

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

The Messenger

From the Pastor

Rev. Jon Zehnder

Gary Habermas (you can Google him) is a university professor who is recognized as one of the world's foremost authorities on the Resurrection of Jesus. (He wrote his doctorate thesis on the topic at Michigan State University.) He said this, "Every single shred of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is also evidence for my own resurrection."

With that riding on Jesus' resurrection, how reliable is the evidence that it really did happen? Well, that evidence was analyzed by one of the most accomplished lawyers on this planet (listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as THE most accomplished lawyer) – Sir Lionel Luckhoo. Luckhoo's conclusion is, "I say unequivocally that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt." (from *The Case for the Empty Tomb: Leading Lawyers Look at the Resurrection*)

Thoroughly convinced that Jesus did rise from the dead in an irrefutable demonstration of His deity, Luckhoo did the most logical thing he could think of – he received Jesus' forgiveness and grace through faith. "My life took a 180-degree change," he said. "I found real peace and happiness and joy and righteousness and holiness." Here are some of the main points that Luckhoo and Habermas and others pointed out:

- Jesus really did die on Good Friday.
 - There are early accounts of His death and resurrection.
 - There was an empty tomb (a fact that even Jesus' opponents had to admit; nobody ever claimed that the tomb was anything but empty).
 - There was eyewitness testimony, people who saw Jesus alive.
 - There was the emergence of the Church. (It took something dramatic to prompt Jewish converts to abandon or significantly modify several major tenets of their Jewish faith tradition.)
- There is also extra-biblical evidence: Habermas has compiled 22 ancient sources that mention Jesus' death and 13 that specifically refer to the Resurrection with an additional 10 providing relevant facts surrounding it.

"No intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the Resurrection account is true." (Quoted from Lord Darling, the brilliant Chief Justice of England in Val Grieve's book, *Verdict on the Empty Tomb*)

For us as believers, all of this is reassuring; for spiritual seekers, this is a challenge that should be taken seriously. "I write these things to you who believe in the Name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." I John 5:13

Pastor Jon

From our Principal

Kati Miser



In 1984, Tony Campolo, a popular Christian speaker and author wrote a book entitled, “It’s Friday, but Sunday’s Comin’,” to encourage those who felt their universe unraveling to keep trusting in God. Of course, his classic message refers to the despair of Good Friday followed by a victorious Easter. We, as Christians, have this Easter assurance of Jesus’ amazing love: a love that surrounds us all our days – gloomy or joyful – despite the challenges of life. We know that we can trust our ever-living, ever-loving God and respond confidently with, “It’s Friday, but



Sunday’s Comin’,” in all things! **At Saint Michael Lutheran School, our mission is to educate children and touch families’ lives with that awesome love of our Lord Jesus Christ!** How will you share the life-changing Easter message with *your* family and friends?



Did you know that each of our SMLS families commits to 20 hours of volunteering each year to help with school functions? Have you heard that our biggest fundraiser – the **Bid for Kids Auction** – takes place this year on **Saturday, April 2?** There has been an average of 250 guests in past years who have helped raise over \$65,000 to benefit our children. You do not have to be a school family to volunteer or even to attend the auction. More information and tickets are available at the school office.

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. **Applications for the 2022-23 school year are open.** Click the “admissions” tab at the top of our website to access the forms. Please give me a call if you want to invite a friend, neighbor or family member for a tour to experience Saint Michael Lutheran School firsthand.

From the Director of Little Saints

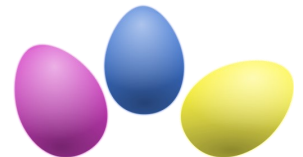
Stacie Thompson

In March, Little Saints celebrated our family heritage with a week of learning about the states and countries our children and families are from. Families were encouraged to send in special ethnic dishes and treats on Friday as we ended the week with special dress, games and music from all over the world.

April 1 is Mud Day! We are trying something new this year by adding a much anticipated "mud day" to the fun at Little Saints. Mud painting, mud pizza, mud sensory pools and a sweet treat of worms and dirt (made with pudding) are just a few of the fun activities planned for Mud Day 2022. We promise to share pictures during the Sunday services in April!



