

Deadline for submissions  
is the 15<sup>th</sup> 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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[www.smlcs.org](http://www.smlcs.org)

with Jesus through baptism into death in order that, just as He was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." (Romans 6:4)

Pastor Jon

**Palm Sunday**

- Saturday, April 1 at 5:30pm in the church
- Sunday, April 2 at 10:00am in the gymnasium

**Maundy Thursday** – April 6 at noon and 6:30pm

**Good Friday** – April 7 at noon and 6:30pm

**Easter**

- Saturday, April 8 at 5:30pm
- Sunday, April 9 at 8:00, 9:30, 11:00am

# The Messenger

*From the Pastor*

*Rev. Jon Zehnder*

*"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)*

I love this story that John Ortberg tells: "I had this odd day last week. I went to an early breakfast meeting with a staff member, and I waited a while, but they didn't show up. Have you ever had that happen? I didn't think a lot about it because I've certainly been on the other end of that one, but later on in the morning I had another appointment with a ministry leader from out of town who asked to get together, and he never showed up! I started to feel kind of bad, but I had lunch scheduled with two people I knew pretty well. I was going to commiserate with them, but neither one of them showed up! So, I had lunch all by myself.

"I was starting to feel bad. So, I went home that night, and I said to my wife, 'I just felt all day like nobody wanted to be with me.' When I looked, she wasn't there; she was in the other room watching a show called *The Bachelor*. I asked her, 'Why are you out there watching a bachelor like him when you could be in here with a husband like me?' There are some questions you just should never ask and that's one of them."

That story got me thinking about our God of grace and His desire to be with us and His plan to accomplish that. Then, what it must be like for God when He wants to be with the people He redeemed and they don't want to be with Him? What must it be like for our Heavenly Father when He wants to be with me and you, but we don't show up?

Friends, there is a joy in knowing that God invested the life of His own Son, our Savior Jesus, in order to make us His own, to reconcile our relationship in Him, to make us into "new creations" who live by faith and are empowered by grace. "We have been buried

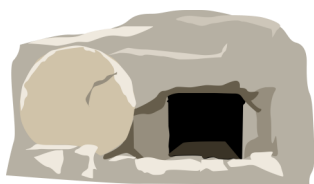


## From Our Principal

Kati Miser



From the very start of His ministry on earth, Jesus proclaimed God's message of unconditional love and forgiveness. **Our mission at SMLS is to educate children and touch families' lives with that same awesome, unconditional love of Jesus Christ.** Both the darkness of Good Friday (when Jesus suffered and died) and the glory of Easter (when Jesus rose from death) happen at the beginning of this month of April. God's perfect love could not end on a cross or be held in a grave. God still transforms our moments of darkness into opportunities for sharing the joy of God's message of unconditional love and forgiveness. Together we proclaim, "Christ is risen! Alleluia!"



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.

Keep an eye out for reports from the SMLS auction event which took place on Saturday, March 25. Thanks to all who organized and participated in this event!

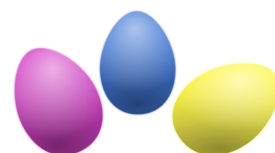
## From the Director of Little Saints

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 28 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 2023. We promise to share pictures during the Sunday services in May.

Little Saints will be closed April 6 and 7 in observance of the **Easter** holiday. Before our long weekend, all of Little Saints will be celebrating Easter with the traditional egg hunts and other fun activities. Easter is always a favorite holiday of the little ones; finding brightly colored eggs filled with treats is so exciting!



## From the Board of Human Care

We are very thankful to our St. Michael family and friends who so consistently and lovingly provide funds and items each month for each organization that the board of human care has chosen. This month, we are supporting Eva's Closet and Foundation. They provide clothing, shoes, household goods, food, school uniforms, supplies and baby accessories at no cost to children and families in need in Southwest Florida. If you would like to support this organization, please note "Eva's Closet" on the memo section of your check, or you may put your offering in an envelope and mark it "Eva's Closet." We so appreciate you considering this group. Thank you from your board of human care.



## 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 Jesus' death and resurrection. 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.

