

Volume 14, Issue 1
January 2023

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

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The Messenger

From the Pastor

Rev. Jon Zehnder

Are you looking for a challenge this New Year? How about this one from Ephesians 4:1-2 - "I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." So, let me ask you: how are you doing on your humility development? Are you gentle-challenged? Patient-impaired? Are you kind of underperforming in the loving department? By the way, if that's tough for you to gauge, ask your spouse, children or a trusted friend.

The Apostle Paul reminds us that this pursuit can only be done as we are compelled by the love of Jesus, the One who came to be one with us, to die to redeem us, to make us His very own (2 Cor 5:14-15). We have been "buried with Jesus through Baptism into death in order that, just as Jesus was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, that we too may live a new life." (Romans 6:4)

In the Scriptures, there is this calling for us to continually put to death whatever belongs to our old, earthly, sinful nature and to pursue this new life that we have in Jesus (take a look at Colossians 3, Philippians 3 and Ephesians 4-5).

Martin Luther said in his explanation of Baptism that this pursuit happens by daily contrition (Godly sorrow over our sins) and repentance; that's how our old sinful nature dies to sin and evil desires. It's how this new person that we are in Jesus emerges every day to live before God in righteousness, innocence and blessedness. It's how we are enabled to serve Him by serving others.

So, here's your New Year's challenge (if you want to take it on): **what is Jesus calling you to die to if you're going to live for Him in 2023?** Like most of our New Year's resolutions, willpower alone will not be enough; we have to replace old habits with new ones.

If you're looking for some new habits, let me suggest the example of the early church (check out Acts 2:42-44): they studied Scripture together; they prayed together; they gave, served, confessed and received Communion together; they replaced sinful habits with kingdom-of-God habits (where God rules by grace in their hearts and lives).

Brothers and sisters, that is our calling as the children of God. It is a life worth dying for! God's richest of blessings in this New Year!

Pastor Jon

From Our Principal

Kati Miser



So, what are your New Year's resolutions? Do they include spending more personal time with Jesus? That's the only lasting resolution worth pursuing. What about praying daily for the staff and families associated with our school? Despite these complicated times, the staff continues to proclaim **our mission at SMLS: to educate children and touch families' lives with the awesome love of Jesus Christ!** The families continue to support that mission by their involvement in school functions. Even the children have been involved in carrying out that

mission as students through a variety of endeavors (for example, Mission Mondays and the latest one, "Shop with a Cop.")

This month, you can support SMLS through the following events:

- Do you know of families who are looking for a Christian school? Invite them to our annual open house on Wednesday, January 25 at 6:00pm for our early learning center through grade 8.
- Invite your family, friends and neighbors to our Touch-a-Truck event on Saturday, January 21 from 10:00am to 2:00pm.



Call the Saint Michael office if you would like more information.

Are you following SMLS on Facebook and Instagram to see photos and to learn more about what's happening at SMLS? Check it out @saintmichaellutheranschool.

Applications for the 2023-24 school year are now open. Click the "admissions" tab at the top of our website to get started. Give me a call if you would like to invite a friend, neighbor or family member to experience Saint Michael Lutheran School.

From the Director of Little Saints

Stacie Thompson

Happy New Year! December was full of many fun events: Polar Express Day, Christmas parties and retellings of the story of Jesus' birth in chapel. We are all quite tired, but January is not a time to rest because we are jumping right into winter at Little Saints.

In January, we will be learning all about winter at Little Saints as all of the children spend the month building up to our annual Winter Day celebration on January 27. The entire early learning center will enjoy a day of games and activities focused on winter fun (Florida style) replete with snowball fights and, yes, ice skating! It's a great time to be a child if you're at Little Saints!



Open enrollment begins January 7, and we have a few spots open in our two room starting in August. Contact me at stacie.thompson@gsmlcs.org, and schedule a tour of our amazing early learning center. We are also holding our annual open house on January 25 from 6:00 to 8:00pm. Stop by and see us!



From the Board of Elders

The board of elders has been working long and hard to go through the 40 nominations for senior pastor (from the district office and from SML members). All were considered; some had already taken calls; some removed themselves from consideration; some were able to be interviewed. As the list was narrowed, top candidates were interviewed again. The decision rests with the SML congregation. So, the board of elders will be coordinating and bringing the top candidates for the senior pastor position down for a visit. This will allow everyone to get a chance to meet them and to get to know them better before selecting one to call. We are hoping to accomplish this from late January through early March. Meeting times with congregational leaders and open house times for members will be shared as they are set. Thank you for your ongoing prayers.

From the Ministry Coordinator

Lori Schwan

Children's Ministry

Sunday School Nursery

We have volunteers who are serving in the nursery during Sunday school to show the love of Jesus to kids two years old and under so that parents can strengthen their faith during our Sunday educational hour.

