

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*

As we approach Father's Day on June 18, I am humbled in my attempts to imitate or even reflect the love, compassion, strength, kindness and forgiveness that our Heavenly Father shows to me (and also to all of you). In Jesus' parable of "The Prodigal Son" (also called "The Prodigal Sons" since both boys were disconnected from their dad, but only one chose to leave home; it is also called "The Waiting Father" since the dad is really the hero of the story), we find some principles that help us act redemptively when we are faced with a wayward child, and it reflects how our Heavenly Father deals with us. It is recorded in Luke 15:11-32 as the third of three examples showing God's love for those who are lost from Him: one out of 100 sheep, one out of ten coins and the two lost sons.

When you reread this section of Luke 15, notice that the father does not disown his sons. There is no trace of anger or retaliation; the father simply keeps on loving them and reaching out to them. The father also did not allow himself to be overcome with despair; he went on living. He didn't blame himself for his sons' actions or their choices, nor did he allow those things to destroy his life.

The father didn't chase his wayward son; he didn't pursue or hound him. He allowed his younger son to choose his path and to deal with the consequences of his decisions (in other words, he didn't rescue him). However, the father also never gave up hope. In Luke 15:20, we see the father constantly looking for the return of his son. Through it all, he kept on believing (and, I'm sure, praying) that his son would someday come to his senses and return.

Notice too that there is no evidence that the father said, "I told you so." He didn't throw his son's mistakes back into his face. Rather, he freely forgave his son and welcomed him back, throwing a party to restore his son's relationship with his older brother, the rest of the household and the community. He then even made the extra effort to reach out to the older son



to join him at his side in the celebration. That party and his older son's presence should remind us that parents and families need the support of others when suffering the pain of a wayward child.

Well, friends, there is a Father who loves like that; it is our Heavenly Father! This parable is a true picture of the love that God has toward us, His children, who so often stray, disappoint and miss opportunities to welcome the wayward home. This continued love, grace and forgiveness is ours for the sake of the Father's only begotten Son, our Savior, Jesus!

Remember the letters of "FAMILY" stand for **F**ather **A**nd **M**other, **I** **L**ove **Y**ou!

*Pastor Jon*

*From Our Principal**Kati Miser*

**At Saint Michael Lutheran School, our mission is to educate children and touch families' lives with the awesome love of our Lord, Jesus Christ!** As another school year comes to a close, we pray that our families continue to teach their children to love and to follow Jesus.



That mission continues with our summer camp which begins in June. What an opportunity to keep on proclaiming Jesus! Even if your children do not currently attend Saint Michael Lutheran School, they (and any other children you know) are invited to participate in summer camp, Vacation Bible Connect and summer Sunday school. Summer camp brochures are available in the school office, and camp director Sue Hampel (939-1218, ext. 229) is ready to answer your questions. Contact Lori Schwan (939-1218, ext. 237) about VBC or summer Sunday school.

We want to take this opportunity to thank you for all of your support throughout the school year including your encouraging words and prayers, your helpful hands and your monetary donations. Thank you in advance for continuing that support even during the summer as we prepare our campus, our budget and our calendar for the next school year.

**Online applications for the 2023-24 school year are available on our website.** To find them, click the admissions tab at the top of our website. Give me a call if you would like to invite a friend, neighbor or family member to tour and experience our school firsthand.

*From the Director of Little Saints**Stacie Thompson*

Our school year has come to an end, and we had to say goodbye to another graduating class of "twos" as they moved on from Little Saints to "the big school." It was a bittersweet time for the teachers and parents as so many of our little ones have been with us since they were infants. They have grown so fast! We hated to see them leave our building, but what an exciting time it is for our two-year-olds. They are finally "big kids now 'cause we are going to the big school!"



Summer has begun, and so has the summer fun. Our classes have moved to a summer camp feel as we work on fun summer themes like dinosaur week and camping week. We have been enjoying hanging out in our tents and making s'mores with our solar oven.



Summer is also a time to say goodbye to our teachers who are moving on or are graduating college and time to say hello to new friends. Many new and exciting changes have been taking place at Little Saints as we have already begun to prepare for a new school year. I hope you have a safe and blessed summer!

*Opportunities to Serve at Saint 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.

**Altar Guild**

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



## 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 fifth grades are continuing to study the start of the Church: "Philip Tells the Ethiopian about Jesus," "Peter Visits Cornelius," "Lydia Believes Jesus" and "Priscilla and Aquilla Help Apollos." 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.

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### 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 *Good Faith: Being a Christian When Society Thinks You Are Irrelevant and Extreme* by Kinnaman and Lyons. 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 is meeting on Tuesdays from 11:00am-1:00pm through 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.



### 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! **You can register today** at [tinyurl.com/SMLVBC2023](https://tinyurl.com/SMLVBC2023). 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).

## *Saint Michael Youth Ministries*

# *Saint Michael Youth Ministries*

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

Thank you for lifting up in prayer the following adults and middle schoolers who will join about sixty youth from around the FL-GA District for a week of camp fun including tubing Ichetucknee Springs as well as serving in the community around Gainesville from June 18 to 23. The youth attending will be Max Gatesman, Emerson Hart, Brynna Minor, Sadie Sorrells, Lily Tapia, Brody Zehnder and Jacob Schwan. The adults attending will be Janet Oliver and Lori Schwan.