**thrivent®**



### Palm Sunday Help Needed

Want to assist with the BBQ on Palm Sunday, April 2? Contact Chuck Oliver if you would like to help with setup or teardown, to bring a dessert to share or to assist in the kitchen in some way. You can reach Chuck at (239) 292-6058 or at [charliet1333@gmail.com](mailto:charliet1333@gmail.com).

### 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. This study will be finishing up *What the Women Saw* on RightNow Media. It will not meet on April 6. Its next study will be based on *The Bible Unearthed* 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](http://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. The next session will be launching on May 2. Anyone who is separated or divorced can join any session. This group is available online and in-person. Register at [www.divorcecare.org](http://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

### Sunday Educational Hour on April 2 and 9

We will not be holding Sunday school or Bible classes on Palm Sunday or Easter Sunday due to our worship services being at 10:00am on Palm Sunday and at 8:00am, 9:30am and 11:00am on Easter.



## *Saint Michael Youth Ministries*

# *Saint Michael Youth Ministries*

### Youth DCE Call Committee Update

Since applying in February for a DCE intern from Concordia University Irvine, we have been praying for God's will to be done. There were two congregations applying for every 1 DCE intern in the Concordia University System. We have just recently heard that we **will not** be getting an intern this summer. Thank you for continuing to keep this process in prayer.

### 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 FL-GA District for a week of camp fun as well as serving in the community around Gainesville. Parent drivers will leave Sunday, June 18 in the late morning, and parent drivers will come and get youth on Friday, June 23 around noon. Six students have signed up so far, but you can still register for \$695. Payments can be made with a deposit of \$150 to hold your spot. Points can be used to help pay for this event. Please contact Lori Schwan with any questions.

### High School Summer Servant Event to Georgia

Let's get away June 10-16 to retreat, serve and connect with each other in the mountains of Blairsville, Georgia. Joe and Sue Clark have opened their home to us while we serve the area in various ways through All Saints Lutheran's connections. We will hike, tube in the Chattahoochee River and white water raft the Nantahala River. The all-inclusive cost is \$500. We have extended the sign up until we fill up to the limited 15 spots for students going into ninth grade through college (and adult chaperones). Payments can be made with a deposit of \$150 to hold your spot. Points can be used to help pay for this event. Please contact Lori Schwan with any questions.

### 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 April, we will have fun and grow in faith together and take advantage of daylight saving time to play outside. Now that Lent is over, we will return to our schedule of 6:00-8:00pm. Thank you for all of your support for our youth-led worship service.



### Seventh and Eighth Grade Confirmation with Parents

We will continue covering the Lord's Prayer this month and then begin our study of the Lord's Supper. 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 2 Kings.

### 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**

As Martin Luther said, “*Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world.*” You have absolutely overwhelmed me with your excited generosity in our **organ campaign**. Within five short weeks of the project’s unveiling, which happened at the end of January, we hit more than 50% of the overall funds required. The project continues to flourish, and we have recently (in mid-March) had the joy of receiving a matching pledge challenge from an anonymous donor in the congregation. This challenge is for our congregation to go above and beyond their regular tithe or percentage giving between now and Palm Sunday with up to \$50,000 in donations towards the “new” organ fund being matched. I put “new” in quotations here for a very specific purpose. As you probably know, our new organ will be a hybrid-combination organ of both speaking pipes and digital voices which will sound from specialty speaker cabinets (hidden from sight in the room behind the current pipework). It was very important to me in the initial design of the instrument to retain as much of the current pipe organ as possible to honor those who came before and made sacrifices to install that instrument originally. This will be a renewal of those portions of the current organ while we digitally expand the tonal capabilities of the new organ with many digital sounds.



Another frequently asked question has come up: “Ben, why have you put the **smaller, digital organ** in the sanctuary?” Another great question! The simple answer is that the current pipe organ has become unreliable. When the organist pushes a button or activates a stop, we need it to respond the way it is designed to function. Because of some issues with the current console and underlying mechanics of the organ, we organists can never know if it will actually work when we push the button or activate a stop. It makes us more than a bit anxious as we are trying to focus on making music which will glorify God but are struggling through the mechanics of the organ and whether they will work in that moment. The smaller Allen organ (which is all digital sounds) fulfills this need in being a reliable instrument for the organists of the congregation. This organ has a permanent home over in the fine arts department and will be used for joint services in the gymnasium as the need arises but is serving a crucial service for the interim time until the new organ arrives one day. Another question from many folks is, “Once we order the organ (which will be when we hit 100% of the fundraising), how long does it take until it arrives?” The quick answer is 10-11 months. One of the reasons I love the Allen Organ Company is that they build everything from scratch in their Pennsylvania factory, from the smallest computer circuitry boards to the entirety of the wood case and each individual key. They stand behind their instruments with unparalleled service. Please continue to ask questions! I love to be nerdy and chat about organs!

