

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



Pastor Dave Bass



Saint Michael Lutheran
CHURCH • DAY SCHOOL • FOUNDATION

Weekend Regular Worship

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

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Fort Myers, FL 33901
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www.smlcs.org

make the sign of the holy cross and say, 'God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit watch over me. Amen.' Then, kneeling or standing, say the Apostle's Creed and the Lord's Prayer... After singing a hymn, or whatever else may serve your devotion, you are to go to your work joyfully."

You don't have to wait for a new year to have a fresh start. Each new day offers the opportunity to remember that you are a Baptized and forgiven child of God through faith in Jesus. He will never break that commitment to you. May you live daily in this truth. Happy New Year!

Pastor Dave

The Messenger

From the Pastor

Rev. Dave Bass

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."

– 2 Corinthians 5:17

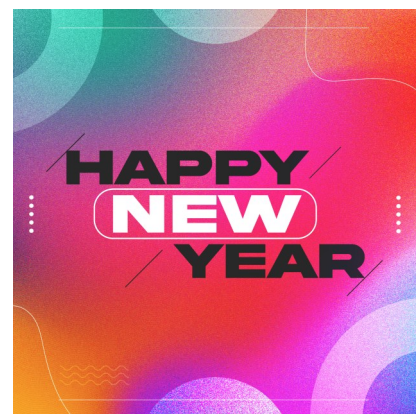
Happy New Year! How many times have you celebrated a new year? For me, the number currently stands at 47. At times, that seems like such a small number, but when you begin to unfold the year into months and the months into days of the week and the days of the into hours, you begin to realize how much time is truly packed into each year. Sometimes, the days, weeks, months and years begin to blur together, and one season collides with another. Why do we celebrate New Year's Day? It seems like it is just another day, so why mark every new year on a calendar? It's because new beginnings mean you have been given another chance, a fresh start. There's a reason the month of January sees an influx of new gym memberships being purchased and people signing up for new diet programs. It is a chance to start again, to improve yourself or to prove to yourself that change is possible.

The Christian life offers many opportunities for fresh starts and new beginnings. Even in our worship as Lutheran Christians, we begin with a time of confession where we admit what we've done wrong. We confess to God and to each other that our lives are not perfect, that we're not living the way the Lord calls us to live, that we're doing things we ought not do and failing to do things we ought to do. We need a fresh start in our spiritual lives as much as in our physical lives.

What is God's response? We hear the Good News that because of God's forgiveness and the sacrificial love of Christ Jesus we get a fresh start. The Psalmist writes it this way in Psalm 103:12: the Lord has taken our sins away from us "as far as the east is from the west." The slate is wiped clean. You don't need to carry the weight of your sin or guilt of the past with you into 2025. You are forgiven!

The reality for us on this side of eternity, however, is that it doesn't take long for us to forget about all that the Lord God has done for us. Like a lapsed gym membership, our commitment to desiring lasting change wanes. The same can happen in our spiritual life if we stray from God's Word, from worship and from joining in community with others. When we are tempted to stray, the Lord draws us back to Himself again and again by His Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. He loves us and will never give up on us.

In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther explained how we can maintain a robust relationship with the Lord: "In the morning, as soon as you get out of bed, you are to



From the Principal

Kati Miser



It's January, a time of year that could be dreary and anticlimactic with the Christmas tree and decorations being packed away, the children growing tired of their new toys and at least one New Year's resolution being broken, but January 6, the celebration of Epiphany which marks the coming of the Wise Men, reminds us to celebrate the grace, mercy and love of God in Jesus that we see every day. The word "epiphany" could be expressed as "eureka!" Jesus, our promised Savior, is here among us! At St. Michael, **our mission is to educate children and**

touch families' lives with the awesome love of Jesus Christ! Here, they learn a powerful, life-giving message and gain the encouragement to share it with everyone they come into contact with. We pray for many "eureka!" moments among our staff, students and parents. "Eureka!" We've found the love of Jesus in this place. "Eureka!" We've found the reason for being excited about life with Jesus as we strive toward our goal of endurance in all things.

A big day is coming up at SML: **open house on Wednesday, January 29.** It's an opportunity for you to share the good things you know about our school and invite your friends and neighbors to see it firsthand. It's hard to believe that it is already time to begin enrollment for the 2025-26 school year! Give me a call if you want to invite a friend, neighbor or family member to experience St. Michael Lutheran School on a personal tour.



