

Deadline for submissions
is the 15th of each month for the
following month's newsletter.

Send to:
smlcspublications@gmail.com



Pastor Dave Bass



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

Framework with Jacob Hoyer from Clarity Navigator. The waiting and wondering will come to fruition as we move boldly and confidently into this new chapter for our congregation. And through it all, our Heavenly Father, our Savior and Friend, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit will remain with us, encouraging us, blessing us and sending us. Merry CHRISTmas to you and your family! May the joy of this holy season resonate with you now and forever.

Joy to the world in Jesus' name,

Pastor Dave



The Messenger

From the Pastor

Rev. Dave Bass

Waiting and Wondering to Christmas

Waiting and Wondering has been the theme of our Advent worship which has been preparing us for the celebration of Christmas. Waiting seems to be a theme throughout our life. When we begin our life as children, we've no doubt spoken the words, "I can't wait till I grow up." And as we grow and mature, we realize how much waiting becomes part of our life. According to a June 2022 article by waitwhile.com, Americans spend roughly thirty-seven billion hours each year just waiting. We wait in line at retail stores, for restaurant reservations, for doctors' appointments, at the airport, at ballgames, at music venues... and the list goes on!

And in this waiting, we grow impatient. The same is also true in our spiritual life. As a matter of fact, it's something St. Peter had to address in his second epistle written around the year A.D. 65. Why? People were already wondering when the Lord would return in glory. And because Jesus had not yet returned in glory and power, early Christians were mocked for their belief. So, Peter writes to encourage them and us. "In the last days, scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, 'Where is this 'coming' [Jesus] promised?' Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 2 Peter 3:3-4.

People are still asking that question today. If Jesus promised to return one day, where is He? For us as Christians, we are reminded that our Lord is present as He has promised us in His Word, the Bible, and in His Sacraments, Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. He is also present in the fellowship and worship of His gathered people, the Church. What exactly does that look like for us?

I will be sharing more information with you in 2024 about the unique mission and ministry plans for St. Michael as we continue the Vision



*From the Principal**Kati Miser*

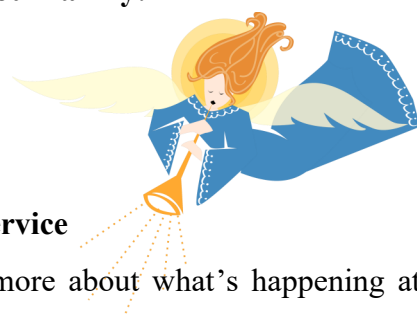
Transformation is this school year's theme. As we celebrate the Christmas season with our families, think about this: two ordinary people were transformed into the parents of God's Son, a simple stable was transformed into a palace, a humble manger became the King's throne and timid shepherds were transformed into bold messengers! So, Jesus, our Savior, was born to transform *our* lives. Experience this transformation by reading the Christmas story to your family and talking about how Jesus has transformed *you*. Let's continue to proclaim our



mission at SMLS: **to educate children and touch families' lives with the awesome love of Jesus Christ!** Your daily prayers for SMLS are so appreciated as we continue to share that Good News with our children, families and community. As a matter of fact, we would encourage you during the Christmas season to send cards or notes to our staff. **A blessed Christmas to you and your family!**

This month, you can support SMLS through the following events. Call the Saint Michael office if you would like more information.

- December 11-15 **Little Christmas Shoppe**
- December 19 at 1:30pm **Band and Choir Christmas Concert**
- December 20 at 6:30pm **Kindergarten and 1st Grade Lead Advent Service**



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

Applications for the 2024-25 school year are now being received. 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*

Happy holidays, everyone! This is the time of year to be thankful, and the **Animal Refuge Center (ARC)** in North Fort Myers is so very thankful for all of the donations again this year. Every year, they look forward to seeing us as we pull in with a carload packed to the roof of badly needed food and supplies for the animals. Thank you to everyone for being so generous!

Little Saints celebrated Christmas with our students and their families on Thursday, November 30 from 4:00-5:30pm at Little Saints. We had games, dancing, cookies and yes, Santa even joined us this year! The families enjoyed this opportunity to spend time with the children and with each other.



