

Deadline for submissions
is the 15th of each month for the
following month's newsletter.
Send submissions to
shea.flynn@gsmlcs.org.



Pastor Dave Bass



SAINT MICHAEL
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Weekend Regular Worship

Sat: 5:30 pm Blended
Sun: 8:00 am Traditional
10:45 am Modern

3595 Broadway
Fort Myers, FL 33901
(239) 939-1218
www.smlcs.org

The Messenger

From the Senior Pastor

Pastor Dave Bass

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

— 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Having grown up in the Midwest, I am used to November days that have a chill in the air and leaves on the ground. While life in Florida might not bring falling leaves or chilly air, it still brings a season that invites us as Christians to pause and give thanks. The warm days and steady sunshine can serve as reminders to us that our hearts are called to a deeper kind of warmth—gratitude for all that God provides.

The apostle Paul writes, "Give thanks in all circumstances." That's not always easy. Life brings challenges—illness, loss, uncertainty and change. But through it all, the Lord remains faithful. Because of Jesus, we have a hope that no circumstances can take away.

It's true that thanksgiving isn't about everything going right. It's about remembering that *God is right here*—in the middle of whatever we face. His love doesn't fade with the seasons. His grace doesn't depend on our moods or our situation. In Christ, we always have something to be thankful for: forgiveness, life and salvation.

Martin Luther once said, "The heart overflows with thanksgiving when it knows that God has given us Himself in Christ." That's what we celebrate every Sunday as we gather around His Word and Sacraments—the ongoing gifts of grace, mercy and community that keep us anchored in His care.

As I think about Thanksgiving from a pastoral perspective, here is a brief list of what I am thankful for:

- **For God's mercies**, which are new every morning
- **For Christ's cross**, which I have the honor of preaching weekly to ears and hearts and minds, this Truth that sets us free
- **For the Holy Spirit**, who is continually strengthening our faith

- **For You, dear reader, who are part of this family called the Church.** I am grateful that we share God's love together.

Thank you for many words of encouragement and support. Thank you for your prayers, for your love and for your commitment to making St. Michael an amazing congregation! May you and your family have a wonderful Thanksgiving.

In Christ's peace and thankfulness,
Pastor Dave

Pastor Dave



From the Principal

Dan Maser



As we close the first academic quarter, our hearts are filled with gratitude for all that God has done in and through our St. Michael Lutheran School community. This year's theme, "Lead On, Good Shepherd," continues to guide our journey as students, staff and families grow together in faith, knowledge and service.

Throughout these opening months, classrooms have been alive with curiosity and discovery, worship has centered our hearts on Christ's love and grace and students have found countless ways to care for one another—reflecting the voice of our Good Shepherd leading them each day. From joyful chapel services to hands-on service projects and meaningful classroom activities, we've witnessed children learning what it means to follow Jesus faithfully and trust His direction in every area of life.

Our new family groups are also providing wonderful opportunities for students of all ages to connect, serve and grow together in faith. These multi-grade groupings are strengthening relationships across the school, reminding us that we are one family in Christ—encouraging and praying for one another.

This fall, our athletic teams have shown the same spirit of teamwork and perseverance, using their gifts to glorify God on the field and court. Whether celebrating a win or learning through challenges and defeat, our student athletes have modeled humility, respect and Christian sportsmanship that reflect our values.

As we transition into the second quarter and adjust to some schedule changes that accompany new activities and routines, we give thanks for the flexibility and partnership of our families and staff. Together, we continue to adapt and grow, trusting that God's plan for each day is perfect and purposeful.

And now, as Thanksgiving approaches, we pause to reflect on the many blessings of this season—our dedicated teachers, supportive families, joyful students and, above all, the steadfast love of our Savior. With hearts of gratitude, we look forward to what He will continue to do in our midst as we follow the Good Shepherd's voice into the months ahead.

"He leads me beside still waters... He guides me along the right paths for His name's sake." – Psalm 23:2-3



From the Director of Little Saints

Nikki Howley

Little Saints celebrated a mini-fall fun day on October 31. It was a huge hit with all the kids! They got to dress up, play games, do some special crafts and have some yummy food and treats to eat.

The first week of November, we will be talking about our pets as we hold our 11th annual pet food drive for ARC from November 2-9. Please keep us in mind for pet donations. The shelter could really use our help this time of year.

The rest of November, we will be talking about families and being thankful as we teach the kids what Thanksgiving is. Each class will have a special Thanksgiving lunch to celebrate.