Little Saints will be closed April 14 and 15 in observance of the Easter holiday. Before our long weekend, all of Little Saints will be celebrating Easter with the traditional egg hunts and festivities. Easter is always a favorite holiday of the little ones; finding brightly colored eggs filled with treats is so exciting!



Visioning for the Future

We presented our strategies and measures to an eighth of the congregation at our second “wet cement” meeting in March. We will use these to know if we are meeting our congregation’s mission and values. The vision team then met with Pastor Jacob Hoyer, certified navigator in the vision planning processes, the next day to discuss possible staffing models as we move forward in filling vacancies (both present and future) including the senior pastor position. On Saturday, April 9, the vision team and the elders, church council, DCE calling committee and administrators will meet to continue to develop the best staffing model for our next chapter of ministry.



Pastor Jacob Hoyer

From the Ministry Coordinator

Lori Schwan

Children's Ministry

Simply Loved Sunday School

In April we will not have Sunday school on Palm Sunday (April 10). Instead, there will be a combined worship service at 10:00am in the gym with a BBQ and Easter egg hunt to follow. Since we have three services on Easter (April 17), we will also not have Sunday school class. On April 3 and 24, both Pre-K 3 through kindergarten and first through fourth grades will study Jesus' death and resurrection. Contact Lori Schwan if you are interested in volunteering with the kids or behind the scenes.



Fifth and Sixth Grade Sunday School Class

In April we will not have Sunday school on Palm Sunday (April 10) or Easter (April 17). Our preteen kids in fifth and sixth grade have heard the Bible stories, but their minds have developed the capacity to ask those harder questions. This is a place where it is safe to wonder and to talk together as we see how the Holy Spirit answers those questions and empowers us to be bold for Him.

Mother-Daughter Retreat for Fifth through Eighth Grades

Thank you so much for your support and prayers during the mother-daughter retreat March 18 through 19! Five mothers and daughters had an amazing time growing closer to each other and to God.

Youth DCE Call Committee Update

During March, the Youth DCE Call Committee completed the initial Zoom interviews with candidates for the position. We are moving forward in the next steps of additional interviews (including, hopefully, on-site ones) as we get to know the candidates better. Thank you for continuing to keep this process in your prayers as we discern from the Holy Spirit whom God has in mind to serve and to lead our congregation in this next phase of the process.

Thrivent Financial Members

If you own a Thrivent Financial product, you can give \$250 two times without giving any of your money. Contact Lori Schwan to see how you can partner with a fundraiser, a service project or an educational Thrivent Action Team.



Pastor Jon's Sunday Bible Class

We will not have class on Palm Sunday or Easter. Join us for the other Sunday mornings in the cafeteria to study "Living a New Life: What Do I Believe and Why It Matters." If you cannot be there in person, connecting via Zoom is also an available option. [Join Zoom Meeting](#) ID: 305 113 7001 Passcode: church

Women's Bible Study

Join Lori Schwan on Thursdays from 10:00 to 11:30am on Zoom or on campus in the ELC board room for ladies' Bible study. We are now following Matt Chandler's study of Psalm 119 on RightNow Media.

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. It's not too late to join us on **Saturdays from 10:00am to 12:00pm** in Pastor's conference room. Register at: www.griefshare.org. If you have any questions, you can contact Susan Gaertner at (586) 243-9335 or gaertner.susanmark@gmail.com.

DivorceCare

DivorceCare will break for the month of April. The new session will meet on Tuesdays from 11:00am to 1:00pm beginning May 10, 2022 and running through August 2, 2022. Anyone separated or divorced can join any session. This group meets online and in-person. You can register at www.divorcecare.org. If you have any questions, call Lori Schwan at 239-939-1218, ext. 237.

Saint Michael Youth Ministries

Saint Michael Youth Ministries

Wednesday Youth Nights

The youth appreciate the congregation's support as they lead the 6:30pm Lenten worship on March 30. In April, we will be back to regular 6:00-8:00pm youth nights for sixth through twelfth grade youth. The only exception is April 13, when youth won't meet the Wednesday before Easter.

National Youth Gathering

Airline tickets have been purchased for the National Youth Gathering. Our next meeting will be Wednesday, May 11 from 6:00 to 8:00pm. Parents, please come to the parent meeting that night at 7:00pm.

