve Worship - To prepare for our child friendly service on Christmas Eve at 5:30 PM, we'll email out a link to the songs to practice at home. If you want your elementary child to have a speaking part, help with technology, or hand out glow sticks and special gifts to each person, contact Lori Schwan. If you want to help with this service, please let me know as well. There will be a rehearsal on Saturday, December 18th at 10 AM with a pizza party to follow. There will also be a rehearsal during Sunday School on December 19th.

5th and 6th Grade Sunday School Class

Our preteen kids in 5th and 6th grade have heard the Bible stories, but their minds have developed to ask those harder questions. This is a place where it is safe to wonder and talk together as we see how the Holy Spirit answers those questions and empowers us to be bold for Him.



Kids Serving

Because of the generosity of donors, **Operation Christmas Child**, a project of Samaritan's Purse, collected more than 50 shoeboxes packed with toys, school supplies, hygiene items, and prayer to children suffering from poverty, disasters, war, and famine.

In December, our Sunday School kids will organize our biggest **Jammies for Jesus** project: buying PJs for the kids in over 40 families who are being served by Lutheran Services of Florida in an effort to help families stay intact. If you are in the congregation and want to help with this Thrivent Action Team by shopping and donating pajamas for kids, contact Beth Crowe (917-667-4235 or ecrowemlhs@yahoo.com) so that she can let you know a specific child for whom to buy. All PJs should be turned in no later than December 12th.

2021 Thrivent Action Teams Expiring!

Before your \$500 for two action teams expires on December 31, 2021, consider applying to sponsor one of over 25 education events, fundraisers, or service projects happening this month. Teams can be applied for activities into the new year too! Please contact Lori Schwan if you are interested in sponsoring.

Women's Bible Study

Join Lori Schwan on Thursdays from 10:00-11:30 AM on Zoom or on campus in the ELC Board Room for ladies Bible study. We are studying Derwin Gray's Advent study on RightNow Media.

Pastor Jon's Sunday Bible Class

Join us Sunday morning in the cafeteria to study J.D. Greear's Advent on RightNow Media. If you cannot be there in person, you can now get Pastor's weekly outline on our webpage, and you can come on live via Zoom using the church volunteer account.

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 305 113 7001

Passcode: church

DivorceCare

A new session of DivorceCare begins 1/4/22. We will meet Tuesday mornings 8:15 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. through 4/5/22. Anyone separated or divorced can join any session. This group will be online and in person. Register at: www.divorcecare.org. Have questions? Call Lori Schwan 239-939-1218, ext. 237.

Saint Michael Youth Ministries

Saint Michael Youth Ministries

Wednesday Youth Nights 50-60 People

The Holy Spirit has been drawing about 50 youth each week for Middle School and High School Youth on Wednesdays from 6-8 PM. Join us as we have dinner hosted by families each week. Each group separately has activities and discussions. We are growing closer to each other and God. We will not meet December 22nd.

We need about 3 additional adults who want to facilitate small groups for middle school discussions so they can apply the Word to everyday life. See Lori Schwan if you are interested in volunteering.

Help Decorate the Church for Christmas

If you're available to help decorate our Sanctuary for Christmas, join the youth on Saturday, December 4th starting at 9:00 AM. We usually finish about lunchtime.



Christmas Progressive Servant Event

On December 12th from 10:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., middle school and high school youth will have an opportunity to “adopt” the 10-17-year-olds at Lutheran Services of Florida’s Oasis Youth Shelter (right behind our soccer field). Before our teens shop for 45 minutes for their gifts with donations from our youth families, we’ll have a rare opportunity to tour the facility. While we are having a tour, the Oasis youth will come to our gym for a Christmas Party to protect their anonymity. In between all the learning and serving, we will have lunch and finish up with dessert at St. Michael. Oasis can have up to 24 youth who stay at the shelter at once, so any cash donations will be welcomed; we budget \$50/teen for needs

and wants. Consider bringing in your financial donations early to plan effectively. Adult drivers are needed. Contact Amber Truax (239-872-7100) with questions. **Be on the lookout for a google form for this event. The form needs to be completed by Wednesday, December 8th.**

Luminaries for Christmas Eve

Youth make, set up, ignite, and clean up 400 luminaries for Christmas Eve. Youth assemble the luminaries during class on Sunday, December 19th. If you are here on Christmas Eve, we could use youth and adults to help with one of the three times: 4:00 p.m. (luminary set up), 5:45 p.m. (luminary lighting), and midnight (luminary extinguish and clean up).