Shortly after Thanksgiving break, we will have our annual Little Saints family Christmas party where each family is invited to attend with their child, and each room is set up for a fun activity. It is a great way for families to spend some time together and get to know the teachers and other families a little bit more.



From the Associate Pastor & CFO

Pastor Roy Peterson

As we approach the end of another calendar year, it is a great time to pause and reflect on God's blessings and express our thanks to Him. Everything we have comes from Him, and we are simply His faithful stewards in this life that He has given us.

One of the ways that many people express their thanks is through their regular tithes and offerings to support the Lord's work and ministry. As we approach the end of the year, there are many ways to give a special gift of thanksgiving that blesses the ministry of St. Michael and can provide potential tax benefits. These include gifts of appreciated stock, qualified charitable distributions (QCD) from an IRA as part of your minimum required distribution (RMD) or gifts from a Donor Advised Fund (DAF). Please consult your financial or tax advisor for guidance or contact Pastor Roy for educational information about these options for year-end stewardship.



Letter from Anita Dennis to St. Michael Congregation

Update on Mission Work in Liberia, West Africa

We joined St. Michael in 1992 when Dr. Benjamin Dennis and I moved to Ft. Myers. At that time, the first of two civil wars in Liberia had broken out in 1989. Despite a three-year truce, war broke out again and there was no peace until 2003. Our LCMS missionaries in Vahun, Ben's father's village, were forced to flee. In 2002, our son Peter was doing a law internship among war refugees in Sierra Leone, the country north of Liberia. It turned out that many of the refugees were from Vahun. St. Michael collected money for the refugees, and Peter hand-delivered it to them.

When Ben died in 2009, funds were collected for his memorial to build latrines and dig wells. However, because of corruption in Liberia, there was little to show for it. That same year a new Lutheran mission, Hope & Care, began in Liberia, housing orphans (now 77 on three campuses) and teaching and shepherding them in the faith. St. Michael and the LWML support this mission. The church pays the yearly support for Lusane, an orphan from Vahun, at Hope & Care.

In 1989 when the first war had broken out in Liberia, there was a thriving LCMS mud block church with approximately 100 members. That building was destroyed like many others, and after the wars there was a small congregation dominated by a corrupt church leader.

In the 2000s because of this corruption, a segment of the congregation broke away and was temporarily worshipping in the town hall. In March of 2024, Peter and his two teenage kids took Ben's ashes home to Vahun, and a gravesite was built on the mission hill. The nearby mission house, built with concrete block, was in complete ruins and missing its roof. The new congregation cleaned up the area and named themselves the Dr. Benjamin G. Dennis Memorial Church. Now the new church wants to use the mission house to conduct services.

Recently, the St. Michael Mission Board allocated \$3,000 to replace the building's roof. This will give the congregation a permanent place to worship and hopefully boost and expand Lutheran work in the area. The Dennis family wants to heartily thank the congregation of St. Michael for your support. May this new building revive Lutheran mission work in the area!

Anita Dennis for the Dennis family



From the Director of Youth Ministry

Sam Morganstern

As the semester continues to fly by, it's hard to believe we're already heading into November! While I'm doing my best to embrace these final months at Concordia University Irvine, I can't help but feel excited because it means I'm that much closer to being back with the St. Michael family this January.

I'm incredibly thankful for everyone who has stepped up to support the youth of St. Michael during these past few months while I've been finishing up my studies. It truly takes a village to walk alongside our young people, and I'm so grateful for the strong team of servant-hearted leaders who have been shining the light of Christ and loving our neighbors so well.

I'm really looking forward to rejoining you all in January and seeing each and every one of you again! Please know that I continue to keep St. Michael and all of its ministries in my prayers that God would continue to use His people to be a blessing to our community.

In Christ,
Sam Morganstern

November Confirmation Module

The November confirmation module, "Lutheran Living" will be held Sunday, November 2 from 12:00 to 4:00pm in the cafeteria. Lunch will be provided. It is available to students in sixth grade or older. This module dives into how the Lutheran church came about, why we believe what we believe and why we worship the way that we do. Students will be encouraged to see how their Lutheran faith is something to be lived out daily at home, at school and in church. Please plan to attend if you have not yet completed this module. Bring your Bible, and be ready to learn, to discuss and to learn in faith together!



From the Director of Children & Family Ministries

Katy Bass

Wiggles Welcome: Grab a Worship Pack!