2023 has been a peacefully quiet year for us at Little Saints, and after the last few years we are thankful for that. I want to extend a big **"thank you" to all of the staff at Little Saints** for working so hard every day to give the best care and education to our children and families. You are truly a blessing to our school and what makes Little Saints so special.

May God's blessings be upon you in the new year!

*LWML Cookie Extravaganza*

LWML will be selling cookies again this year! Mark your calendars for **December 9 and 10**. Support the LWML by purchasing delicious Christmas baked goods. You can also help us by baking your favorite cookies and breads and bringing them to the school on Friday, December 8 from 8:00am – 3:00pm or to the gym on Saturday, December 9 from 10:00 – 10:30am.

From the Ministry Coordinator

Lori Schwan

Thrivent Financial Sponsors Needed Now

Before your \$500 for two Action Teams expires on December 31, 2023, consider applying to sponsor one of over 25 educational events, fundraisers or service projects happening this month. You can apply for a team for activities that will be happening in the new year too! Please contact Lori Schwan if you are interested in sponsoring.

Sunday School and Sunday Bible Studies

Sunday school and Sunday Bible studies will only be happening in December on December 3 and 10. Normal schedules will resume on Sunday, January 7.



GriefShare

GriefShare is a friendly, caring group of people who will walk alongside you through one of life's most difficult experiences, the loss of someone close. GriefShare's new session will run on Saturdays from 9:00-11:00am from January 20 through April 13 in Pastor Dave's conference room. You may join any session. Please register at [GriefShare.org](https://www.griefshare.org). If you have any questions, please contact Gail Schultz at gail1370@aol.com.

DivorceCare: Surviving the Holidays

After separation or divorce, your Thanksgiving or Christmas holidays won't look the same as they used to. Traditions change. Some family members won't be there. Social gatherings can feel stressful, but "DivorceCare: Surviving the Holidays" can help. This special DivorceCare class will meet on Tuesday, December 5 from 11:00am-1:00pm. This group will be online and in-person. Please register at www.divorcecare.org.

Wondering to Bethlehem Advent Books

If you haven't picked up your copy of *Wondering to Bethlehem*, please get your copy from the narthex. We will be progressing through this book as a congregation throughout Advent.



From the Director of Children & Family Ministries

Katy Bass

Advent Event

Thank you to all who helped make our Advent wreath-making event a blessing to our families and homebound members! Remember to save your Styrofoam wreath when you are finished with it in order to reuse next year.

Sunday School: Nursery through Sixth Grade

- Kids two years old and younger are cared for in the sanctuary nursery.
- Kids three years old through fourth grade will be rehearsing for the Christmas Eve family service and learning about our Savior's birth.
- Kids in fifth and sixth grade are studying questions they come up with about faith.
- Please contact Katy Bass if you are interested in volunteering with the kids or behind the scenes.



Christmas Eve Family Worship

To prepare for our child-friendly service on Christmas Eve at 5:30pm, we'll email out a link to the songs so kids can practice at home. If you want your elementary school-age child to have a speaking part, to help with technology or to help hand out bulletins, contact Katy Bass at katy.bass@gsmllcs.org or (409) 790-9835. Please let her know if you would like to help with the service yourself. There will be a rehearsal on Saturday, December 23 at 10:00am with a pizza party to follow.

Kids Serving

Our Sunday school kids will once again be partnering with Lutheran Services of Florida for their toy drive that will help families in our community who don't have the extra money to buy gifts for their kids. If you are in the congregation and want to help with this Thrivent Action Team by shopping and donating a new toy for a child, please bring it by December 3.

Saint Michael Youth Ministries

Saint Michael Youth Ministries

Middle School and High School Gatherings

The seven middle schoolers who attended the LCMS FL-GA District Youth Gathering had a great time growing in their faith as we learned how God stitches us together. Thanks to the three high schoolers who attended the Youth Leadership Event. A very special thank you to Joel Zehnder who donated his time to chaperone. Thank you to everyone for your prayers.

