

Letters at Christmas





St. Michael

Lutheran Church

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO JESUS

WELCOME!

- ❖ **INFORMATION CENTER:** Are you interested in Bible classes, Sunday School, youth activities or our J.O.Y. Group senior adult ministry? Stop by the Information Desk in the lobby—we want to meet and help you.
- ❖ **GUEST and HANDICAP PARKING:** For your convenience, parking is located across from the main church entrance and the west entrance door (4).
- ❖ **AUTOMATIC DOORS:** Two sets of automatic doors are available. One is located on the west entrance door (4) and the other is located on the main doors (2).
- ❖ **LISTENING DEVICES** for those who have difficulty hearing the service are available at the sound booth at the back of the sanctuary.
- ❖ **TODAY'S SERMON IS AVAILABLE ONLINE**, along with prior sermons and Bible studies, at stmfw.org/sermons.
- ❖ **ONLINE GIVING IS AVAILABLE** at stmfw.org/giving.
- ❖ **WE VALUE YOUR ATTENDANCE:** Please complete a connect card or visit stmfw.org/iamhere.

St. Michael loves new parents and small children!

- ❖ **WE WELCOME CHILDREN IN WORSHIP**, but if you need it, a nursery for children under age 5 is located in Room 24B. Please ask an usher for directions.
- ❖ **THE CRY ROOM** is our lobby. Please pull up a chair so that you may watch and listen to our worship service.
- ❖ **BUDDY BAGS** are available for small children in the lobby. You may pick one up prior to service and return on your way out. Enjoy!
- ❖ **CHANGING TABLES** are located in the family and women's restrooms adjacent to the lobby.
- ❖ **CHILDREN'S CHURCH** is for children 5 and under during the sermon at the 10:45a worship.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT
December 17, 2023

WELCOME AND OPPORTUNITIES

Theme of the Day: Tucked in the middle of the book of Revelation (chapter 12) is a story that points to the birth of Jesus, the reason He was born, and His victory over sin and Satan. Reading this story during the season of Advent reminds us of the reason for this season and reason for our joy (Joy is the third candle that we light this week on the Advent tree) at Christmas.

INVOCATION AND CALL TO WORSHIP

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

P: Before we read from Revelation 12 today, let us remember the apostle Paul's words to us in Ephesians 6; "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

C: For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,

P: but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

C: Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.

P: Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist,

C: with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

P: with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

C: Take up the shield of faith,

P: the helmet of salvation,

C: and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

ALL: And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests."

HYMN

The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns
(stanzas 1-3)

348

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love You, and worthily magnify Your holy name; through Christ our Lord. Amen

NICENE CREED 8:00a/APOSTLES' CREED 10:45a

**OFFERTORY 8:00a
10:45a**

The Rose Carol
Come, O Come Emmanuel

**Harmony Ringers
Resound**

PRAYERS/THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our G.A.P. team is available to pray with you after the service.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER 8:00a

PREFACE/PROPER PREFACE

SANCTUS

WORDS OF INSTITUTION/THE PEACE OF THE LORD

AGNUS DEI

DISTRIBUTION HYMNS

God Loves Me Dearly	392
Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord	352
Arise O Christian People	354
How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds	524

POST COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn His face toward you, and give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

HYMN

The Advent of Our King
(stanzas 1-6)

331

SILENT PRAYER

Lord, keep me ever faithful and may I be found ready when You return. Amen.

