

DECEMBER newsletter

Advent and Christmas Worship



Wednesday, December 7 ESM Vespers Service 10:00a/7:00p*

Wednesday, December 14 Advent Service 7:00p*

Saturday, December 17 Sunday School Christmas Service 5:00p



Saturday, December 24 / Christmas Eve Services

Family Candlelight Worship with carols and puppets 5:00p

Candlelight Worship with choir, bells and orchestra 7:00p*

Candlelight Worship with choir, bells and orchestra 11:00p



Sunday, December 25 / Christmas Day

Festival Worship with Holy Communion 10:00a*

Saturday, December 31 / New Year's Eve 5:00p

Sunday, January 1 / New Year's Day 10:00a*

* Also available via livestream



Advent



Journey

CONNECT WITH PASTOR GOFF

By the time you read this newsletter article, we will already be a week into the season of Advent. Nevertheless, let me set the stage for our Advent and Christmas theme this year at St. Michael. We are focusing on the theme of “journey” that I’m drawing from a song by Jordan St. Cyr entitled, “Weary Traveler.”

As Jordan talks about why he wrote this song, he says that, in part, it was prompted by all the traveling he does as a professional singer, performing at concert after concert, while his wife is home with four kids, one of which has a chronic illness. Not only does that kind of lifestyle wear a person out with all the travel, but at the same time he feels the weight of guilt and regret not being at home more. Personally, he feels like a “weary traveler.”

But Jordan also recognizes that everyone of us daily face our own challenges and struggles in life, and if we are honest with ourselves, we would admit it often leaves us feeling rather “weary” too. And yet, all too often we limp along telling ourselves everything is okay, often ignoring Jesus’ invitation, **“Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)**. Jesus offers us that invitation because He knows that for a variety of reasons, we get weary in life.

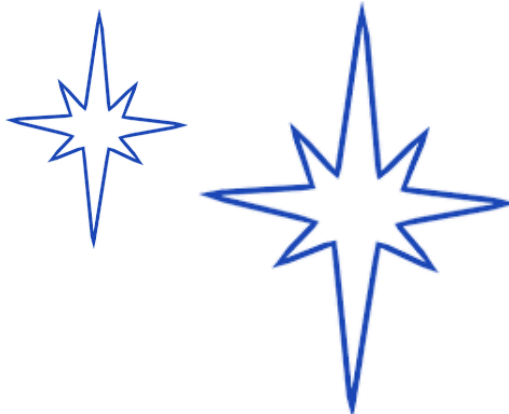
For instance, I believe that the past few years of living through the pandemic has made all of us a bit weary. The number of people dealing with anxiety, depression, stress, etc. in the last few years has increased significantly. Psychologists believe we won’t fully see the impact isolation and lockdown has had on us mentally/emotionally, physically, educationally (because of the learning loss for students zooming from home) and even spiritually for years. St. Cyr has a line in his song that says, “we were never meant to go this road alone.” This may be a reference to Jesus’ invitation to “come to me all who are weary . . .” but I think it’s also a reference to the fact that we aren’t meant to live life (including our life of faith) isolated from others around us.

Overall, we know life here isn’t our final destination in our journey. St. Cyr repeats the phrase in his song, “Someday soon we will make it home,” to encourage us to not give up in life, hold on, and keep our eyes of faith on our true home in heaven. However, in the meantime coming to worship, being a part of the body of Christ, and **connecting with others is critical**. Maybe there is someone reading this who hasn’t been “home” here at church for a while. If so, I invite you to come “home.” In fact, the theme of the Christmas Eve message will be “Welcome Home” as we gather at the manger and see our Savior, the one who came to take us to our true home in heaven one day.

As we celebrate the coming of Jesus into our lives this Christmas, know that no matter who you are or where you have been in your life’s journey, **you are “welcome home” here at St. Michael** this Christmas, and always. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Christmas blessings,

Pastor Dennis Goff



CONNECT WITH PASTOR SHAWN

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Matthew 22:37-39

As we prepare for Christmas with Advent devotions, special worship services, and finding ways to give to others, we have opportunities to be Christ's hands and feet to the world around us, living out the grace we have been so blessed to receive. Here are a few opportunities in which you can be involved:

CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE

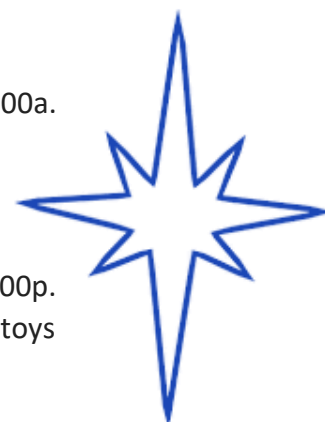
Our giving tree is filled with tags that seem a little different than previous years. We are following the trend of other non-profits, such as Lutheran Social Services, and desire to bless our families with the ability to purchase gifts for their family members. St. Michael will provide a devotional book and a gift card for groceries to each family. On the tree, we will post one to two family gifts (puzzles, books, games, etc.) and personal hygiene items (toilet paper, paper towels, soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, etc.). We will also hang tags for \$25 gift cards to Target, Meijer, and Kohl's (stores with clothes and toys) to bless the families. All items need to be returned by Sunday, December 11. If you have questions, contact Robin Kaiser at rrkaiser@hotmail.com.