Wiggles happen—we get it! That's why we've created **worship packs for kids** to help little hearts and hands stay engaged during worship. Each bag is filled with goodies like sermon-themed activities, stickers, a fun craft or fidget toy and even a snack to keep stomach grumbles at bay. Grab one at the sanctuary entrance before the service starts! The plastic bags are yours to keep, but please drop the pencil pouch back in the basket when you're done so we can refill it for next week. Worship together, wiggles and all; we're glad you're here!

Operation Christmas Child

On Sunday, November 16, our Sunday school children will be putting together Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes during the Sunday school hour. This is a wonderful way for our kids to share God's love with children around the world. We're currently accepting donations to help fill the boxes. They can be dropped off at church before Sunday, November 16. [Follow this link](#) or scan the QR code to see what items we're collecting.

Ignite345

Calling all third to fifth graders! Join us on Wednesdays from 6:00 to 8:00pm for dinner, games and a hands-on Bible lesson that helps kids grow in faith and friendship. Ignite345 is designed to "fuel faith and spark fun," giving students a safe, Christ-centered space to belong and serve together. We follow the St. Michael Lutheran School calendar and therefore **will not meet on Wednesday, November 26, 2025**. Thank you for planning accordingly! If you have a friend who you think might love it, please invite them! Parents, watch the weekly emails for themes, meal details and any sign-ups.



From the Director of Children & Family Ministries

Katy Bass

Gingerbread Bash

Pull out your ugly Christmas sweaters and get ready for some festive fun! Join us on Saturday, December 13 at 10:00am for a family-friendly morning filled with laughter, music and holiday cheer. Together we'll build gingerbread nativities, sing Christmas songs, hear the Christmas story and play jolly games that celebrate the joy of Jesus' birth. It's a sweet way to remember the true meaning of the season! We will share how you can sign up soon.

Ladies at the Table

All women are invited to join us for our next Ladies at the Table event on **Saturday, November 1 at 11:00am** in the cafeteria. We'll enjoy a delicious brunch, share a short devotion and work together on a meaningful service project to support Phil's Friends, a Christian nonprofit that provides care packages, prayers and encouragement to individuals battling cancer. Come ready to serve, connect and give thanks as we use our hands of gratitude to share God's love with others. Financial donations will be accepted to help cover the cost of items needed for the service project. For more information, please contact Katy Bass.

St. Michael Cookbook

Are you looking for a thoughtful Christmas gift? Our St. Michael cookbooks are available for purchase in the narthex for \$20 each. Filled with favorite recipes from our congregation, they're perfect for holiday baking, family dinners or gifting to a friend. Cookbooks will be available after services the weekends of November 16, 23 and 30. Pick one up and share a taste of St. Michael this Christmas season!

Thanksgiving Eve Pie Social

After the Thanksgiving Eve service, Pastor Dave and Katy invite you to stay for a warm and welcoming pie social in the church narthex! Enjoy a slice of delicious pie, sip on some punch and linger a while to share stories, laughter and gratitude with your church family. Join us Wednesday, November 26 right after the service. Let's give thanks together and savor a sweet time of fellowship!

Preparing the Church for Christmas

All are invited to join us on Saturday, November 29 at 9:00am as we prepare God's house for the celebration of our Savior's birth. Together we'll hang wreaths, set up trees and adorn the sanctuary with reminders of Christ's light and love. This is a beautiful time of fellowship and service. It's an opportunity to pause in the busyness of the season to prepare our church for Advent and Christmas worship. Come share in the joy as we "deck the halls" to the glory of God!

Advent Tea

All ladies are invited to join us on Saturday, December 6 at 10:00am for our Advent tea. It will be a peaceful and uplifting morning to pause, reflect and prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. Enjoy a time of faith, fellowship and festive joy as we enter this special season together. To register, please contact Katy Bass or [RSVP at this link](#). We are also looking for table hosts to create welcoming spaces for our guests. If you would like to host a table or learn more about what that involves, please contact Katy at (409) 790-9835 or katy.bass@gsmlcs.org.



From the Director of Assimilation & Senior Adult Ministries

Lori Schwan

Senior Adults Update

When we took a tour of Lutheran Services of Florida's Oasis Youth Shelter for students age ten to 17, we expanded our knowledge of the amazing work that this organization does. In December, we will provide Christmas gifts for the students living at the shelter.