St. Michael Lutheran Church (LCMS)

Dennis Goff, Senior Pastor

Shawn Davis, Missional Pastor

Stephanie Maxson, Music Director

Rhonda Patterson, Communications Director

Celine Newman, Director of Belonging

Mark Neubacher, Visiting Pastor

Emma Deines, Youth Director

Tammy Bruns, Executive Director

Tina Hoover, Executive Assistant

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT

St. Michael Lutheran Church
2131 Getz Road 46804
STMFW.ORG | 432-2033
December 16/17, 2023



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WORSHIP

* Also available via livestream

Wednesday, December 20 and Saturday December 23/No Services

Sunday, December 24 / Christmas Eve Services

- Worship with lessons and carols 10:00a*
- Family Candlelight Worship with carols and children's activity 5:00p
- Candlelight Worship with choir, bells and orchestra 7:00p*
- Candlelight Worship with choir, bells, orchestra, Holy Communion 11:00p

Monday, December 25 / Christmas Day

- Festival Worship with Holy Communion 10:00a

Saturday, December 30 5:00p

Sunday, December 31 / New Year's Eve 10:00a*

ST. MICHAEL'S 70TH ANNIVERSARY

In 2024 we celebrate 70 years of St. Michael! This year of Jubilee we will grow together through celebrations and spiritual practices while sharing the story of what God has done and is doing through His people. One way we will celebrate this coming year is through community events every 7 weeks (approximately). Save these dates on your calendar!



Jubilee Celebration Dates:

February 24 - Generosity Event

June 8/9 - Camp Lutherhaven Retreat

September 8 - Rally Day

December 14/15 TBD

April 28 - Congregational Meeting

July 20 or 21 - Cook Out Celebration

October 26/27 - Fall Family Fun Festival

CAMP LUTHERHAVEN WOMEN'S RETREAT—January 26-28

Dive into what it means to live on fire for Christ in life today with speaker Sara Scheiwe. This New Year's retreat promises to be an intentional, fun, and encouraging time with others and with Jesus. For more information and to register, please visit www.lutherhaven.org.

iLEAD—check out this amazing opportunity!

Last year, St. Michael collaborated with three other sister Lutheran congregations – Emmanuel, St. Peter's, and Holy Cross to participate in a leadership development opportunity called **iLead – “Inspiring Leaders through Engagement and Development.”** This leadership development opportunity included four large group sessions, one at each of the four congregations, and four small group sessions with current and future leaders at our own individual congregations. In January, we will begin year two of iLead!

Everyone in the congregation, currently serving in a leadership role or not, are invited to any of the four large group sessions with our guest presenters. Here is the lineup for January:

- January 6 (8:30-10:30) at Holy Cross: Rev. Mike Newman, President of the Texas District of the LCMS. President Newman's topic is “The Job of the Church” where he will lay a foundation for all that we do in the church, focusing on the central role of forgiveness and the church's call to deliver that gift.
- **January 20 (8:30-10:30) at St. Michael:** Dr. Josh Wymore. Josh is an executive coach, keynote speaker, and trainer with **WYMOR** sharing skill sets and practices to become a “humbler” leader. Josh and his family proudly call Fort Wayne their home.

REDEMPTION HOUSE UPDATE

We will provide a meal at Wayne Street on December 17 and Fairfield Avenue on December 17. Contact Candi Luchnenko to provide a dish at 422-2061.

2024 OFFERING ENVELOPES ARE AVAILABLE

Please pick up your offering envelopes in the hallway outside the church office. If you would like to give electronically and no longer need envelopes, please inform the office. If you would like to receive envelopes, please contact Tina at tina@stmfw.org.

YEAR-END GIVING

Please note that December 28 is the last day for year-end contributions in order to be posted and deposited in the bank by year-end. Also, please complete stock transfers by December 15. Thank you for your generosity!

HOLIDAY HELP CENTER FOR THE GRIEVING

GriefShare has created a Holiday Help Center to help grieving people cope with the many emotions they will face during the holidays. It also provides practical tips for surviving social events and establishing new holiday traditions.

Visit <https://www.holidays.griefshare.org/blog>.

COUNT ME IN! . . . TO WORSHIP

Saturday, December 9 **109**

Sunday, December 10 **525**

Sunday Livestream **113**

SERMON SERIES FOR 2024

The theme we will highlight for our 70th anniversary next year is “Jubilee: Set Free to Tell the Story.” The preaching focus throughout 2024 (with a few exceptions), will focus on a number of Old Testament characters who were a part of God’s salvation story down through the ages that has become our salvation story. Similarly, there have been countless people connected to St. Michael who have been a part of “telling the salvation story” here. We are all a part of, and continue to share in, that legacy.

