

Deadline for submissions
is the 15th of each month for the
following month's newsletter.
Send to:
smlcspublications@gmail.com



Pastor Jon Zehnder



Weekend Regular Worship

Sat: 5:30 pm Informal
Sun: 8:00 am Traditional
10:45 am Blended

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



The Messenger

From the Pastor

Rev. Jon Zehnder

The Power of Passion

I was hoping the title might catch your interest! February is the month of “passion” with Valentine’s Day, Grandparents’ Day, but more than that it is the season of “the Passion,” the season of Lent (starting February 22). Once again, we’ll dedicate 40 days to ponder the reality of God’s great love for us, a love that caused God the Father not to withhold His own Son but to freely give up Jesus to redeem us and cover our sin, and what we will discover again is this thing called “grace!”

Billy Graham’s grandson, Tullian Tchividjian, wrote a book entitled *One Way Love: Inexhaustible Grace for an Exhausted World*. In it he shared some great thoughts:

- “The Bible is one long story of God meeting our rebellion with His rescue, our sin with His salvation, our guilt with His grace and our badness with His goodness.”
- “Jesus paid it all so we are free from the need to do it all. Our identity, worth and value are not anchored in what we can accomplish but in what Jesus accomplished for us.”
- “The Law reveals sin but cannot remove it; it prescribes righteousness but is powerless to produce it; the Law is impotent, offering nothing but condemnation and death. The Law, apart from the Gospel, can only crush; it cannot cure.”
- “The Law serves us by showing how to love God and others, but we fail to do this every day. When we do, the Gospel brings comfort by reminding us that God’s infinite approval of us does not depend on our keeping the Law but on Jesus keeping the Law for us.”
- “Grace is one-way love and has the unique power to inspire generosity, kindness, loyalty and more love because it removes any and all requirements to change or produce. Grace is a gift, pure and simple.”

God became one of us and intentionally suffered and died in our stead for the sins of all people. There is no greater love and no love story as moving. The message of Lent can be summarized this way, “God’s demand is to ‘be righteous;’ God’s diagnosis is, ‘no one is righteous;’ so, God’s deliverance is, ‘Jesus is our righteousness.’”

As we began 2023, the challenge set before us was to know God better and love Him more this new year. Here’s one last word from Tullian, “Once this Good News of God’s grace, love and forgiveness in Jesus grips our heart, it changes everything. It frees us from having to be perfect; it frees us from having to hold it all together. In the place of exhaustion, we might even find energy.” There is power in the Passion! During these 40 days of Lent, let us discover God’s grace again! Lenten midweek services will be held at Saint Michael on Wednesdays at noon and 6:30pm.

Pastor Jon

From Our Principal

Kati Miser



“Jesus loves me: this I know For the Bible tells me so!”

Such a simple truth is in this children’s song! However, the acknowledgement of this truth changes everything in our relationships with each other. **Our mission at SMLS is to educate children and touch families’ lives with the awesome love of Jesus Christ!** As the love of Jesus touches the relationships in this place, we are indeed given motivation to want to share that love: making disciples for life. It would be great to share it through notes of appreciation to our staff or to share with family, friends and neighbors by encouraging them to check out upcoming events highlighting our school.

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 our school has had on their family.



Applications for the 2023-24 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

Our annual **Winter Day** was on January 27. 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 be hosting our annual **Father-Daughter Dance** again this year on February 4 from 5:00-7:00pm. Our theme this year is Country Night. Our gym will be transformed into a field in the country on a summer night. A good time will be had by all as our dads make some special memories with their little girls.

In February, the two-year-old rooms will study **community helpers**. We hope to be able to bring in special speakers from the community to talk to the kids about their “community helper” jobs. If anyone has a community-based job like police officer, firefighter, veterinarian, doctor, nurse or garbage collector and wants to come visit the kids, please let us know.



From the Board of Human Care



This month, the board of human care has chosen the **Harry Chapin Food Bank** as our organization to support. The Harry Chapin Food Bank started in 1983 as the Southwest Florida Food Bank. In 1994, its name was changed to recognize singer/songwriter Harry Chapin who devoted his short life to helping feed the hungry. Harry Chapin Food Bank feeds over a quarter of a million people per month in a five-county area. 35% of the people fed are children. 17% are veterans.