Seventh and Eighth Grade Confirmation with Parents

Seventh and eighth grade students and their parents will continue to study application of the fifth commandment (suicide and bullying) on December 3 and 10 during Sunday school in the education building, room 48 (Mrs. Weaver's room).



High School Sunday School

Join us in the youth room as our journey of walking through the Old Testament continues in 2 Chronicles.

Wednesday Youth Nights

Each Wednesday, middle and high school students grow in their faith from 6:00-8:00pm with dinner, games and small group devotions. If you would like to volunteer or to sponsor a meal, please contact Lori Schwan.

Progressive Servant Event

On Sunday, December 17, the youth will gather in the cafeteria for lunch at 11:30am following the combined worship service. We will then go to Target to shop for the 10- to 17-year-olds who are in the Oasis Youth Shelter. We will return to St. Michael by 1:30pm. We will need lots of drivers to sign up via the weekly Google Form. Monetary donations can be made to offset the costs of these gifts. Bring them that night or drop them in the offering plate with "Oasis Youth Shelter" on the memo line. We will wrap the gifts during our regular Wednesday youth night on December 20.

Decorating the Church for Christmas

Youth are invited to help decorate the church for Christmas on Saturday, December 2 at 9:00am. Donuts will be provided along with service hours and points. We expect to be finished around lunchtime.

High School Summer Servant Event at Lutherock

The FL-GA District will be sponsoring a summer servant event for current eighth through twelfth grade students on July 13-20 at Lutherock in North Carolina. People must sign up by Sunday, December 3 with a \$150 down payment. The total cost without transportation is \$575. Points can be used. Additional information will be shared this month.



Middle School Summer Servant Event

Save the date for the Middle School Summer Youth Servant Event at Luther Springs on June 23-28.

Rock the Universe

On Saturday, January 27, middle and high school students (along with adult chaperones) will be going to Rock the Universe at Universal Studios. They will meet at Saint Michael on Saturday at 10:30am to depart on a bus, stop for lunch on the way and be in the park from 4:00pm-1:00am watching concerts and riding rides. After the park closes, they will head home, returning early Sunday morning around 4:30am. The cost will be \$145 which includes park ticket, bus and snack. The registration and payment must be submitted to Lori Schwan by Wednesday, January 10.

Luminaries for Christmas Eve

Youth will be making, setting up, igniting and cleaning up 400 luminaries for Christmas Eve. Assembly will be on Saturday, December 23 at 10:00am with a lunch of pizza to follow. If you will be here on Christmas Eve, we could use you and any adults to help with setup (4:00pm), lighting (5:45pm) and cleanup (midnight). Please sign up through the Google Form that will be sent out.



From the Director of Worship & Music

Ben Ball

*"The advent of our King our prayers must now employ,
And we must hymns of welcome sing in strains of holy joy.
All glory to the Son who comes to set us free
With Father, Spirit, ever one through all eternity."
— text by Charles Coffin (1676-1749)*



Thank you to everyone who came to our second annual ***Sounds of the Christmas Season*** concert on December 1. It was a great evening, and Eva's Closet received quite a Christmas blessing from Saint Michael! Thank you. I cannot wait to see how we expand next year!

What a busy month we have ahead here at Saint Michael! There is quite literally music everywhere around campus from the elementary choirs and bands to the weekday chapel services to the middle school band, choir and orchestra to the classrooms playing music during their various activities, all the extra rehearsals... and then all the church music! It's a glorious sound rising together in worship of our coming King.

A Service of Lessons and Carols

On Sunday, December 17, we will have one combined worship service at 10:00am. That morning, our worship will be led by the entire worship and music ministry of Saint Michael in a special worship called *A Service of Lessons and Carols* which alternates between Scriptures and music to tell the story of Advent and Christmas.

We received an **update on the new organ** from the Allen Organ Company in Pennsylvania. They will finish our instrument sometime in early- to mid-May, but, due to the already scheduled installation of other instruments as well as activities on our campus, we will not install the organ here at Saint Michael until July. This came as welcome news to me as I was going over the calendar to see if it would even be possible to install prior to the end of the school year... and it was not! I will have more updates as the months fly by, but that is what we know at this point. Thank you for your continued enthusiasm for the project. The official dedication concert for our new organ will be next fall.

