

Volume 15, Issue 2
February 2024

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

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The Messenger

From the Pastor

Rev. Dave Bass

Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day are sharing the same date for the first time since 2018. For those of you who are curious, the same confluence happened in 1945, 1934 and 1923. After this year, it will happen once more before the century is over: in 2029. For us as Christians, both Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday hold special but different values for us.

The symbol for Valentine's Day love is a shape recognized by young and old

alike: the shape of a heart . Either drawn on paper or symbolized by the joining of your fingers and thumbs on both hands, this shape is easily recognized



. It's a near-universal symbol for love expressed between a husband and wife, between parents and children or between best friends. However, this shape does not capture the full extent and definition of love.

On Ash Wednesday, we begin the Lenten journey alongside Christians all over the world which leads us to love not in the shape of a heart but in the shape



of the cross. St. John describes it this way: "This is how God's love was revealed among us: God sent His one and only Son into the world so that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9).

During the 40 days of Lent, the St. Michael family will be walking through a sermon series entitled "Guided to the Cross." Together as the people of God, we will come to understand how Jesus and His suffering on the cross changes us not only here in time but for all eternity. We will be reminded that it is only by way of Jesus' cross that we have access to the divine and eternal love of God the Father.

It is only by way of Jesus' cross that our home in eternity is being prepared for us. It is only by way of Jesus' cross that we learn what it means for us to also take up our cross and follow Him faithfully to fulfill what He has called us to: be witnesses and disciples. Unlike Valentine's Day love (which can often seem conditional and is highlighted one day a year), the love of God the Father shown to us through Jesus, the Son of God, and strengthened by the Holy Spirit is free; this love is faithful; this love is everlasting. So, may your Valentine's Day be filled with love, but may your Ash Wednesday and Lenten journey find its focus on God's great gift of love to all: Jesus.

Pastor Dave

From the Principal

Kati Miser



O the wonderful cross! O the wonderful cross!
All who gather here by grace draw near
And bless Your name!

As the season of Lent quickly approaches, we as Christians are drawn to the cross and its significance in our lives. How important is it for your children, grandchildren or neighborhood children to know about Jesus and His saving love? At St. Michael Lutheran School, **our mission is to educate children and touch families' lives with the love of Jesus Christ.** A vital part of that mission is to provide parents with a strong Christian support network in a home-school partnership. The closer that we are drawn to the cross the more transformed our lives become and the more influential we are on those around us.

This month, you can support SMLS through our **Grandparents' Day** on Friday, February 16. Next month will be our annual **SMLS Auction** on Saturday, March 16. Call the St. Michael office if you would like more information.

Let's create a **buzz** around town about our wonderful school! Post SMLS reviews on Facebook, Instagram and other websites to help prospective families learn about St. Michael. Please **share** your stories about the impact St. Michael has had on your family. Thank you also for all the personal referrals you have made to families, friends and acquaintances.

We are accepting new online applications for 2024-25 on our website. You can begin by clicking 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 St. Michael Lutheran School firsthand.



From the Director of Little Saints

Stacie Thompson



Our annual **Winter Day** was on January 26. 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 3 from 5:00-7:00pm. This year, we are quite excited that our dance will be a masquerade ball. Our gym will be transformed into a ballroom complete with fairy lights. 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 you know anyone who has a community-based job like a police officer, firefighter, veterinarian, doctor, nurse or garbage man and who would like to come and speak to the kids, please let us know.



From the Board of Human Care

The board of human care has chosen **Harry Chapin Food Bank** to support this month. They are celebrating 40 years of serving children, families and seniors in a five-county area. Harry Chapin Food Bank was established in 1983 and was known at that time as Lee County Food Co-op. 19% of their clientele are seniors and 32% are children. Harry Chapin Food Bank helps working families that are struggling to make ends meet.

If you would like to be a part of helping their organization this month, please write "Harry Chapin" in the memo section of your check or enclose your donation in an envelope marked "Harry Chapin." Our board is very thankful to have a congregation that looks at all of God's children and strives to help and pray. We thank you very much!

From the Ministry Coordinator

Lori Schwan

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 current session is meeting on Saturdays from 9:00-11:00am through April 13 in Pastor Dave's conference room. You may join any session. Please register at GriefShare.org. If you have any questions, please contact Gail Schultz at gail1370@aol.com.



DivorceCare

DivorceCare is currently meeting on Tuesdays from 11:00am-1:00pm through April 9, 2024. Anyone who is separated or divorced can join any session. This group is available online and in-person. You can register at www.divorcecare.org. If you have any questions, please call Lori Schwan at (239) 939-1218, ext. 237.