From the Director of Worship & Music

Ben Ball

Happy New Year! It is hard to believe that it is already 2025. To be fair, I say the same thing every year. As we stand at the threshold of this new year, I hope that we will daily remember and deeply cherish the gift we just celebrated at Christmas—Jesus, our beautiful Savior, who was born as a humble baby and walked the earth to know both our joys and our sorrows; Jesus, who knew the road before Him would lead to the agony of the cross at Calvary yet gladly did it anyway; Jesus, the all-victorious King who will come again to reign. Let us worship God in spirit and in truth with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.



Now that January is upon us, we jump from Christmas into the season of Epiphany which lasts until the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. Epiphany simply translates to “appearance” and is when we celebrate that the Light of the world, Jesus, our Savior, has come into the world for all people.

Mark Your Calendars

I hope you will **join us on Sunday, January 26 at 3:00pm** for the official dedication concert of our new sanctuary organ! Works presented at the concert will include both hymn arrangements and many staples of organ literature including works of Bach and Buxtehude. The repertoire has been intentionally chosen to showcase as many of the instrument’s many tonal colors and abilities as possible within the span of a single concert.

Back in November, I spent a Sunday afternoon and evening recording a new CD on our sanctuary organ. It was quite a grueling recording session, and my brain was, to be frank, absolutely mush by the end. However, I am pleased to present you with the fruits of that afternoon as a free gift to you! *Heaven’s Morning Breaks* is a collection of 18 hymn arrangements by organist/composer Phil Lehenbauer. Phil spent his full-time career as a band director after graduating from Ohio State University but always held a church organist position in addition to his teaching. He currently serves as the organist at Shepherd of the Coast Lutheran Church in Fort Lauderdale. In his retirement from teaching, he had time to begin publishing many of his works. I am so thankful that he did as they have become a delightful staple of my organ library! The CD (or thumb drive if you prefer) will be available starting at the organ dedication concert on January 26.

Blessings,
Ben Ball



From the Director of Children & Family Ministries

Katy Bass

Worship Packs for Kids

Don't forget to pick up a worship bag for your child as they enter the church. Each bag contains activities related to the sermon and children's message, stickers, a craft and a snack. The plastic bags are yours to keep, but we ask that you return the pencil pouch to the designated basket.

Donations Needed

We are accepting donations of gallon-size Ziploc bags and snacks for worship bags. The snacks must be individually packaged. Suggestions include individually packaged Goldfish, Cheez-Its, Teddy Grahams, Nilla Wafers, pretzels, graham crackers, veggie straws and Pirate's Booty. Please drop off the items you would like to donate in the church narthex.

Thank you to everyone who donated items for our Gingerbread Bash! They were greatly appreciated by everyone who attended.

Contribute to Our Cookbook

Attention all cooks of St. Michael: we need your recipes! The time has come to submit recipes for our upcoming "Find Your Five" cookbook. The deadline for recipes has been extended into January. Written recipes can be dropped off in the labeled box in the narthex. Please include your full name and a contact number in case we have any questions when transcribing the recipes. There are forms available for you to use that you can pick up next to the box. You can also submit recipes online at www.typensave.com. Log in using the username *SMLCS* and the password *findyour5*. If you have any questions, please contact Katy Bass at (409) 790-9835 or katy.bass@gsmles.org.

Gingerbread Bash and Family Movie Night

A big thank you to all of the families who attended our family movie night and our Gingerbread Bash! It was so much fun to watch our families enjoying themselves and making memories together.



St. Michael Youth Ministries

St. Michael Youth Ministries

Middle and High School Sundays

In December, each group will be studying how with God we are “in good hands” and therefore “secure.”

Poinsettia Thank You

The youth would like to thank you for helping us to sell a record 504 poinsettias! We hope you enjoyed their beauty at home and in the church as we remember Jesus’ purpose for coming to earth to shed His blood on a cross for the world.

Season of Service

December provided four weeks for the youth to serve in five different activities from decorating the church to waiting tables at the senior social to shopping for and wrapping Christmas gifts for 17 kids at Oasis Youth Shelter to making 400 luminaries for Christmas Eve worship. Thank you to all of the youth and adults who donated time and funds to grow our servant hearts.

Wednesday Youth Nights

Wednesdays in December had a variety of activities from basketball to Christmas party fun and wrapping presents for Oasis youth. Thank you to all of the volunteers who assisted the students in their faith development. In January, we will be enjoying dinner, games and small group devotions on Wednesdays from 6:00-8:00pm. If you would like to volunteer your time or would like to sponsor a meal, please contact Lori Schwan.

Putting Away Christmas Decorations

Many hands make light work! We will be putting away St. Michael’s Christmas decorations on Wednesday, January 8 at 6:30pm. Anyone from the congregation is welcome to assist. Youth are able to earn points or service hours by volunteering their time.