National Youth Gathering

If you missed the chance to register with the other 25 kids and 6 adults, it’s not too late! Contact Lori Schwan as hotel numbers will be configured in January. Next payment of \$250 is due January 16th.

High School Living Faith

The high school youth group is taking the opportunity on the first Sunday of every month to live out our faith, bringing the Scriptures to life. Our first event of sprucing up the Memorial Garden to celebrate All Saints’ Day was a great success thanks to Lou Conzelmann and Mandy and Joel Zehnder leading the youth. On Sunday, December 5th at 9:15 a.m., students will have breakfast and Bible study at Biggie’s Restaurant.

Father-Son Retreat for 5th - 8th Grade



We will host our annual Father-Son Retreat: God’s Plan for a Man on January 14-15, 2022 at Riverside Retreat. Registration is \$65/participant. There is a pre-meeting for the Fathers on Sunday, December 5th from 9:15-10:30 a.m. in Rm. #50 (Nara’s 8th Grade SMLS Classroom). Questions: Contact David Radecki 239-339-7183 radecki99@comcast.net

More Youth News!

Rock the Universe

On Saturday, January 29, 2022 a group of middle and high school students and adults will be going to Rock the Universe held at Universal Studios. The group will meet at St. Michael on Saturday at 10:30 AM, head out on a bus, stop for lunch on the way, and be in the park from 4 PM – 1:00 AM watching concerts (see list below) and riding rides. After the park closes, they will head home, returning early Sunday morning (approximately 4:30 AM). Cost is TBD which includes park ticket, bus, and snack. Deadline to register is Wednesday, January 12th. Be on the lookout for your permission slip, and turn it in to Lori Schwan. Bands include: Casting Crowns, Zach Williams, We the Kingdom, Big Daddy Weave, Cory Asbury of Bethel Music, and Social Club Misfits.

Youth Group FUNdraisers

Breakfast with Santa

Join us in the gym on Saturday, December 11th from 9:00-11:30 a.m. for Breakfast with Santa. All proceeds go to help fund youth activities, including the National Youth Gathering in Houston, Texas. This FUNdraiser has been sponsored by a Thrivent Action Team and includes a picture with Santa, breakfast, and crafts. There is a \$40 entry fee for a family of three. \$5 for each additional person. RSVP at Fmsclark13@gmail.com with “Santa” in the subject line.

Amy Grant Virtual Christmas Concert

St. Michael will host in our gym a **free** Amy Grant’s Virtual Christmas Concert compliments of Thrivent Financial on Saturday, December 4th at 6:30 PM. The youth will be selling concessions (pizza, snacks, and drinks, etc.) as a Thrivent Action Team fundraiser.

Poinsettias

You can purchase **EXTRA LARGE** Poinsettias for **\$14.00 each**. They can be purchased to take home *OR* to decorate the church for the holidays. For those purchasing poinsettias to take home, you can choose from three different colors (red, white, or bi-color). Poinsettias can be picked up before Christmas starting December 4th. Youth will be at all three services the weekend of December 4th and 5th for those who are purchasing a poinsettia to take home. If that is not a convenient time, please call the church office to make other arrangements. For those purchasing poinsettias to decorate the church, as always, you can purchase a poinsettia in memory of or in honor of a loved one. **Poinsettia orders for in memory of or in honor of a loved one must be in by Sunday, December 12th.** Color selection is only available for those taking the poinsettias home. Poinsettias purchased to decorate the sanctuary can be picked up **after** Christmas.

