

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



**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](http://www.smlcs.org)

# The Messenger

*From the Pastor*

*Rev. Jon Zehnder*

## **"It's All about Family"**

On May 14, we celebrate Mother's Day. Then two weeks later on May 28, we celebrate Pentecost. What these two great days have in common is that they are all about family. We bless God for our moms and all the ways they love and bless us, and then we bless God for making us a part of a spiritual family called the Church!

God's plan and desire has always been to be "with us," and He has recorded His plan and purpose for doing just that in the Bible where we can read the account of God in His grace saving, calling, adopting and gathering a family to Himself – a family that would love Him in return, honor Him and live with Him now and forever.

So, we have been called by God not just to believe but to **belong** to the family of God. Maybe you remember hearing that there are 58 references to "one another" in the Bible, all talking about how we ought to treat each other in the family of God, but here are the four that I would venture to say we have been privileged to see lived out for us by our moms (or truths that our moms often reminded us of):

- ***Love one another.***
- ***Encourage one another.***
- ***Serve one another.***
- ***Pray for one another.***

What we celebrate at Pentecost is that the power of our adoption into the family of God came by way of the work of the Holy Spirit in our

hearts and lives. This gives us the faith to believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths that Jesus is our Savior. Being included in God's family is the highest honor and privilege we will ever receive.

One of the most important lessons many of our Moms wanted us to learn is **how** to love others because she knew that it is in loving that we are the most like our Heavenly Father. Thanks for teaching us that lesson, Mom!



*Pastor Jon*

## From Our Principal

Kati Miser



The month of May brings thoughts of, “Summer vacation is almost here!” Celebrations mark those final days of school and graduation. Jesus has been here with us and will follow us into our summer activities. **Our mission is to educate children and touch families’ lives with that awesome love of our Lord Jesus Christ!** Thank God for all the blessings of the 2022-2023 school year as we have experienced His love and presence. As the love of Jesus continues to

touch the relationships in this place even during the summer, we are indeed given motivation beyond this place to want to share that love, making disciples for life.

Did you know that the PTL is sponsoring a teacher appreciation week May 22-26? What a great time to send a note to a teacher!

Our biggest fundraiser, the SMLS auction, took place this year on March 25. There were over 330 guests who helped raise over \$130,000 to benefit our children! Thanks to their generosity, in addition to providing funds for the usual school expenses, extra funds were raised to purchase new athletic uniforms for five teams along with \$6,000 that will go towards a new preschool playground for our pre-k 3 and pre-k 4 classes.

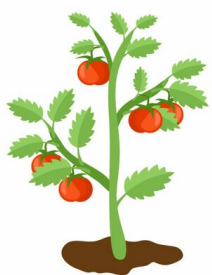


**Applications for the 2023-2024 school year are open.** Click the “admissions” tab at the top of our website. Give me a call if you want to invite a friend, neighbor or family member for a tour to experience Saint Michael Lutheran School firsthand.

## From the Director of Little Saints

Stacie Thompson

Another school year is winding down for the older 2’s rooms, and soon we will close out the year with our end of year party to celebrate and say goodbye. We will miss having these friends in our building, but we will still see each other around campus as many will move on to pre-k 3 in the SMLS main building.



The playground will be shut down over the summer months to allow the natural elements to recuperate from constant use during the school year. We are also hoping to finally get the new storage shed during this time since our old one blew away in hurricane Ian. We hope everyone enjoyed our gardens again this spring; we have had an abundance of tomatoes and green beans this year. The kids love planting the gardens and watching them grow then sneaking a quick snack of tomatoes when the teachers are not looking. Wishing you all a blessed summer!



## From the Board of Human Care

This month, the board of human care would like your help for the people of Turkey who are struggling to put their lives back together after the earthquake they experienced. Hundreds of thousands of families are living in makeshift communities. Lutheran World Relief is providing tents, tarps, solar lights, clothing, hygiene kits, baby essential packets and many other things. It will be an ongoing project to provide aid. We can help by designating monies for **Turkey Earthquake Relief** through Lutheran World Relief. If you would like to help, please designate on an envelope or the memo section of your check, “Earthquake Relief.” Thank you for considering these people in need.



## *From the Ministry Coordinator*

**Lori Schwan**

### **Children's Ministry**

#### **Sunday School Nursery Volunteers Needed**

We are looking for volunteers who want to serve in the nursery during Sunday school to show the love of Jesus to those two years old and younger so parents can strengthen their faith during this education time. If you are interested in helping, please contact Lori Schwan.



#### ***Simply Loved Sunday School***

Both pre-k 3 through kindergarten and first through fourth grades are studying the start of the Church: "The Holy Spirit Comes," "The Community of Believers Share," "Peter and John Heal a Lame Man" and "Ananias Helps Saul." If you would like to work with kids or help out behind the scenes, please contact Lori Schwan.

### **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. There are several events that can be action teams happening this summer.

**thrivent®**

### **Palm Sunday Thank You**

Thanks to all of Chuck Oliver's team of volunteers who helped make the Palm Sunday celebration amazing. Don Hanchey's BBQ was awesome, and the desserts were great!