From time to time I will share videos (either from worship or recorded at other times) and post to my **YouTube channel**. If you would like to watch these videos, simply go to YouTube and type in “[BenBallOrganistSML](#)” (no spaces) and search. You will know you are on the correct channel or video when you see the picture on the right next to my name. If you want to be notified when a new video is posted, hit the “subscribe” button.



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## Vacation Bible Connection



Thursday through Sunday, **July 13 to 16**, we are reviving our summer opportunity to grow in faith with people of all ages in our community! Our theme this year will be Holy Week where we will walk in the steps of Jesus. Join us Thursday and Friday nights from 5:30-8:00pm to learn and grow from Jesus in fun and creative ways (dinner is provided). Then, come back on Saturday as we serve like Jesus through projects around Fort Myers. We’ll rise like Jesus on Sunday with worship, small group time, a meal and lots of fun. Like God’s gift of heaven, this time to connect with Jesus and others is totally FREE! **Registration will begin in April**. Contact Lori Schwan ([lori.schwan@gsmlcs.org](mailto:lori.schwan@gsmlcs.org)) if you are interested in volunteering on our team; there is a place for everyone (behind the scenes or working directly with kids, teens or adults).

## From the Director of Worship & Music

**Ben Ball**

*(continued from page 5)*

### Update on the Student Scholarship Fund:

As you read in last month's newsletter, it is very important to me to be raising up the future generation of musicians. If you have attended one of our Wednesday noontime services, you have been blessed to hear some of our young students offering their instruments and voices in worship. Thank you for all the support you have given to them following the services! For most of them, this was their first time playing solo in front of a group. They were all quite nervous, but, as you heard for yourself, they did quite well. It is my desire to start this new scholarship campaign to provide some of our students with weekly professional lessons. Together with the fine arts faculty, we have crafted an idea of a scholarship fund for just such an opportunity.

Students would

- 1) Apply and audition with the fine arts faculty to be accepted into the program.
- 2) Have an accountability advisor with the private lesson teacher (to make sure they are making good progress and taking it seriously).
- 3) Be required to offer a special piece in our worship services two times per semester.

The joy of this is that it is a win-win situation: it benefits our church in worship, and it benefits the fine arts program of our school. If this is something you would be interested in sponsoring, please chat with me directly, or make an offering designated to "*Acct #9105 Private Music Lesson Scholarship*." I appreciate your support in this as we build up the Kingdom from generation to generation!

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

Blessings,

Ben Ball

Director of Worship and Music



## Hospitality Team



We are looking to rebuild our hospitality volunteer team. The hospitality team serves at celebration of life services. Tasks will vary at each celebration service (as every service is different), but tasks usually include reception setup and cleanup, assisting with service setup in the sanctuary, sound booth and slides during the service, washing tablecloths, etc. Please email Lori Schwan at [lori.schwan@gsmlcs.org](mailto:lori.schwan@gsmlcs.org) if you are interested in joining the team.

## Congregational Meetings

There are a variety of congregational meetings scheduled in the upcoming weeks where communicant and winter associate members will have an opportunity to sign the church constitution and bylaws. Signing the constitution and bylaws is a requirement of any member who desires to vote on the pastoral call.

- Saturday, April 1 at 6:30pm in the sanctuary
- Sunday, April 2 at 11:15am in the gym
- Wednesday, April 12 at 5:30pm in the sanctuary (This meeting will include an overview of the pastoral candidates.)
- Sunday, April 16 at 9:20am in the cafeteria (This is our voter's meeting where all communicant members and winter associate members who have signed the constitution will vote on the pastoral call.)