### **Prayers for High School Summer Servant Event to Georgia**

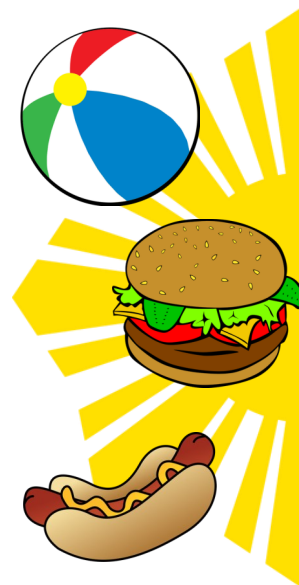
Thank you for keeping the following people in prayer as they travel to serve the community out of Blairsville, Georgia from June 9 to 16. The youth attending will be Savannah Truax, William Truax, Andrew Schwan and Tiago Passos. The adults attending will be Sue Clark, Janet Oliver and Lori Schwan.



### **Wednesday Youth Nights**

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.

| Date    | Middle school host   | High school host                                    |
|---------|--|---|
| June 7  | (Host needed)  | (Host needed)                                       |
| June 14 | (Host needed)  | (Host needed; lower attendance due to Georgia trip) |
| June 21 | (Host needed; lower attendance due to Camp Luther Springs) | (Host needed)                                       |
| June 28 | Service project at Saint Michael                           | Service project at Saint Michael                    |
| July 5  | Service project at Saint Michael                           | Service project at Saint Michael                    |
| July 12 | (Host needed)  | (Host needed)                                       |
| July 19 | (Host needed)  | Hodson family                                       |
| July 26 | (Host needed)  | (Host needed)                                       |



### **Car Wash**

Thank you for your support at the car wash last month! We raised over \$800.00 with your incredible generosity.

### **Incoming Sixth through Eighth Grade Summer Sunday School**

Join us each Sunday morning for summer Sunday school. It will be a great chance to talk about topics you've wondered about!

### **High School Summer Sunday School**

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



## From the Director of Worship & Music

Ben Ball

*Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore Him!  
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before Him.  
Let the Amen sound from His people again; gladly forever adore Him.*



As we move into the summer months, I want to take a moment to update you on the Share the Music Scholarship fund. First, thank you for all your support! Our goal for next academic year is that we will offer a weekly lesson scholarship to a minimum of four of our music students. I have chatted with several students about applying for the program in the fall, and they were ecstatic about the opportunity to study with a professional in our community. I want to highlight one student who was blessed by the program which is only in its first semester of existence. Many of you know Jacob Schwan who played at one of our Wednesday Lenten services and will be playing again soon. As a sixth grader this year, he committed to working weekly with Dr. Bryan Edgett whom you have heard in worship services many times here at Saint Michael. Bryan is a retired university music professor with a doctorate in trumpet performance, many years teaching professionally and experience playing both solo and with groups around the country. We would be matching other students up with similar professionals in the community. By becoming a part of “sharing the music,” you would be investing in the future generation of musicians.

To be considered for a Share the Music Scholarship, students must

- 1) Apply for 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 their learning seriously).
- 3) Offer a special piece in our worship services twice each semester as part of receiving the weekly lesson scholarship.

The joy of this is that it is a win-win-win situation: it benefits our church in worship, it benefits the fine arts program of our school and it benefits the future of music. 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 as we build up the Kingdom from generation to generation!



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@gsmllcs.org](mailto:ben.ball@gsmllcs.org).

Blessings,  
Ben Ball  
Director of Worship and Music



## Thrivent: June 2023 Events

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

### How Endowments Fit into Your Overall Finances and Support Your Mission

June 1 at 1:00pm

### Savvy Social Security

June 7 at 12:00pm and 7:00pm

### Financial Procrastination: Why It Happens

June 20 at 1:00pm and 8:30pm

June 22 at 7:30pm

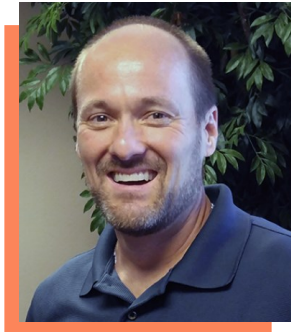
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## Senior Pastor Succession

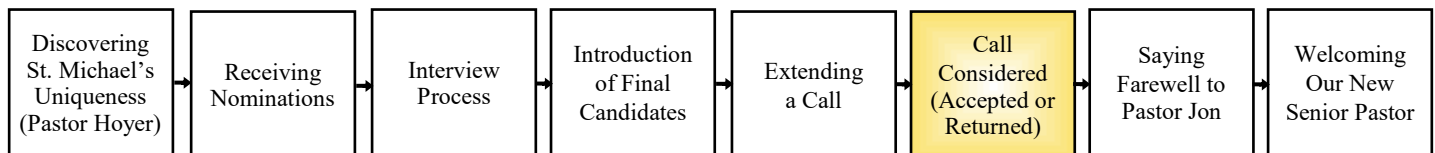
**Where we have been:** Starting in 2021, leaders of the church and school met with a ministry consultant, Pastor Jacob Hoyer, to help us understand the unique culture of our ministry, how we do ministry and how we work together. That enabled the church to develop a ministry position description and 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 visited again, meeting with key staff and leaders 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). That deliberation usually takes place in a two- to four-week time period before we will hear what Pastor Jon Thomas has determined is God's will for him, his family and his ministry (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 the Board of Human Care

To our wonderful congregation and friends, we are so thankful for your care, concern and generosity for the different organizations that the board of human care presents to you each month.

This month, we are very blessed to bring Project Dentists Care to your attention. Project Dentists Care was started in 1996 by Dr. Bill Truax and Dr. Hal Haerring. The clinic is located downtown and serves people in our community from low-income households.

Last year, Project Dentists Care provided services to almost 2,000 people. Services provided are fillings, extractions, cleanings and dentures (full and partial). These services are life-changing for the patients who receive them.

We are so thankful for your consideration of this caring organization. If you would like to further their work, please make a note on an envelope or check, "Project Dentists Care." They are very grateful for your consideration.