EPIPHANY BY CANDLELIGHT—January 7 at 2:00p

Just like Advent by Candlelight, except in Epiphany! Sign up at the Information Desk to attend, decorate a table with dishes and a centerpiece or to bring an hors d’oeuvre or dessert! We will enjoy a speaker who will share about astronomy and the Christmas Star.

MERRY CHRISTMAS YOUTH: SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17

Middle School 4:00p-6:00p and High School 6:00p-8:00p. It's the Christmas Party and we would like each person to bring a wrapped pair of new socks to swap! We will sing Christmas carols with Stephanie and celebrate the coming of our Savior. We will share time in fellowship and share soup and sandwiches. Bring a friend that might enjoy joining our group in 2024!

High School Food and Fellowship at Electric Works

Join us Wednesday, December 20 at 6:00p. This is a date change due to scheduling conflict. St. Michael's Youth will provide some snacks to share.

"Connect" 8th grade students and their parents-every Tuesday from 3:00p-5:30p

Connect is a time for 8th grade students and parents to meet with DCE Intern Emma, play games, have some snacks and get to know one another. "Connect" will be every Tuesday at Union Street Market/Electric Works.

CHECK OUT OUR UPCOMING BIBLE STUDIES!

OT Introduction and Genesis

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Pulse, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne – 4 sessions in January

The Christian Leader

Celine Newman, Director of Belonging – 8 sessions in January and February. Please see the description on page 9.

A Hebrew Perspective for Understanding the Bible

Pastor Gary Endersby – 6 sessions February and March

Thrive: Living Resilient and Renewed

Pastor Goff – 10+ sessions February through May

Simple Habits of Effective Parenting

Dr. Ben Stellwagen (ESM Principal) and other ESM Staff – 8 sessions February, March, April

Money and Marriage God's Way

Tim Thoms – 7 sessions February, March, April

Christian Foundations Class

Celine Newman, Director of Belonging; Pastor Goff; Pastor Davis – 5 sessions April and May

Christian Discipleship Class

Celine Newman, Director of Belonging; Pastor Goff; Pastor Davis – 3 sessions May

OT – Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel

Pastor Goff – 8 sessions April and May

Visual Faith continues with Anna Davis

NEW BIBLE STUDY—THE CHRISTIAN LEADER

During this 8 Week series for Christian leaders we will be unpacking various topics that are relevant to being a high quality leader. Beginning January 6, an iLead Leadership seminar will be taught at a local Fort Wayne church. The following Sunday we will gather to review and discuss the topic that was discussed. During the in-between weeks we will dive into additional topics focused on helping you to grow as a Christian Leader. **This study is for any leader, those who serve at St. Michael as well those who serve in leadership positions outside the church.**

January 7 - Review of the Job of the Church

January 14 - A Good Leader Is A Good Follower - Submission to Christ and others

January 21 - Review of Humbler Leadership

January 28 - Being the Leader God Made Me To Be - Strength's inventory

February 4 - Review of Resilient Faith

February 11 - The Creator of Time and the Enemy of Hurry - Rhythms of a Godly life

February 18 - Review of Women as Leaders

February 25 - The Ministry of Investment - Why good leaders care about how their people invest.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith. Our Lord invites to His table those who have been baptized, who repent of their sin, who believe Jesus Christ is their Savior, and who believe the body and blood of Jesus is really present together with the bread and wine. Anyone who is not yet instructed in the Christian faith or who has a differing belief are asked to first speak with one of the pastors. If you need communion delivered to where you are sitting, please notify an usher or elder before the service begins. Gluten free communion wafers are available by raising your index finger as communion is distributed signaling to the elder that you wish to receive a prewrapped gluten free wafer. Grape juice is available in the purple tinted cups located in the center of the tray of individual cups. Children or adults who have not yet been confirmed or instructed in the Lord's Supper are welcomed to come forward for a blessing placing their arms over their chest.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR THIS WEEK December 18-25