Lunch and Learn: Memory and Brain Health

Please save the date of Sunday, November 2 at noon. The board of congregational care will provide a catered lunch from Jason's Deli while we are joined by a special guest speaker: Stephanie Malally, a social worker with Lee Physician Group's Memory Care Clinic. Any adult is welcome to attend. Please RSVP at <https://forms.gle/a5FSK8N9aDfDk3h96> or by contacting Lori Schwan.



Lee County Community Band Concert

Every month the 66-member Lee County Community Band holds a free concert at Mariner High School (701 Chiquita Blvd North, Cape Coral, FL 33993) on a Sunday at 3:00pm. This month, their performance will be "Stars, Stripes & Spotlights: An American Celebration" on November 9. If you want to carpool to the concert, meet at St. Michael at 2:00pm.

Tuesday Movie Matinee

If you missed seeing *Soul on Fire* last month, we highly recommend checking out this wonderfully inspiring film. In November, we will watch *Sarah's Oil* on Tuesday, November 11 at 2:00pm at Bell Tower. Tickets are \$8 on Tuesdays if you have a free Regal Crown Club membership.

Christmas Senior Social

Save the date for our annual Christmas celebration on Sunday, December 14 at 4:30pm in the cafeteria following our annual Sounds of the Season concert! Come enjoy a special afternoon of wonderful music and a delicious meal with our congregation members. Also, share input of what you would like to see our senior adult ministries be involved in. Attendees this year will also have the opportunity to get involved in a Thrivent Action Team servant event of providing gifts for the youth of the Oasis Youth Shelter. Contact Lori Schwan if you would like to learn more.



2W Club: ECHO

After some fun and games at their meeting in October, 2W Club is looking forward to touring ECHO Global Farms in North Fort Myers on Saturday, November 15. Anyone who wants to carpool can meet at St. Michael at 9:00am. The tour will begin at 10:00am. Please sign up with Gail Schulz so she knows who plans to come. She can be reached at (732) 991-0642 or gail1370@aol.com. Any widow or widower is welcome to attend.

Caring for Caregivers Event

Lee Health is sponsoring an event exclusively for caregivers on Thursday, November 13 from 8:30am to 1:00pm at Healthy Life Center (23450 Via Coconut Point, Estero, FL 34135). A group from St. Michael is attending. We'll begin with relaxation through sound bowls and breathwork followed by inspiring presentations from three engaging speakers. Enjoy music therapy, a delicious lunch and time for your own renewal and connection. Don't forget to visit our variety of vendors and the Brain Bus for valuable information and resources. Register by calling (239) 468-0050 or by visiting LeeHealth.org/Events.

Thrivent Financial Sponsors Needed Now

We usually do more than half of our Thrivent Action Teams during the Holiday Season (over 50). We are in need now of people who want to sponsor servant events, fundraisers and educational events. Please contact Lori Schwan if you are interested in sponsoring a Thrivent Action Team.



From the Director of Assimilation & Senior Adult Ministries

Lori Schwan

LWML

Join us on Saturday, November 8 from 11:15am to 3:00pm for the Southwest Florida Zone LWML Rally under the theme “Equip and Encourage.” Registration starts at 11:15am with lunch at 11:30am followed by officer elections, worship, Bible teaching, mission spotlight and the business meeting. Blythe Ann Barreto (Harkenrider), granddaughter and daughter of Nancy and Jody Jackemeyer, will lead Bible study and share about teaching in Slovakia. The cost to attend will be \$10. Please make out checks made to “Women of St Michael LWML.” RSVP to Gail Schultz at (732) 991-0642 or at gail1370@aol.com.

DivorceCare: Surviving the Holidays

After separation or divorce, your Thanksgiving and 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, one-time DivorceCare class will meet Tuesday, November 4 from 11:00am to 1:00pm in-person and virtually. Please register at DivoreCare.org.



Regular DivorceCare meetings continue on Tuesdays through December 16 from 11:00am to 1:00pm. Join any session online or in-person in the Early Learning Center boardroom. Go to DivoreCare.org to register or to sign up for daily email devotions. If you have questions, call Lori Schwan at (239) 939-1218, ext. 237.

GriefShare: Surviving the Holidays

Are you wondering how you will survive the weeks surrounding Thanksgiving and Christmas? Are you dreading these holidays, knowing that everything has changed and that happy memories from past years can’t be recreated? Our Surviving the Holidays seminar on Saturday, November 1 from 1:00-3:00pm is especially for people who are grieving a loved one’s death. Register at griefshare.org.