Thrivent Financial Members

If you own a Thrivent Financial Product, you can give \$250 two times without giving any of your money. Contact Lori Schwan to see how you can partner for a fundraiser, service project or an educational Thrivent Action Team. Those with Choice Dollars from 2023 can direct them through March 31, 2024.

thrivent®

Sunday Marriage Enrichment

Anyone is welcome to join any Sunday morning at the boat table in the St. Michael office for the marriage study *Love and Respect Building Blocks* by Emerson Eggerichs.

Sunday Adult Bible Class

Join us Sunday morning in the cafeteria to study *One Christ, Many Creeds*, a look at various denominations in the Christian church. If you can't be there in person, a Zoom option is also available. Join Zoom meeting ID 305 113 7001 with password "church".

Sunday Women's Bible Study

This women's Bible study, *Praying the Names of God*, will focus on a specific name of God each week and how they can use it as a focus of prayer. Priscilla Flynn looks forward to welcoming you on Sunday mornings in Pastor Dave's conference room.

Wednesday Women's Bible Study

This women's group meets on Wednesdays at 10:30-11:30am in the Early Learning Center boardroom as they study the book *His Last Words* by Kim Erickson.

Wednesday Evening Adult Bible Study

This group usually meets Wednesdays from 6:00-8:00pm. They will be taking a pause during Lent. Contact Vicky Manietta for more information at (239) 826-6325.

Thursday Women's Bible Study

This group meets on Thursdays from 10:00-11:30am in the Early Learning Center boardroom and on Zoom. They are currently studying *Women in the New Testament* on RightNow Media.

Saturday Men's Bible Study

This group meets on Saturdays from 9:00-10:30am at the boat table in the St. Michael office. They are currently studying the book of Ephesians.



Photos for Our Online Directory

In October, Sam Johnson took about 100 household pictures for our online directory. If you didn't get your picture taken, Sam will be taking more at worship on February 3-4. Go to tinyurl.com/SMLCPortraits and enter the password *church* to preview your pictures and purchase them at a special rate for St. Michael families. If you have any questions, you can email studiosam08@gmail.com.



Saint Michael Youth Ministries

Saint Michael Youth Ministries

Seventh and Eighth Grade Confirmation with Parents

Seventh and eighth grade students and their parents will wrap up their study of the sixth commandment in February during Sunday school (9:15-10:30am) 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 Nehemiah.

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. We will attend the Ash Wednesday service on February 14 together. If you would like to volunteer or to sponsor a meal, please contact Lori Schwan. Electronic donations can be made in the youth designation at secure.myvanco.com/L-Z8M7/home.

Rock the Universe

Thank you to all of the parents who came at 4:30am and the seven volunteers who gave their day and stayed up late to chaperone the 48 middle and high school youth at Rock the Universe. They had a blast riding rides at Universal Studios and listening to music by Casting Crowns, Phil Wickham, Brandon Lake, CAIN, Andrew Ripp and Hulvey.

Edison Festival of Light Parade

We will not be selling tickets to the parade this year, but you can still purchase them at <https://edisonfestival.org/outertix-my-tickets/>.

Compassion International Scholarship

Thank you to everyone who is living generously by sponsoring a child in a developing country through Compassion International. Our youth group sponsors Renata, a 15-year-old girl who lives in Indonesia. In addition to bringing in cash to help pay for her \$43 monthly scholarship, you can now make electronic donations in the youth designation at secure.myvanco.com/L-Z8M7/home.

Middle School Summer Servant Event

Our beloved middle school summer servant event at Camp Luther Springs is back! Students entering sixth through ninth grades are invited 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. If we exceed 11 youth attending, we will need an additional adult to help chaperone. We will depart from St. Michael on Sunday, June 23 in the late morning and will begin our trip home on Friday, June 28 around 1:00pm, arriving at St. Michael in the early evening. The cost for camp before transportation is factored in is \$525 if you register by March 10. The cost to register will increase by \$60 after that. We will share the cost for transportation as we get closer to the event. Fill out the Google form at tinyurl.com/LutherSprings24 to let us know if you might be interested in this event. Once you know that you will be going, please send in a check for \$175 as a non-refundable deposit to reserve your spot on the trip. Payments and points can be used to help pay for this event. Scholarships are also available.

Stay Connected

If you are not getting emails or text messages about youth activities, please contact lori.schwan@gsmclcs.org.