Monday, December 18

8:30A Mom's Bible Study
6:45p BSF Young Adults
7:00p Handbell Christmas Party

Tuesday, December 19

1:00p Purls
7:00p Praise Teams Rehearsal

Wednesday, December 20

10:30p Men's Bible Study
1:30p Praying for Our Nation
6:00p High School Youth
6:30p Men's Choir Rehearsal
7:00p Adult Choir Rehearsal
7:00p Dart Ball
7:30p Orchestra Rehearsal
8:30p Music Christmas Party

Thursday, December 21

7:00p Jubilant Fields Rehearsal

Friday, December 22

8:00p Men's Basketball

Saturday, December 23

No Worship Service

Sunday, December 24

10:00a Worship
5:00p Family Worship
7:00p Worship
11:00p Worship

Monday, December 25

10:00a Worship

SERVING AT ST. MICHAEL this weekend

Are you able to join a worship service team? Contact Tina Hoover at 432-2033 or tina@stmfw.org.

Greeters: Mike and Jo Sienk, Mary Bear (5p); Dave and Kathy Trinklein (8a)
Brad and Jen Chaffee (10:45a)

Lay Readers: SS Children (5p); Gretchen Weerts (8a); Karen Hall (10:45a)

Children's Church: Emma Latin (10:45a)

Acolytes: Nevaly Roehm (5p); Austin Wagner (8a); Austin Pieper (10:45a)

Information Desk: Gloria Fahlsing (5p); Celine Newman (8a)
Jan Fillmore (10:45a)

Ushers: Dave and Myra Atkinson, Andrea Tarbet (5p); TBD (8a)
Dave Crow (10:45a)

Elders: Ryan Meyer (5p); Mark Muntzinger (8a); Paul Selking (10:45a)

Nursery: Kira Clendenen and Alessia Passoni

Fellowship: Aimee Stir

Altar Guild: Karen Martin

PRAYERS THIS WEEK

We are privileged to pray for each other. Please notify the staff on your connect card or by email if you would like your prayer needs kept private. Otherwise, we will print them in this publication on a weekly basis.

- **December Milestone Birthdays:** Monica Zoch, 12/2, 85; Joe Pyle, 12/9, 82; Mary Jones, 12/13, 95; Shirley Lehman, 12/13, 89; John Patterson, 12/13, 81.
- **Pray for:**
 - Brandon Barker, son of Rebecca, who is suffering with back pain. Pray that the shots he received will help ease his pain.
 - Linda Hansen who will have knee surgery on Dec 21.
 - Al Claus who is hospitalized. Pray for peace in daily life.
 - Pray for Orly Kobi, Colleen's sister, as she travels to Israel to be with her family in two weeks.
 - Positive test results this week for Carol Korte.
 - Stacey Swedzinski, friend of Stan and Sally Scheumann, undergoing cancer treatment.
 - The family of Tom Schoenherr who died; friend of Stan and Sally Scheumann.
 - Continued prayers for Don and Kathy Magner, Brian Wielosinski, Sue Doepner and her family, Mason Leininger, Mary Nichols



Reading through the New Testament—Week 50

December 17-23

Becoming more like Jesus—growing in His Word

Once again, we turn to some general introductory information about the book of Revelation. From the early days of the church, Revelation was turned to in times of persecution as a source of strength and encouragement. A few additional guidelines may be helpful in reading the book.






Revelation consists of a long and complicated series of visions – over sixty of them. They need to be read for what they are: visionary accounts of reality that were given by God to portray profound spiritual and theological truths. It’s also important to remember that the images John used were familiar to the people of his day, even if they aren’t to us. Most of them come from the Old Testament – there are about 350 allusions or references to the Old Testament.