GriefShare continues on Saturdays through December 6 from 9:00 to 11:00am in Pastor’s conference room in the school building. To enroll, visit griefshare.org. If you have any questions, please contact Gail Schultz at (732) 991-0642.

Thursday Women’s Bible Study

Join us on Thursdays from 9:30 to 11:00am as we study *A Treasure Revealed: Martin Luther and the Events of the Reformation*. We will be meeting on the St. Michael campus in the ELC boardroom and on Zoom (Meeting ID is 305 113 7001 Password: church).

Sunday Women’s Bible Study

Join us on Sundays from 9:30 to 10:30am as we dive into Donna Snow’s book, *Strong and Courageous: Studying God’s Promises in Joshua*. All women are welcome—come grow in faith and fellowship together! We will be meeting on the St. Michael campus in the band room and on Zoom (Meeting ID is 305 113 7001 Password: church).

Michael W. Smith Concert

Michael W. Smith will be performing at Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall on Sunday, December 14 at 7:00pm. St. Michael has 20 tickets in the mezzanine. They are \$91 each. If you are interested in going, please contact Lori Schwan at (239) 939-1218, ext. 237.



Other Notable Dates

- Friday, January 16 from 12:00-2:00pm—“Feed My Starving Children” Servant Event
- Sunday, January 25 at 12:00pm—Lunch and Learn
- Wednesday, February 4 at 11:30am—*Fiddler On the Roof* at Broadway Palm Dinner Theater (tickets \$74)
- Sunday, March 2 at 12:00pm—Lunch and Learn: Balance

From the Director of Worship & Music

Ben Ball

*"Now thank we all our God with hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mother's arms has blest us on our way
With countless gifts of love and still is ours today."*

—text by Martin Rinckart, LSB #895



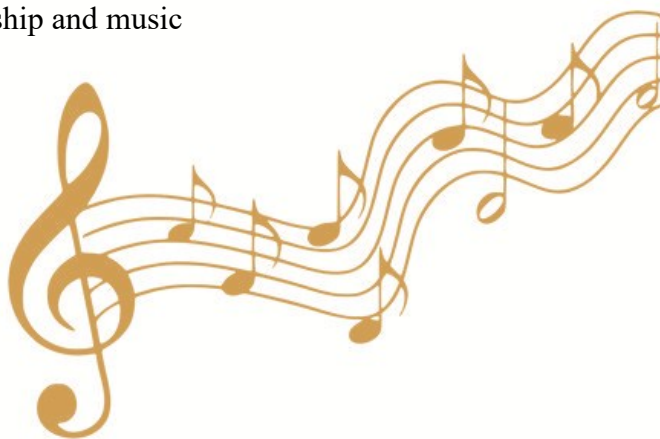
Happy November! As we enter the time of year when people really fixate on the topic of thanksgiving, I hope you will join us in worship as Pastor Dave and Pastor Roy lead us through the sermon series, *Overflowing with Thanks*. Looking ahead to the end of the month, please make plans to join us for a special **worship service on the eve of Thanksgiving, Wednesday, November 26 at 6:00pm.**

Mark your calendars for the fourth annual *Sounds of the Season Christmas concert*! This is one of the first events Katie and I started when we arrived at Saint Michael, and it is going stronger than ever. We are excited to welcome you to this special concert on **Sunday, December 14 at 3:00pm** in the sanctuary. The concert is free and open to the public. We ask that in place of a concert admission you bring a donation or a special item to donate to Lutheran Services of Florida as we seek to make music and mission together. Some of the items they need are toilet paper, paper towels, canned goods, laundry detergent, Lysol, Lysol wipes, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, body wash and bedding sets (twin XL size). Joining us this year will be a very special guest, Mr. Rudy Lucente of Philadelphia.



Last November, I embarked on a four-month journey of composing and arranging a collection of Advent and Christmas carols for solo piano. I compiled all this sheet music into a **collection titled *Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild***. In July, I recorded all of these pieces. As a gift to you, these recordings will be available to you at the end of this month on CD or digitally (via USB drive) so you can listen anywhere. Please feel free to share with others you think may find enjoyment through this music! I hope you enjoy listening to these variations on familiar carols. If you play the piano and would like the sheet music to play for yourself, please talk to me directly or send an email to ben.ball@gsmlcs.org.

Blessings,
Ben Ball
Director of worship and music



Gentle Jesus
MEEK and MILD

Christmas Meditations for Piano

Arranged and played by Ben Ball

Available in December!

SAINT MICHAEL LUTHERAN CHURCH