### **Wednesday Women's Bible Study**

Sue Clark is leading a women's Bible study, "The Women of the Bible Speak," Wednesday mornings from 10:30 to 11:30am in the ELC boardroom. The study begins on May 3 and runs through the month. If you have any questions, please contact Sue at [fmsclark13@gmail.com](mailto:fmsclark13@gmail.com).

### **Thursday 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 is currently covering *The Bible Unearthed* on RightNow Media.



### **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

### **GriefShare**

GriefShare will resume at St. Michael in the fall. Visit [GriefShare.org](https://www.GriefShare.org) for other local meetings or to sign up for daily email devotions. If you have any questions, please call Gail Schultz at (732) 991-0642.

### **DivorceCare**

A new session of DivorceCare will be meeting on Tuesdays from 11:00am -1:00pm from May 2 to August 1, 2023. Anyone who is separated or divorced can join any session. This group is available online and in-person. Register at [www.divorcecare.org](https://www.divorcecare.org). If you have any questions, please call Lori Schwan at (239) 939-1218, ext. 237.





## *Saint Michael Youth Ministries*

# *Saint Michael Youth Ministries*

### **Final Call for Middle School Summer Servant Event at Camp Luther Springs**

This is the last call to join our seven middle school students for our summer servant event at Luther Springs in Hawthorne, Florida! 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 (usually including tubing Ichetucknee Springs) 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. You can still register for \$635. Payments can be made with a deposit of \$150 to hold your spot. Students can earn points to help pay for this event. Please contact Lori Schwan with any questions.



### **Final Call for High School Summer Servant Event to Georgia**

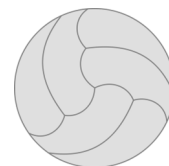
Want to join the four high school students and two adults as we retreat, serve and connect with each other in the mountains of Blairsville, Georgia? Joe and Sue Clark have opened their home to us while we serve the area in various ways through All Saints Lutheran's connections. We will hike, tube in the Chattahoochee River and white water raft the Nantahala River. The all-inclusive cost is \$500. We have extended the sign up through May 15 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.

### **Thank You, Jim Grier**

We wish God's blessings to Jim Grier and his wife as they move to northern Florida. Jim faithfully taught our students in fifth and sixth grade Sunday school for the last few years. Tiffany Roszell will continue to connect with these students as, together, they examine the hard questions. This is a place where it is safe to wonder and talk together as we see how the Holy Spirit answers these questions and empowers us to be bold for Him.

### **Wednesday Youth Nights**

In May, we will be having fun with activities that are special on our campus and will be growing in faith each Wednesday from 6:00 to 8:00pm. The activities in May will be Romans and Christians (May 3), Volleyball (May 10), Slip 'n' Slide (May 17), Grad Party (May 24) and Capture the Flag (May 31). We would appreciate it if anyone were able to sponsor any of the dinners in the month of May.



We will meet off-campus this summer from 6:00 to 8:00pm. Would you like to host a middle school Wednesday youth night in June or July for the incoming sixth through eighth graders or host Revive for the incoming ninth graders through college freshmen at your home or clubhouse? A night of fun usually includes a simple dinner, fun (an indoor or outdoor game or swimming) and devotional time. Either someone in your family or another adult or youth can share a devotion (resources can be made available to you). Receipts can be turned in to reimburse dinner costs. Let Lori know if you or someone you know might be interested. With everyone's schedules differing, numbers will fluctuate between 5 and 25. We will send out a Google form to families each week to help the host be able to estimate numbers. We are currently looking for hosts for June 7, June 14, June 21 and June 28 for middle school groups and for high school groups.

### **Graduation Blessing**



Each year, we recognize the graduates in our congregation. If you are a high school or college graduate since June of 2022, please send in a little information about your accomplishments (e.g. clubs, sports, honors) as well as future plans (education, jobs, career, etc.) to Lori Schwan ([lori.schwan@gsmlcs.org](mailto:lori.schwan@gsmlcs.org)) by May 7. We will be having a special graduate blessing on Sunday, May 14 at both the 8:00am and 10:45am worship services for our twelfth grade seniors and their parents as part of our Faith Stepping Stone program. We will have a special gift for each of our high school graduates and a cake reception in the narthex following the service.

## From the Director of Worship & Music

**Ben Ball**

*Alleluia, alleluia! Hearts to heaven and voices raise:  
Sing to God a hymn of gladness, sing to God a hymn of praise;  
He who on the cross a victim for the world's salvation bled—  
Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, now is risen from the dead.*



Happy Easter season! He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Your generosity overwhelms me! Thank you for your gifts towards the new organ fund! This is such an exciting project, and it has been quite interesting to hear all the stories of why you are giving to the project (either in memory or in honor of someone). As I write this in mid-April, the campaign (which opened the last weekend of January) has reached a significant milestone, hitting slightly more than 80% of the total goal. This is an astounding feat when you consider that it has only been basically two months! So many of you have asked all kinds of wonderful questions and generally just wanted to chat about the organ project, and I love chatting about it! More than several folks over the past few weeks heard me say, “Just wait until you hear the new organ!” I cannot wait to present to you the new organ when it arrives. Once we complete the total funding for the project, the contract will be signed, and then we will wait for about eleven months while the organ is custom built at the Allen Organ Company factory in Pennsylvania.