As mentioned previously, the style of writing that John used was familiar to his readers. It was called apocalyptic, and John’s readers were able to digest much of what he was saying because they were used to reading that sort of literature. As a literary style, apocalyptic was highly symbolic. For instance, the beasts, dragons, and even dissolving universes were pictorial representations of deep historical and theological realities. They were familiar to John’s readers, coming as they did from well-known books in the Old Testament such as Exodus, Psalms, Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

Overall, basic Christian theology is woven throughout the book. That gives it an inner coherence and unity that ties it together. As you read, try not to get completely enthralled (or entangled) by the symbols; but understand that there is theological truth being presented.

New Testament in a Year—December 17-23

Revelation

Chapter 9  10  11  12  13 

Additional Reflections from this week's reading

Revelation 9 | Beginning in chapter 8, we read where John describes catastrophes that will accompany the end times. With that in mind, we would do well to heed the advice of the apostle Paul to “take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one” (Eph 6:16). And remember that our enemy, the devil, is already defeated by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Revelation 10 | If the angel with the golden censer in 8:3 is identified as Jesus, it is even more probable that the “mighty angel coming down from heaven” (10:1) is Jesus too. The disciples were surrounded by a cloud at Jesus’ transfiguration (Lk 9:34), and Jesus said that He would return “in a cloud with power and great glory” (Lk 21:27). The other descriptions here also point to Jesus – a rainbow encircles the throne of God (4:3), the Lamb is standing in the center of the throne (5:6), the angel’s face shone like the sun, just as did Jesus at His transfiguration (Mt 17:2).

Revelation 11 | Jesus asked John to measure the temple and observe the two witnesses at work. In this way John was assured that the work of sharing the message of the little scroll was not his alone. Bringing the gospel to the world is the mission of every believer until the Savior returns.

Revelation 12 | This chapter marks the beginning of John’s fourth vision of his seven visions. This fourth vision covers the same time that the second and third visions did. The vision of the seven visions depicts events from the beginning of the New Testament age until the last days and the final judgment.

Revelation 13 | Here we read where the devil enlists the aid of a hideous beast to bolster his attacks against God and His people. Such a beast represents worldly power and political authority that has gone awry.

Blessing the World

This week as you reflect on John's Revelation, we also spend time reflecting on this season of expectant waiting the celebration of Christmas. This week spend 30 minutes sitting in that place - reflecting on the first and second coming of Christ. Are there people who came to mind as you reflected? Can your reflection open a conversation that might bless that person? As we open conversations and listen to those around us, who God puts on our hearts, we have an opportunity to be a "witness". (Acts 1:8)

Belonging in Community

As we ponder the reading in Revelation we read of Satan as the "deceiver" of the whole world.

Take some time to read all the way back in Genesis 3:1-6. We often look at this section of scripture as the first sin. Ponder that this also shows us the first deception of humans. "Did God really..."

What are some deceptions that you can recall throughout the rest of scripture?

How did these deceptions affect humanity?

What deceptions do you experience today? Especially in your personal relationships?

Now read through Revelation 12:9-12.

One great prophecy in Revelation is that the originator of deception will be destroyed. Deception and the effects of it will be no more.

What do you imagine a life without deception will be like?

What a glorious and wonderful existence that will be! As you close, take time to praise God for the promises he gave to us throughout the book of Revelation and pray for faith to remain until that day.

THIS SUNDAY'S SERMON OUTLINE

"All is Well (?)"

Revelation 12:1-17

Christmas letters

A letter to seven churches

A great _____ appeared in _____ (12:1-6)

- Woman: _____
- Dragon: _____
- Male Child: _____

A _____ in heaven (12:7-12)

- There was a war in heaven. (v. 7)
- The dragon was thrown down. (v.9)
- The accuser can no longer accuse. (v. 10)
- Triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb. (v. 11)
- He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short. (v. 12)

A _____ on earth (12:13-17)

- He pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. (v. 13)
- Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring – those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. (v. 17)
- "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Ephesians 6:12)

What to do until the _____

- R_____ in the victory of the blood of the Lamb
- Know your t_____
- Keep w_____