If you would like to help this organization, please put your donation in an envelope and mark it “Harry Chapin,” or when writing a check, please write “Harry Chapin” in the memo area.

The board is so appreciative of your donations! We strive to help many, and your help is immeasurable. We thank you very much.

From the Ministry Coordinator

Lori Schwan

Children's Ministry

Sunday School Nursery

Volunteers look forward to serving in the nursery during Sunday school to show the love of Jesus to those two years old and under so parents can strengthen their faith during this important education time.

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.



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.

thrivent®

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. In February, we will be making our way through Brian Heasley's *Be Still* on RightNow Media.

GriefShare

GriefShare is currently meeting on Saturdays from 9:00-11:00am 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.



DivorceCare

DivorceCare is currently meeting on Tuesdays from 11:00am-1:00pm 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.



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

February Voters' Meeting

The February voters' meeting will be Sunday, February 26 at 9:30am in the cafeteria and gym. Breakfast will also be provided beginning at 9:00am as the SML youth thank the congregation for their support regarding the LCMS youth gathering that they attended last year. This will be in place of adult Bible study classes. We will be reviewing and voting on the annual fiscal budget. We will also be voting on extending a call to Jason Zehnder who has finished his colloquy.



Saint Michael Youth Ministries

Saint Michael Youth Ministries

Youth DCE Call Committee Update

In January, the youth DCE call committee met to discuss the option of having a director of Christian education intern. The committee agreed to apply to this program by February 1. Thank you for continuing to keep this process in prayer as we discern from the Holy Spirit whom God has in mind.

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

In February, we will have fun and grow in faith together. We will be preparing for the youth-led Lenten worship service on March 22.

Rock the Universe

Thank you for praying for our youth, young adults and adults who enjoyed the rides and Christian concerts at Rock the Universe at Universal Studios on January 28.



Seventh and Eighth Grade Confirmation with Parents

In February, we will begin our study of the Office of the Keys. 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 Chronicles.

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.

Adult Information Class



The adult information class is for any adult who would like more information about becoming a member of St. Michael Lutheran Church. Class will meet on Saturday, February 11 from 9:00am – noon and Sunday, February 12 from 2:00 – 5:00pm in the cafeteria. Pre-registration is not required, but it is helpful for planning purposes. If you have questions or would like to register for the class, please contact Shea Flynn at shea.flynn@gsmlcs.org or (239) 939-1218.

From the Director of Worship & Music

Ben Ball

I am so pleased to present to you a new opportunity for kids from kindergarten through fifth grade: the **Rejoice Children's Choir**! This group will meet beginning on Sunday, February 5 from 9:15-9:30am prior to being walked over to Sunday School. The group will be co-directed by Ben and Katie Ball and will incorporate the basics of music along with "hymns, psalms and spiritual songs" to be offered in worship from time to time. Please spread the word to anyone who may wish to be a part of this group. It is open to all children of the church and school, provided that they are willing to make the commitment to our weekly rehearsals between Sunday morning worship services. I also ask that you regularly pray for this group as we seek to train up the next generation of musicians in the importance of worship and music.



Our **Grace Notes Handbell Choir** is currently at capacity. If you would still like to ring, please contact me to be put on the waiting list or become part of a second group (if we have enough folks to begin a second handbell ensemble).

The **Sanctuary Choir** meets on Tuesday nights from 7:00-8:30pm and leads regularly in worship (alternating weekly between 8:00am and 10:45am worship services).

The **Worship Team** rehearses on Wednesday nights from 7:00-7:45pm and leads the 10:45am blended service.

The **Tech Production Team** serves as the supportive backbone to make our worship service successful, both in-person and online, through the manipulation of sound and video components. We are always looking for folks interested in learning more about this ministry.

If you play an instrument or sing and you are feeling a pull to become involved musically, please chat with me and see where we can get you plugged in as part of our music and worship ministry.