SHEPHERD'S HANDS COMMUNITY OUTREACH CENTER

Volunteer help in packaging diapers is appreciated on Wednesday, December 21, at 10:00a. Contact Susan Hein with questions at heinsd01@frontier.com.

NINE CHRISTMAS BASKET GIVEAWAY

Volunteer help is needed on Friday, December 16, from 10:00a to noon and 6:00p-8:00p. On Saturday, December 17, volunteers are needed to help package hats and gloves, toys and food baskets. Contact Dawn Buuck at tomordawn@msn.com with questions.



REDEMPTION HOUSE MEAL - CHANGE



Instead of taking meals to the houses on December 4 and 18, we will have dinners and Christmas parties at both houses on Saturday, December 17, at 6:00p. Our regularly scheduled meals will be January 8 at Wayne Street and January 15 at Fairfield. If you would like to help and join us, please contact Linda Chapman at 417-3052.

THRIVENT MEMBERS

Thrivent is a financial group that helps its members live generously. A part of Thrivent's mission is to give back to the communities that its members live in. One of the ways they do this is through Thrivent Action Teams. Thrivent Action Teams are set up to help people take a passion area, grow the idea, add action steps, and even give up to \$250 of seed money to see an opportunity happen. From tying fleece blankets with your neighbors to cooking a meal for a family in need, Action Teams help gather people to live out the grace with which we have been covered. Check out Thrivent.com/what-we-offer/generosity for more info or contact Pastor Shawn (pastordavis@stmfw.org or calendly.com/pastor_shawn) to talk through ideas and the application process.

NEWS FROM STEPHANIE

And Mary **sang**, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is his name! Luke 1:46-49

Mary's listened to the angel, accepted God's plan, traveled to share the news with her cousin Elizabeth, and sang a song of praise! How do we respond to God's plan in our lives? We trust and praise his name! I love the lyrics from the contemporary song Gratitude.

When my words fall short...I throw up my hands and sing hallelujah...I know it's not much, but I've nothing else fit for a King. So come on my soul, oh don't you get shy on me; lift up your song, 'cause you've got a lion inside of those lungs. Get up and praise the Lord!"

I am also reminded me of the lyrics from the Christmas song Little Drummer Boy.

Come, they told me...Our newborn King to see...Our finest gifts we bring to lay before the Little Baby...I am a poor boy too, I have no gift to bring that's fit to give our King. Shall I play for you, on my drum?...Mary nodded. The Ox and Lamb kept time. I played my drum for Him. I played my best for Him...Then He smiled at me pa-rum pum pum pum. Me and my drum

Like the little drummer boy, we come to offer our gift of praise, small though it may seem, to our newborn King!

MUSIC CHRISTMAS PARTY

St. Michael music department is hosting a party, and you are invited! On December 13 at 7:45p, Smooth Edge 2, an A Capella jazz group featuring our very own Mike Zipse, will be performing in Luther Hall. Come join us for this time of fellowship, food, and wonderful music!

OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE IN WORSHIP

Ushers and greeters are needed to cover the extra Advent and Christmas services. Ushering & greeting is a wonderful way to serve together as a family! Would you consider serving with your son/daughter or grandson/granddaughter? Please contact either our head usher at dcrowboilers65@icloud.com or our worship director at stephanie@stmfw.org to sign up! And thank you!

SATURDAY BAND LINE-UP

December 3 King's Strings **December 10** Life Song **December 17** Sunday School Christmas Service

SPECIAL SERVICE WORSHIP NOTES

Sunday, December 25

10:00a Holy Communion service



Saturday, December 31

5:00p New Year's Eve Holy Communion service with organ

Sunday, January 1

10:00a Communion service

BELONG BECOME BLESS

MUSIC/WORSHIP NEWS CONTINUED

DECEMBER ADVENT SERVICES

ESM Vespers services

All are invited to hear our ESM students share the message of Christmas through recitations and songs. The service will also be available via livestream.

Wednesday, December 7 at 10:00a & 7:00p at St. Michael

To You is Born a Child will be presented by our ESM Pre-K through 3 grade students.