Rock the Universe

On Saturday, January 25, middle and high school students and adult chaperones will be going to Rock the Universe at Universal Studios. The group will meet at St. Michael on Saturday at 9:30am, depart on a bus, stop for lunch on the way and be in the park from 4:00pm to 1:00am watching concerts and riding rides. After the park closes, they will return home, arriving around 4:30am on Sunday morning. The cost to attend is \$155 which includes park ticket, bus and snack. The payment and paperwork are due on Wednesday, January 8. Featured bands will include Forrest Frank, Bethel Music, Elevation Rhythm, Josiah Queen, Taya, Caleb Gordon, Consumed by Fire, Coqui and Allison Eide.

LCMS Youth Gathering

We are still accepting applications for our trip to New Orleans on July 18 to 24. The \$600 payment is due on Wednesday, January 22 so that we can purchase tickets for our flights. If you would like more information, please contact Lori Schwan.

Compassion International Scholarship

In December, we sent two extra-special gifts to Renata for Christmas and for her sixteenth birthday on December 31. We also sent her a letter containing pictures from our Christmas activities. Thank you for supporting our regular \$43 monthly scholarship.

Youth Confirmation Modules

In November, 16 students learned about our Lutheran heritage and how God’s Word helps us in our discipleship. Those who participated in this module should turn in their packet of worship reflections and essay by January 8. The next confirmation module will be on the topic of Baptism. It will be taught by Mrs. Betsy Courtney on January 12 from 12:15-4:00pm. Any middle school student is welcome to attend.

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From the Ministry Coordinator

Lori Schwan

Thrivent Financial Members

If you own a Thrivent financial product, you can give \$250 two times without spending 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. Those who have Thrivent Choice Dollars can also direct them for 2024 up until March 31, 2025.

Thursday Women's Bible Study

Join us on Thursdays from 9:30 to 11:00am on Zoom and on campus in the ELC boardroom for a women's Bible study led by Lori Schwan.



GriefShare

St. Michael's GriefShare group is meeting Saturdays through January 11 (extended due to interruptions from the hurricanes this summer) from 9:00 to 11:00am in Pastor Dave's conference room. GriefShare's next new session will be beginning on February 8. Feel free to join any session. Go to www.griefshare.org to register or sign up for daily email devotions. Reach out to Gail Schultz at (732) 991-0642 if you have any questions.

DivorceCare

DivorceCare is beginning a new session that will run from January 7 through April 1 on Tuesdays from 11:00am to 1:00pm. Anyone who is separated or divorced can join any session. The group meets virtually and in-person in the early learning center boardroom. Please register at www.divorcecare.org. DivorceCare's winter session will last from January 7 through April 8. Daily email devotions are also available from the same website. If you have any questions, please call Lori Schwan at (239) 939-1218, ext. 237.

St. Michael Youth Ministries

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Bingo Night and Dinner

Plan to join us on Saturday, February 1. Doors to the gym will open at 6:00pm. Bingo will start at 7:00pm. So, there will be plenty of time for you to come over after Saturday evening worship. Let the youth serve you an all-you-can-eat dinner of salad, bread and spaghetti with marinara or meat sauce. You can also bid on some amazing and unique desserts. Enjoy a night of bingo for all ages! Dinner tickets may be purchased in the narthex at weekend worship services or from St. Michael youth. Tickets are free for kids two and younger, \$10 for kids aged three to ten and \$15 for everyone aged 11 and up. Bingo cards will cost \$5 each or \$20 for five. Win some great prizes for each round of bingo. If you can't attend in person, you can still participate by purchasing raffle tickets for premium prizes like an Apple Watch or for our 50/50 raffle. You don't have to be present to win.

Middle School Summer Servant Event

Students entering grades six, seven, eight and nine are invited to join youth from around the FL-GA District for a week of camp fun and serving the community arounds Gainesville. If more than 11 youth want to attend, we will need an additional adult chaperone. We plan to leave St. Michael Sunday, June 22 in the late morning and will depart for home on Friday, June 27 around 1:00pm, arriving at St. Michael in the early evening. Camp registration will cost \$508 if registered by February 5. The cost will increase by \$30 for those who register after that date. The cost for transportation will be shared closer to the time of the event. Express your interested using the Google Form found at tinyurl.com/smlmiddle25. One you know that you will be attending, submit a check for \$175 as a nonrefundable deposit to reserve your spot on the trip. Payments and points may be used to help pay for the event. Scholarship are also available. Contact Lori Schwan for more information.

Stay Connected

If you have not been receiving emails or text messages about youth activities, please contact Lori Schwan (lori.schwan@gsmllcs.org) so you can be added to our contact lists.