From the Director of Worship & Music

Ben Ball

*Go to dark Gethsemane, all who feel the tempter's power;
Your Redeemer's conflict see, watch with Him one bitter hour;
Turn not from His griefs away; learn from Jesus Christ to pray.*
—text by James Montgomery (1771-1854)



I know it's hard to believe, but Lent is about to begin! February 14 is Ash Wednesday, and that opens for us the season of Lent and our time to prepare to look towards the cross on that dark hill of Calvary. I hope you will make plans to join us in worship not only for our regular weekend worship celebrations but also for our Wednesday midweek Lenten services.

Mark Your Calendars!

On Sunday, March 3 at 3:00pm, St. Michael Lutheran is blessed to be hosting The Mastersingers Chamber Choir in concert. Music will include compositions by Mozart, Dvorak and Brahms accompanied by Janet Carter. This concert is free and open to the public. The Fort Myers Symphonic Mastersingers is a nonprofit choral arts organization with the mission to cultivate a lifetime of music through exceptional performance, educational initiatives and community outreach. Since forming in 2001, the Mastersingers organization has grown from a small chorus to an organization encompassing four unique programs: the 100-voice Mastersingers, the 30-voice Chamber Choir, the City of Palms Youth Choir and the Intermezzo Choir (for those navigating neurocognitive decline and their caretakers). They are a diverse group of vocal musicians who represent all walks of life with a shared love of singing and a commitment to their mission. The Chamber Choir is a small ensemble of talented singers selected from the Fort Myers Mastersingers through a rigorous audition process for their superior musicianship and vocal abilities.



If you are feeling a tug (or a push from someone!) to become involved musically, please chat with me and see where we can get you plugged in as part of our music ministry. You do not have to be able to read music to join in this ministry. We will take you as you are and grow together from there. Please continue to reach out to me at any time with any questions, concerns or song requests you may have. My church email address is ben.ball@gsmlcs.org.

Blessings,
Ben Ball

Upcoming Special Worship Services

Ash Wednesday Worship

- Wednesday, February 14 at 12:00pm
- Wednesday, February 14 at 6:30pm

Midweek Lent Worship - Wednesdays at 6:30pm

- February 21
- February 28
- March 6
- March 13
- March 20

Join us at 5:30pm in the cafeteria before our Wednesday evening services for a light dinner and fellowship this Lenten season!



From the Director of Children & Family Ministries

Katy Bass

Children's Ministry Lunch

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our children's ministry kickoff lunch! It was great to meet new families and discuss the future of our children's ministry.

Children's Ministry Survey

If you didn't join us at the kickoff lunch and would like to fill out a questionnaire for your family, please contact Katy Bass at katy.bass@gsmlcs.org or (239) 939-1218 ext. 227.

Sunday School (Nursery through Sixth Grade)

- Children two years old and younger are cared for in the sanctuary nursery by a consistent team of volunteers to allow parents and older siblings to attend Sunday school or Bible studies.
- Kids three years old through fourth grade will be learning all about Jesus and what he teaches us through Jesus' parables.
- Kids in fifth and sixth grade are learning answers to questions that they have.

Please contact Katy Bass if you are interested in volunteering with the kids or helping out behind the scenes.

Worship Packs for Kids

Last month, we started using worship packs for kids during our services. Each bag contains coloring pages, puzzles, activities, stickers and more. The theme of each pack matches the Bible lesson used in the worship service and the children's message. We have made small changes as we find out what works best for the families of St. Michael. Please stay posted for any updates!

Cross My Heart Lent Devotional

The children's Lenten devotions, *Cross My Heart*, are ready to be picked up in the narthex! Be sure to pick up one for your family and follow along with our Lenten journey here at St. Michael. The first day of the devotions is Ash Wednesday (February 14).



Resealable Plastic Bags Needed

We are in need of resealable plastic bags (e.g. Ziploc bags) for various projects for our children and family ministry. Any donations of sandwich, quart or (especially) gallon size bags would be much appreciated! Please reach out to Katy Bass if you would like to make a donation or if you have any questions.

Pizza & Paint Event

We will be holding a "Pizza and Paint" event for kids in kindergarten through fifth grade from 12:00-1:30pm on Sunday, February 25. Parents can drop off their kids for an afternoon of delicious pizza and creative painting! Keep an eye on your email inbox for an email with RSVP information in the coming weeks.



Small Group Census

We are in the process of compiling an accurate listing of all of the small groups at St. Michael! If you are the leader of a small group, please email Katy Bass (katy.bass@gsmlcs.org) to let her know the following information:

- The name of the group
- When and where the group meets
- The theme or topic of the Bible study
- Whether you are open to new members
- Any other notable information

Thank you for your help in connecting all of our church's small groups!