"Simply Loved" Sunday School

Both Pre-K 3 through Kindergarten and first through fourth grades are studying people who were away from home: Jonah, Daniel, Esther and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. If you would like to work with kids or help out behind the scenes, please contact Lori.



Thank You for Serving!

In December, our Sunday school kids partnered with Lutheran Services of Florida's efforts to help families provide gifts for their kids. The social workers appreciated our support, prayers and donations.

The kids and parents served in another way: by singing and sharing the story of Jesus' birth at the family Christmas Eve service. Thank you to Ben and Katie Ball for helping to lead the kids in the music for the service. The children did a beautiful job! All of the parents' support was also a blessing.



Thrivent Financial Members

If you own a Thrivent financial product, you can provide \$250 two times without giving any of your own money. Contact Lori Schwan to see how you can partner with a fundraiser, a service project or an educational Thrivent Action Team. Those who have Choice Dollars left from 2022 can also direct them until the March 31, 2023 cutoff date.

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Women's Bible Study

Join other women on Thursdays from 10:00-11:30am on Zoom or on campus in the ELC boardroom for a weekly Bible study.

GriefShare

A new session of GriefShare will meet on Saturdays from 9:00-11:00am from January 21 through April 15, 2023 in Pastor Jon's conference room. Anyone can join any session. Find out more at www.griefshare.org. If you have any questions, please call Gail Schultz at (732) 991-0642.

GRIEF SHARE[®]

DivorceCare

A new session of DivorceCare will meet on Tuesdays from 11:00am-1:00pm from January 10 through April 4, 2023. Anyone who is separated or divorced can join any session. This group is available online and in-person. Register at www.divorcecare.org. If you have any questions, please call Lori Schwan at (239) 939-1218, ext. 237.

DIVORCE Care

Pastor Jon's Sunday Bible Class

Join us Sunday morning in the cafeteria to study the book of Revelation. If you cannot be there in person, Zoom is also available. [Join Zoom Meeting](#) ID: 305 113 7001 Passcode: church

Saint Michael Youth Ministries

Saint Michael Youth Ministries

Fifth and Sixth Grade Sunday School

Preteen kids in fifth and sixth grade will ask Jim Grier and Tiffany Roszell their challenging questions. This is a place where it is safe to wonder and talk together as we see how the Holy Spirit answers their questions and empowers us to be bold for Him.

Wednesday Youth Nights

We have been so blessed to have great youth nights in December. The kids had fun with Christmas parties, shopping for the 14 students at Oasis Youth Shelter and learning to see the hope God brings us when we are “blue”. This month, we will have fun and grow in faith together.



Luminary Blessings

Thank you to the youth and adults who put out over 400 luminaries on Christmas Eve as we remembered Christ bringing light into the darkest parts of our lives.

Rock the Universe

On Saturday, January 28, a group of middle and high school students and adults will be going to Rock the Universe at Universal Studios. The group will meet at Saint Michael on Saturday at 10:30am, depart on a bus, stop for lunch on the way and be in the park from 4:00pm-1:00am, enjoying concerts and riding rides. After the park closes, they will head home, returning home early Sunday morning (approximately 4:30am). Cost is \$140 which includes a park ticket, a warm hat, transportation (bus) cost and a snack. The payment is due Wednesday, January 11 to Lori Schwan. Bands that will be performing at Rock the Universe are Zach Williams, Matthew West, Dante Bowe, Anne Wilson, We Are Messengers and Cain.



Seventh and Eighth Grade Confirmation with Parents

We're moving through our study of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. We encourage parents to attend with their teens. Any seventh and eighth grade students are welcome to join us. This class meets upstairs in the education building (look for printed signs).

High School Sunday School

Join us in the youth room as our journey of walking through the Old Testament continues in 1 Kings.

Annual Edison Festival of Light Parade

The Edison Festival of Light Grand Parade is Saturday, February 18. Our youth are selling seating downtown for \$12 per person. There will be an option to buy them online (more details are forthcoming). Youth families who are able to help with setup should arrive at noon to 2:00pm. Hands are also needed for teardown for about 30 minutes after the parade ends.



Stay Connected

If you are not receiving emails or text messages about youth activities, please let Lori know so that she can add you to her lists.

From the Director of Worship & Music

Ben Ball

*O Morning Star, how fair and bright!
You shine with God's own truth and light, aglow with grace and mercy!
Of Jacob's race, King David's son, our Lord and Master,
You have won our hearts to serve You only!
Lowly, holy!
Great and glorious, all-victorious, rich in blessing!
Rule and might over all possessing!*

Text by Philipp Nicolai (1556-1608)



Happy New Year! It is hard to believe that it is already 2023! As we stand at the threshold of this new year, I hope we will daily remember and deeply cherish the gift we just celebrated at Christmas: Jesus, our beautiful Savior, who was born as a humble baby and walked the earth to know both our joys and our sorrows, Jesus, who knew the road before Him led to the pain and suffering of the cross at Calvary yet gladly did it anyway, Jesus, the all-victorious King who will come again to reign. As Charles Wesley penned in one of his greatest hymns ("And Can It Be"), "Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me!"