Wednesday, December 14 at 10:00a & 7:00p at Emmanuel

The Old, Old Story will be presented by our ESM Pre-K and 4-8 grade students.



Longest Night/Blue Christmas Advent Service—Wednesday, December 14 at 7:00p

It is not uncommon for churches to have a worship service on, or around, December 21 which is considered the longest night of the year. Even with such extended darkness, this service focuses on Christ, the Light of the world, who overcame all darkness even the darkness of loss, suffering, and loneliness. For some people, Christmas itself can actually be a difficult time of the year, especially for those who mourn the death of a loved one, people who are far away from home, or those suffering in one way or another physically, mentally/emotionally, or spiritually. However, no matter what your life circumstances may be, the light of Christ still shines as we approach the manger together at Christmas. Join us Wednesday, December 14 at 7:00p for our “Longest Night/Blue Christmas Advent Worship.”

St. Michael Sunday School Christmas Service: Saturday, December 17 at 5:00p

Our children pre-K through 5th grade will present *Journey to Bethlehem; Follow the Star* sharing the Christmas story through scripture, songs, and drama. Thanks to Ali Raney for directing the kids this year. Plan now to attend this special service and encourage our students!

MUSIC REHEARSALS FOR DECEMBER

Monday, December 5

6:00p Harmony Ringers
7:00p Resound

Wednesday, December 7

6:30p Women’s Choir
8:00p Adult Choir

Thursday, December 8

6:30 Orchestra

Monday, December 12

6:00p Harmony Ringers
7:00p Resound

Tuesday, December 13

7:00p-7:45p Choir, orchestra, bells

Monday, December 19

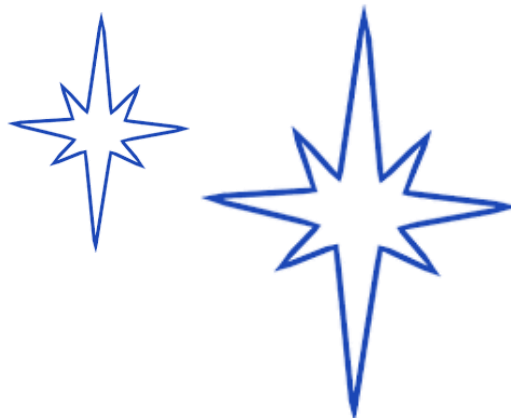
6:00p Harmony Ringers
7:00p Resound

Wednesday, December 21

6:30p Men’s Choir
7:00p Adult Choir

Saturday, December 24

6:00p Choir, orchestra, bells



COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Are you aware that December is National Stress-Free Family Holiday Month? December 3 is also the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Check out lookupindiana.org for facts about anxiety, depression and trauma.



GRIEFSHARE

The holiday season can be especially difficult when you're grieving the loss of a loved one. Are you wondering how you will get through the weeks around Thanksgiving and Christmas? **Griefshare** has created a Holiday Help Center to help you cope with the many emotions you will face during the holidays. It also provides practical tips for surviving social events and establishing new holiday traditions. [Click here](#) to visit the Holiday Help Center.

St. John's Lutheran Church in Kendallville is hosting a GriefShare Surviving the Holidays Seminar on Sunday, December 4 from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Contact [DCE Paul Wendt](#) for more information and to register.



LUTHERAN FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

The Lutheran Foundation has scholarships (starting at \$1,000) to award to students pursuing degrees in nursing or other healthcare professions. This broad category encompasses undergraduate and graduate students in nursing, counseling, physical therapy, mental health, dental and medical programs, and more.

Please forward this to anyone in northeast Indiana who is pursuing a degree in healthcare! Application deadline is noon on February 1, 2023. [Click here](#) for full eligibility information, scholarship application instructions, and an application!



The Concordia Lutheran Church Men's Club will once again be selling Christmas trees and wreaths to help fund the church and school. The tree lot is located at the Church-School, 4245 Lake Avenue. The lot will be open 2:00p to 8:00p weekdays, 9:00a to 8:00p on Saturdays, and 12:00p to 8:00p on Sundays. The proceeds from this fundraiser are used to support various projects and functions of the Concordia Church and school. A selection can be made from Scotch Pine, Douglas Fir, Fraser Fir, and Blue Spruce. Decorated wreaths are also available.

The Happy Goat Christmas Tree Farm, owned by members Loren and Lisa Schaefer, is located at 7602 Butt Road. Check them out on Facebook!



THOUGHTS FROM CELINE

This month I want us to dive into the practice of fellowship. This is a word that we often use but may not always pause to think about the concrete definition. Merriam-Webster defines fellowship as companionship, a company of equals or friends. As we dive into this concept I want to first look at how unfathomable it is that God would fellowship with us. God the Almighty Creator and Savior would choose to be our companion and consider us as equals and his friend.