Apple AirPods Pro Raffle

Buy a \$20 raffle ticket with a chance to win the Apple AirPods Pro with Active Noise Cancellation (\$200 value). Tickets are on sale now through December 15th. This Thrivent Action Team that supports our youth ministry will notify the winner in time for Christmas. Tickets can be purchased at the SMLCS office, from youth in the Narthex before and after worship, and through ZELLE (239-634-3073 Memo: Your Contact Info).



Youth DCE Call Committee Update

Over the last few months a call committee, led by Bill Minor, has formed and met several times to begin the process of calling a new Director of Christian Education for Youth Ministry. All the necessary steps have been completed with the Florida-Georgia District to start seeking out names of possible DCEs. Thanks for continuing to keep this process in prayer as we discern from the Holy Spirit whom God has in mind.

Visioning for the Future

In November, we had our fourth of seven monthly meetings with Pastor Jacob Hoyer, Certified Navigator in the vision planning processes. Our vision team, made up of congregational leaders and staff, discussed what St. Michael's unique values are. In December, we will discuss our strategies that hold our vision together.



Pastor Jacob Hoyer

GriefShare

It hurts to lose someone. GriefShare is a friendly, caring group of people who will walk alongside you through one of life's most difficult experiences. You don't have to go through the grieving process alone. A new group will meet Saturdays from 1/8/22 - 4/2/22 from 10 AM - 12 PM in Pastor's Conference Room. Register at: www.griefshare.org. Questions? Contact Susan Gaertner (586) 243-9335 or gaertner.susanmark@gmail.com.

Dominican Republic Missions

Our mission in the DR is continuing despite the pandemic. Their lives are improving just as ours are here. Our school is back in session with a slightly decreased enrollment. The missionaries are all back from their vacations, which are called home service. The missionaries go to different churches and schools to raise funds. This is the first time they have been home in two years.

Leonardo has been going there and keeps us up to date on the police and fire departments. Recently, two firemen lost their lives fighting a fire, leaving two widows with children. These were well-liked and respected friends.

With the holidays approaching, we are requesting that you do not forget our beloved children at this time. They continue to learn about Jesus and His love for all from the hardworking missionaries in our seven sites. There is a transportation problem this year, so it is not possible to collect gifts to bring there. We are collecting money to help their economy by purchasing gifts there. Cash or checks are welcome. Please put your financial gift in an envelope and mark it "DR mission." *Donations need to be in by December 11th*. Thank you, and have a blessed Christmas.

Office Job Available

Would you like a job where you are challenged every day to keep church members, school parents, children and staff up-to-speed on all that is happening at St. Michael? Then we may have a position for you as our **COMMUNICATIONS AND FACILITIES COORDINATOR**. If you are "old-fashioned" enough to recognize and appreciate the use of proper grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation in things you read -- you have an important qualification for this job. Getting along with others (mostly by being flexible and willing to multi-task) gives you the majority of the "must haves", while familiarity and comfort with technology means you check all the boxes. This is a **full-time position with benefits**, accountable to Senior Management, in which you'll use various software packages – familiarity with which would, naturally, be a plus. They include publishing and web posting applications; parts of the Microsoft Office 365 Suite, Adobe Acrobat, Proclaim, Lutheran Service Builder, as well as Church 360 – Members. **If interested, please call Bob Jablonski at 239-939-1218 x339.**

Angel Tree

The Board of Human Care will have the Angel Tree set up in the Narthex again this year. Through the Angel Tree, we provide gifts for children and families in need from the community. Each Angel Ornament will be for one child in the community. We are requesting a \$25 gift card from Walmart or Target rather than specific gifts. If you would rather make a monetary donation for any amount, please mark your check or envelope with "Angel Tree – Board of Human Care." *The gift cards or monetary donations will need to be in by Sunday, December 12th so we have time to distribute the gifts before Christmas.* Thank you for your continued generosity and support. Without you, projects like this would not exist.