You probably know the name Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach was a deeply faithful man. He stands today as one of the greatest musicians to ever walk the earth, but his humility was without parallel. He wrote incredibly intricate pieces of music, yet he had a very simple belief regarding music: *"The aim and final purpose of all music should be none other than to glorify God and refresh the soul."* Music is vital to the Christian. The singing of hymns, songs and spiritual songs is a Biblical call, both in our personal and corporate time of worship. It should always support and add to (and never take away nor distract us from) the Gospel message. It should inspire and revive our souls in a way which leads us into a deeper worship of our blessed Redeemer. It should all point to Jesus. We are here to offer ourselves fully unto the Lord in our worship in thanksgiving for what He has done. Sing with the full confidence of our assurance in Christ!

I hope you will prayerfully consider joining one of St. Michael's musical groups. Our **handbell choir** rehearses on Tuesday nights from 5:45-6:45pm and rings in worship once every four to six weeks. While reading music is encouraged, it is certainly not mandatory (we will teach you what you need to know!) The **sanctuary choir** meets on Tuesday nights from 7:00-8:30pm and leads regularly in worship (alternating weekly between the 8:00am and 10:45am services). The **worship team** rehearses on Wednesday nights from 7:00-7:45pm and leads the 10:45am blended service. If you are feeling a tug on your heart to become involved musically, please chat with me, and we will see where we can get you plugged in as part of our music ministry.

Please continue to reach out to me at any time with questions, concerns or any song requests that you have. My church email address is ben.ball@gsmlcs.org

Blessings,
Ben Ball

Volunteer Work Day



Saint Michael's board of properties has scheduled a volunteer work day for Saturday, January 14 from 8:00am to noon with hopes of making a large push to clean things up around campus. Most work will involve hauling tree branches and other debris to designated areas for pickup by the city. If you are able to bring gloves to use, those will be the most important tools to have. Bow saws, pruning shears and loppers will also be useful in reducing larger tree branches into smaller sections for easier moving and stacking. If you know someone who might be willing or able to help, please spread the word!

From the Board of Human Care

Donate Used Winter Clothes

Winter is a hard time to try to keep warm if you are homeless. During January, the board of human care will be collecting used jackets, sweatshirts and sweaters to be delivered to a homeless shelter. Please bring any of these items and deposit them in the large box in the narthex. These items are greatly appreciated and needed during the winter months.

Financial Donations for the Salvation Army

The board of human care is asking for donations to be given to the Salvation Army homeless shelter this January. The homeless shelters provide assistance to men, women and families including making meals available on a daily basis. If you would like to donate, please put your donation in an envelope marked BOHC—Salvation Army, or make a note on your check. So many people have found themselves in difficult situations, and the Salvation Army helps to fill a need in our community. Thank you for helping so many people!



Thrivent: January 2023 Events

Anyone who is interested can attend Thrivent's free virtual events for January 2023. Learn more about the events, and RSVP at <https://www.thrivent.com/member-network/southeast/events>.

Francis Chan—True Life

Available on demand January 9-15

Living a Life of Significance with Tim Tebow

Available on demand January 10-16

Paychecks & Playchecks: Retirement Solutions for Life

January 17 (7:30pm) and 19 (12:30pm, 7:30pm)

Michael Jr. Virtual Comedy Show

Available on demand January 23-29

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Opportunities to Serve at St. Michael

Church Cleaning

The church housekeeping team is looking for additional members! We have a small team keeping God's house in order. If you are interested in joining the team, please call Lisa Ciarlo at (407) 864-7436.

Ushers and Communion Assistants

We need volunteers as we have returned to the rail for Communion. Interested in becoming an usher or Communion assistant? Please contact Lee Berchtold at (239) 872-8999.

Sound Booth

We are in need of volunteers at all three service times who would be interested in serving in one of a few roles in the sound booth during worship. If enough people become volunteers, then they will be able to rotate weeks in the booth. Different roles are available from clicking through the slides to operating the sound board and camera for the livestream. No prior experience is needed; we can set up training with someone more experienced to help you get started. Please contact Ben Ball if you are interested in serving in this way at (239) 939-1218 or ben.ball@gsmlcs.org.



Altar Guild

The altar guild is in need of assistance at all three services. Altar guild is a wonderful way to serve at St. Michael behind the scenes and to make new friends! Please call Deb Helton at (239) 560-5830 for more information.