Please continue to reach out to me at any time with questions or concerns or to let me know your favorite hymns. My church email address is ben.ball@gsmllcs.org.

Blessings,
Ben Ball
Director of Worship and Music



Upcoming Special Worship Services

Midweek Worship - Wednesdays at 6:30pm

- December 6 - **Advent Worship**
- December 13 - **Blue Christmas**
- December 20 - **Kdg. and 1st Grade Christmas**

A Service of Lessons and Carols

- Sunday, December 17 at 10:00am

Final Weekend in Advent

- Saturday, December 23 at 5:30pm
- Sunday, December 24 at 10:00am

Christmas Eve Worship - Sunday, December 24

- 5:30pm - Family Service
- 7:30pm and 11:00pm - Candlelight Services

Christmas Day Worship

- Monday, December 25 at 10:00am

New Year's Worship

- Saturday, December 30 at 5:30pm
- Sunday, December 31 at 10:00am

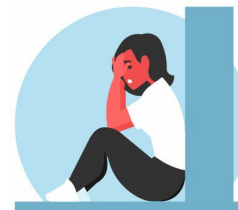
From the Faith Community Nurse

Tammy Zinn

Dear friends and family at Saint Michael Lutheran Church,

During this time of year, social norms set the expectations that we are to be joyful during the holidays, yet many of us are not. We may feel a sense of anxiety or depression from the busyness of the holiday season, and some of us are grieving loved ones who have passed. These emotions can leave us feeling overwhelmed and blue.

Slow down, and take a deep breath.



Give yourself permission to take time for yourself. Here are tips for practicing self-care during the holidays:

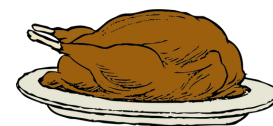
- Take time to sit quietly. Sometimes self-care can be as simple as taking a few minutes to stop, sit and breathe. Whether we can find five minutes or 30 minutes to take a break, it can make a world of difference for our well-being. Find ways to create alone time (pray, read or meditate). Take inventory on what really matters.
- Tap into a sense of play/relaxation. It can be easy to become caught up in all the logistics that the season requires, constantly ticking things off the to-do lists. Before we know it, the holidays have become less of a celebration and more of a chore. Put the list down, and take time to play or relax. Make the gift wrapping or decoration time fun, watch sentimental Christmas movies, read a book, have a cup of coffee with a friend or volunteer. Whatever it is, making this a priority can help bring balance to a stressful or lonely season.
- Care for the body. During the holidays, create personal wellness: get rest, eat a healthy diet and exercise.
- Practice letting go of expectations. Sometimes, the best act of holiday self-care we can give ourselves is to *work on letting go*. Work on letting go of the expectations we often set for ourselves at this time of year, fixed ideas created in our mind that might not match how life plays out.

As wonderful as the holidays are, they can still be stressful and cause us to be blue. Caring for yourself is essential to thrive mentally, physically and spiritually. Stay connected! Attend church service, join a small group and be in fellowship.

God's blessings and good health to you,
Tammy Zinn
Faith Community Nurse

From the Board of Human Care

The board of human care would like to provide gift cards to the over 70 families who will need help providing a Christmas meal for themselves and their families. If you would like to contribute to this ministry, please write "BOHC - Christmas Meal" on the memo line of your check or on the envelope. The board of human care is thankful for your thoughtfulness and your giving hearts!



Christmas Poinsettias

Saint Michael youth will once again be selling poinsettias to raise money for our youth ministry. Instead of the eight-inch pots we've had in the past, we will be selling six-inch pots for \$10. We will have a limited number of plants that can be ordered to be picked up before Christmas beginning November 29. In addition, there will be plants that can be purchased to beautify our sanctuary in honor or memory of a loved one and be picked up after Christmas. Orders can be placed with a youth or by filling out one of the bulletin inserts.