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. Last month, a group of them served at Gigi's Playhouse for kids and adults with Down syndrome. They had a blast helping with their Dr. Seuss celebration.



On Sunday, April 3 from 3:00 to 6:00pm, we will have a beach and BBQ event. We will meet at Bowditch Beach's grill (250 Estero Blvd., Fort Myers Beach 33931). Bring your swimsuit, any beach game you like and a dish to share (mac 'n' cheese, potato salad, etc. as we will have meat for the grill). For more information, contact Mandy Zehnder at 239-265-6226.

Seventh and Eighth Grade Confirmation with Parents

In April, as we finish our Lenten journey, we will talk about the Lord's Supper. Parents are encouraged to be a part of these classes as they apply to our lives. Please bring Small Catechisms each week.

Youth Thank You

Thank you for your generous support of the Youth Group's Wall o' Money. We raised over \$6,000! These funds help the youth with all their activities including the National Youth Gathering and middle school summer servant event at Camp Luther Springs.

Middle School Summer Servant Event at Camp Luther Springs

Our beloved Middle School Summer Servant Event is back! Those going into sixth through ninth grades are welcome to join other youth from around the Florida-Georgia District for a week of camp fun as well as serving in the community around Gainesville. Parent drivers will leave Sunday, June 19 in the late morning, and parent drivers will return to pick them up on Friday, June 24 around noon. Total cost for camp and transportation is now \$500. Payments can be made with a deposit of \$150 to hold your spot. Points can be used to help pay for this event. Contact [Lori Schwan](#) for more information.

Faith and Film This Summer

Vacation movie school? Talking pictures? *Jesus Christ Moviestar*? In all things, God has hope for any situation. Join us Thursday nights throughout the summer for Faith and Film. We know that God can speak through anything: a burning bush, a donkey and even the movies of today! With that in mind, the goal is to process secular movies through God's redemptive lens and to develop the skill of how to have spiritual conversations with different ages over popular culture. It's perfect for families and people of all ages. Doors will open at 5:00pm, and the movie will begin playing at 5:45pm. Bring your favorite lawn chairs, or bring money to rent chairs or even couches to support the youth ministry! Dinner and movie snacks will also be available for a free will donation. We will have service projects on various weeks to support local community agencies which are thematically related to the movies. Stay tuned for a listing of the weekly movies. This series is co-sponsored by the youth and parish education boards. If you have any questions, please email lori.schwan@gsmlcs.org.



*From the Director of Worship & Music**Pastor Colton LaMay*

Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus,

As Jesus calls us to the foot of the cross during this season of Lent, it is easy to get caught up in reflecting on the decay of this world. When we look at the news or hear the divisions between the people we love, it can be easy to lament in the suffering that is so visible all around us. However, when we ponder God's creation, we can see that we are in a constant cycle of decay and rebirth. Here in Southwest Florida, we may not see a great deal of variation in our seasons, but we do undergo an amazing period of rebirth this time of year. Of course, one of my favorite parts of springtime is the cycle of bird migration and the different species of songbirds that visit or make their nests here. The different trees are alive with the beginnings of new fruit, the visible rebirth in the life cycle of the world God has created. It's no coincidence that Jesus' resurrection is on the Feast of First Fruits immediately following the Passover!



This visible rebirth is something we are blessed to witness in this amazing creation God has made and entrusted to us to care for and steward. More importantly, it points to the continual rebirth that we celebrate each day in remembrance of our Baptism. Jesus calls us into His eternal family by water and the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life with Him. Paul reminds us in Titus 3:5, "Jesus saved us, not because of the things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." While we were still dead to sin, Jesus graciously granted (and continues to grant) new life to His children out of His great love for us! That is a springtime celebration we celebrate each new day, blessed in the days of sure hope for the eternal life Jesus promises as we grow together in our community of faith.

I pray that resurrection and rebirth permeate all parts of life through the forgiveness we freely receive from Jesus, that all divisions might be healed and strivings would cease. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3). Blessings to you as we enter the time of Holy Week, to the cross and to the resurrection of Jesus! I pray each day is made new in Jesus so that the first fruits of His love would overflow into the lives of those around you! Praise be His Holy Name for all eternity!