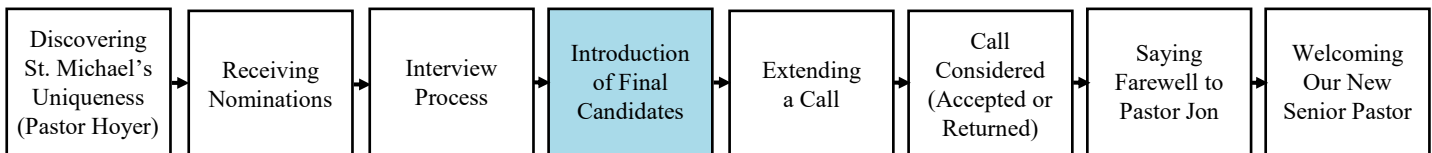
Please continue to reach out to me at any time with questions, concerns or song requests you have. My church email address is ben.ball@gsmlcs.org.

Blessings,
Ben Ball

Director of Worship and Music



Senior Pastor Succession



When a congregation enters a time of pastoral succession, people can often feel anxious and uncertain about the future. When we feel that way, we are in good company because Jesus' first disciples were also fearful, anxious, and unsure even when Jesus was right there with them! When we experience a time of pastoral change, it can be tempting to try to go through the process as fast as we can to try and relieve that anxiety. However, the experiences of many congregations show that approach almost never turns out well.

So, we will take this time trusting in God's guidance and provision, knowing that God's love for us will cast out our fears as He promises in Luke 12:36, "Stop being afraid, little flock, for it is in your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." We are the Church, where God's Word is still being proclaimed, the Sacraments shared, worship celebrated, children and youth taught and nurtured in the faith and care given to those in need. The mission and ministry of the Church go on even as we pray during this time. The board of elders and council leadership will continue to give updates about this process. Thank you for joining us on this adventure!

Our first senior pastor candidate and his wife will be visiting February 7-10. This is a time for the various ministry staff, boards and congregation to get to know them. Scheduled meeting opportunities will be shared soon.

Organ Project

Dear members and friends of Saint Michael Lutheran Church,

Martin Luther said, *“Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world.”* We are embarking on an exciting program to enrich worship in our congregation and community through the beauty of a combination digital and pipe organ crafted by the Allen Organ Company of Pennsylvania. This instrument will enhance our music ministry, providing the backdrop for a robust worship service.

The current Klug & Schumacher pipe organ which has served our congregation faithfully was built in 1981. The console (where the organist sits to play) is failing mechanically and many of the ranks (or rows of pipes which make the orchestral sounds of winds, strings, horns, etc.) now require reconstruction. Advancements in technology and manufacturing of musical instruments have grown exponentially over forty years. Because of technological advancements, we are able to artfully blend digital components with the established “surround” sound of the pipes to honor the original craftsmanship while updating the components that will take us well into another forty years! The pipes you see in the sanctuary will remain untouched while the bulk of the work will be housed in wooden chests that blend into the existing configurations, maintaining a subtle effect that will not detract from worship.

Much like the gestation of a new human life, construction of the new manuals (keyboards), stops, pedals and amplifiers will take up to nine months. Please prayerfully consider giving a gift toward this project.

If we were to build a new instrument from the pedals up, we could expect a cost approaching \$3,000,000.00. Because we are integrating digital technology with pipes, we have a far more achievable goal of \$398,000.00. We will begin displaying charts from which donors may purchase a single key or a stop in honor of or in memory of someone (or simply to the Glory of God). We are well underway with this project with a seed money gift of \$100,000. We give thanks to God for this generosity in starting the campaign.



Because every donation is “instrumental,” we seek everyone’s support to lift our voices and music to heaven. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Jon or me directly. Thank you for your consideration and participation in this exciting project!

Blessings,

Ben Ball

Director of Worship and Music

Lenten Worship Schedule



We will be having midweek Lenten worship services on Wednesdays beginning on Ash Wednesday, February 22, and leading up to Holy Week and the celebration of Easter. These Wednesday services will be held in the church at 12:00pm and at 6:30pm on February 22 and on March 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29. A light fellowship meal will be shared each Wednesday at 5:30pm.

Keep an eye on our weekly announcements bulletin for further details about the individual Lenten services as well as information about our schedule of worship services for Holy Week and Easter.