### New Organ Fund – Frequently Asked Question

Several have asked, “Since the new organ looks so much larger than the current one, does that mean the maintenance cost of the new organ will be much greater?” The short answer is no. For the longer explanation: the new organ will retain about 50% of the current organ’s pipework and mechanical structure. That alone means that the cost of maintenance on the new organ will be half of the current cost. The new organ will be more than 90% digital, which has virtually no cost after installation. We would have the ability to do digital enhancements and upgrades in the future if we choose to do so, but the cost of maintenance going forward will be minimal.

Thank you for all the support you showed to the kids involved musically in worship throughout Lent and Easter! It was so rewarding to have them offer their gifts in worship as well as for them to get to experience playing as a soloist in front of people. There is no greater place to obtain such experience than in a church, in my humble opinion. For most of them, this was their first time playing solo in front of a group. While they were nervous, they all did splendidly! I am planning many more instances to involve our students in the worship ministry of our church.

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

Blessings,  
Ben Ball  
Director of Worship and Music



## 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@gsmclcs.org](mailto:lori.schwan@gsmclcs.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).

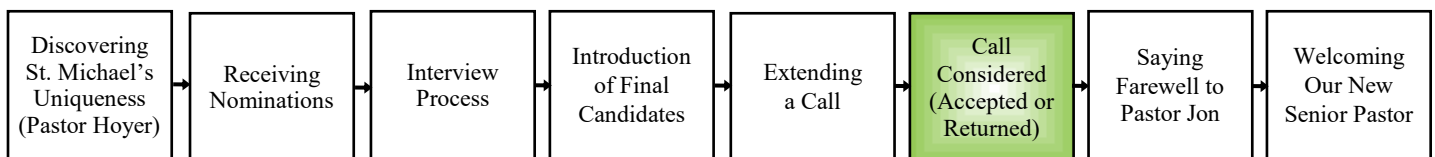
## Senior Pastor Succession

**Where we have been:** Starting in 2021, leaders of the church and school met with a ministry consultant, Pastor Jacob Hoyer, to help us understand the unique culture of our ministry, how we do ministry and how we work together. That enabled the church to develop a ministry position description and allowed us to understand the unique gifts, talents and experiences the next senior pastor will need in order to carry the ministry forward.

The board of elders worked hard and long to evaluate the 42 nominations they had received. As the list was narrowed down, top candidates were interviewed again. The top two candidates and their spouses were brought down for a visit to allow everyone at Saint Michael a chance to meet them and get to know them better before selecting one of them to call. The congregation walked together, starting on April 1, in daily Scripture and prayer regarding the call. The call meeting was held on April 16, and the congregation voted to extend the call to **Rev. Jon Thomas**.

**Where we are now:** Pastor Thomas, his wife Margaret and their daughter Isabella have been invited to visit again to make sure they have all the information they need about Saint Michael so they can prayerfully deliberate where God is calling them to serve in His kingdom (whether continuing at Saint John or coming to Saint Michael). After visiting, there is usually a two- to four-week time period where the called individual considers God's will (whether to accept or decline our call).

Please keep praying! Pray for unity, pray for grace, pray for guidance for Pastor Thomas and strength for both Saint Michael's and Saint John's church, ministry and members.



## From Rev. Jon Thomas

Pastor Zehnder, call committee and all the wonderful people of St. Michael,

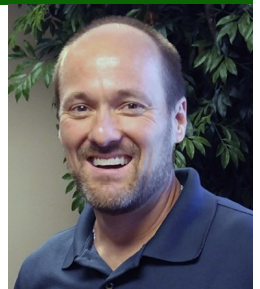
What an honor, privilege and responsibility you have bestowed to me in extending a call to serve as your next pastor. I am truly humbled by your confidence and trust in me. Thank you.

You are also to be commended for the process that you have embarked on over the last several months. In my almost 30 years of ministry, through many calls, I have not seen such a large part of the congregation take the time and effort to be a part of the process. I am impressed with the prayerful consideration and intentional deliberation you have done.

Know that my family and I are in the process of giving the same time, passion and energy considering the two calls that we now have. We have received the call documents and are going over them now.

I wish there was a way to serve both congregations as I love the people and mission here and over the last several months, have grown very fond of you and your ministry there.

I know you are praying for us. Thank you! We will look forward to visiting you again soon. In the meantime, may Jesus continue to shine down on you and through you!



## Youth Car Wash



The middle and high school youth will be holding a free car wash from 7:30am to 12:00pm on Sunday, May 7. Youth may attend worship on Saturday night. Parents will be needed to help valet and park cars. Youth and parents should keep an eye out for emails to sign up to serve. This is a great time to gain points to help pay for upcoming youth activities like the high school summer servant event and Luther Springs.