Blessings in Jesus,
Pastor Colton

Diaper Drive Thank You

Thank you to the Hideaway Country Club Greenbriar Village for donating over 4,000 diapers and 1,400 baby wipes to the Healthy Start Coalition of Southwest Florida. What a blessing to our community!

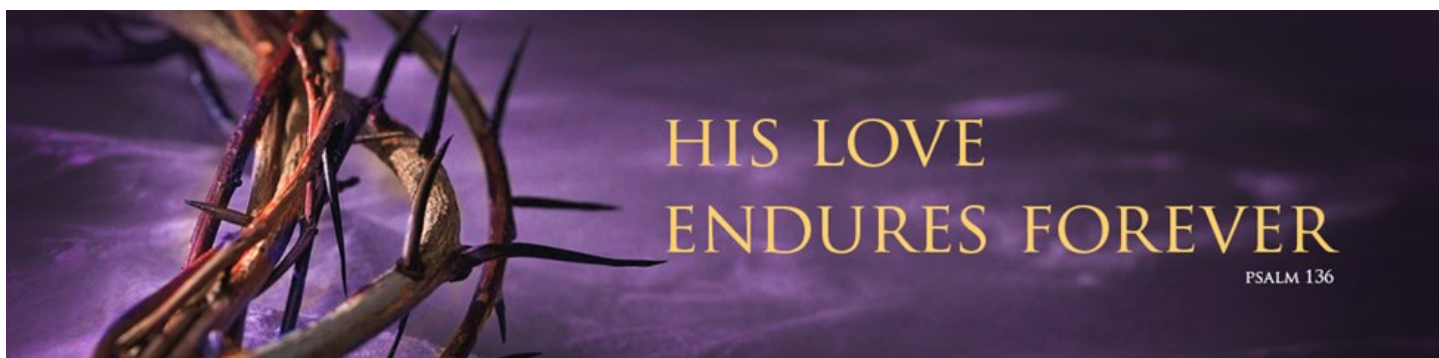
Lutheran Women's Missionary League

This month, LWML is meeting on April 9 at the same time, 10:30am, but in a new location, the band room in the Anderson-Eichler (SMLS gym) Building. A Zoom option will also be available. Meeting ID: 305 113 7001
Passcode: church



Lent and Holy Week Schedule

We hope you can fellowship with us during this upcoming Lenten season.



Wednesday, April 6th Lent

Service will be recorded and posted online only.

Palm Sunday Services

Saturday, April 9th at 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 10th at 10:00 a.m.

Fellowship Lunch and Easter Egg Hunt immediately following the 10:00 a.m. service.

Maundy Thursday

Thursday, April 14th at noon and 6:30 p.m.

Good Friday

Friday, April 15th at noon and 6:30 p.m.

Easter Services

Saturday, April 16th at 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, April 17th at 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., and 11:00 a.m.

Palm Sunday Help Needed

Want to assist with the BBQ on Palm Sunday, April 10? Contact Chuck Oliver if you'd like to help with setup or teardown, to bring a dessert to share or to assist in the kitchen in some way. Chuck can be reached at (239) 292-6058 and at charliet1333@gmail.com.



Saint Michael Foundation



I am sure you've seen this logo thousands of times and wondered, "What do those three stylized individuals, standing on an open book with the cross in the center, mean?" Well, the book is the Bible which is centered on the message of the Good News that God was in Jesus reconciling the world to Himself by laying our sins on Him so we could receive His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:19-21). The three individuals represent our church, our school and our foundation.

Our foundation was created to ensure that the ministries and missions that the Lord has challenged us to do would remain strong and effective into the future and that new opportunities could be pursued and funded. Through board-established policy, funds are professionally managed using short-term, long-term, and endowment strategies that support the work of the church, the school and missions.

From generation to generation, we pass the blessings we have received forward as God works through our gifts and works through us to touch hearts for eternity and to change lives in our congregation, our school, our community and around the world. As of the end of December, our Foundation stood at \$1,624,166. Please prayerfully consider how you might be a blessing to those who will follow us. Feel free to check out information on our website (smcftmyers.com/saint-michael-foundation/), or call Bob Jablonski (Saint Michael Chief Financial Officer) at (239) 939-1218 or Michael Roach (Investment Manager) at (239) 275-9233.