We see this as God relates to the people of the Old Testament. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David...Yes, he held his authority, but he also laughed with them, listened to their requests, wrestled with them and shared dreams with them. (Genesis 17-18, Exodus 32:7-14, 33:9-11, Exodus 25:8) We also see this in a very concrete way in the person of Jesus. In the life that Jesus lived on this earth we hear the stories of how he went to parties (John 2:1-12), ate with them (Luke 5:27-23), walked with them, became friends with them (John 15:12-16), and went to the synagogue with them (Mark 1 :21-28).

FELLOWSHIP IS A PART OF GOD'S DESIGN.

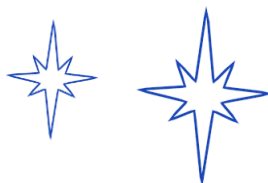
Being together as equals. Experiencing the ups and downs. The celebrations and arguments. The mundane and the extraordinary. When we experience fellowship we can see how the feelings of loneliness and isolation are addressed. We gain a sense of belonging and we become welcomed, known, and accepted. The church in Acts was defined by their fellowship. (Acts 2:42-47) And we as individuals and the church are no different today.

I have heard it too often, "I can be a follower of Jesus without going to church." And every time my heart aches a little. We can work ourselves into that belief that agreeing with what the Bible teaches and keeping ourselves in-check is the base requirement for being a follower of Jesus. Yet, to truly be a follower of Jesus we need to do what he did...and one of the things that Jesus did was practicing fellowship with others. The Jews, the Gentiles, even the Pharisees - men and women, young and old. He ate with them, walked with them, talked about His worldview with them, discussed scripture, went to synagogue, celebrated, mourned, debated, and shared resources. He was connected with others. And those others were the beginning of the Church, the Body of Christ. To be clear, I am not saying that we should only spend time with other Christians. I am saying that being in **fellowship with other Christians is an important practice in our faith walk.**

So this month, let's be intentional about practicing fellowship. Let's be in each other's company. Take time to come to the extra events. To linger a little after worship. And this is definitely not confined to the location of St. Michael. If you worship online, be intentional about having other Christians with you and eat a meal together. In your Bible Study group or Service group, take time for fellowship activities, perhaps have a Christmas party. Have another church family over to your house for a Sunday meal. Go to a Christmas concert or celebration together. Host a World Cup party.

Again, it is part of God's design that we get to do things together. Together is where we truly become known and feel belonging. And as you fellowship, be sure to work on your own vulnerability. Allow people to get to know you. And take time to go a little deeper with those around you. Learn about how someone got their name or where they grew up. Share about something that made you laugh this week or what is weighing on you. Be in prayer together and be sure to smile, hug, shake hands, and look each other in the eye.

Interested in growing in fellowship - Sign up to join a St. Michael Connect Group at www.stmfw.org/connect.



FAMILY MINISTRY FROM CARRIE

Advent is here and Christmas is coming! What is it that you want your child to take away from this season? Family traditions are a fun and important part of our family lives. They help us create special bonds and make memories that we will carry with us forever. I still remember making handmade ornaments with my mom and sister growing up. Now that I am a mother too, I love watching the memories my kids make with their grandmas every year in the kitchen while baking and decorating cookies. We cherish the years that we are able to travel to be with family on Christmas Eve and attend church together. Many families don't let this season pass without a visit to Santa or an elf taking up residence in their home. Both can be fun for kids, but what do you want your children to remember most about Advent and Christmas?

Advent is a wonderful way to prepare our hearts for the coming of Jesus. It reminds us of His birth, His presence, and His second coming. Do you have favorite Advent traditions? A calendar you use every year? A wreath and candles of your own? We can help with some of those things! We have Advent calendars available for families who would like one. A wonderful resource for all things Advent is Focus on the Family. Check out their website here: <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting/welcome-to-advent-2022/> It is filled with wonderful explanations, resources, activities, and Christ-centered fun for the whole family. Join us every Wednesday for our Advent services and be sure to send your children up to the weekly church service children messages to learn about the Advent wreath and receive an ornament making kit for the week. Let's pour our precious time and energy into the spiritual lives of our kids this season, an eternal investment that has the potential to shape their lives for years to come!

The Sunday School Christmas program will take place on Saturday, December 17, during the 5:00p service. Join us for a *Journey to Bethlehem* as told by our preschool-7th graders. This year's program involves classic Christmas carols, a short play, music from a few Academy of the Arts students, and more! We hope to see you there!



ACADEMY OF THE ARTS

We are excited to host **two recitals for our 45 Academy students** on Sunday, December 4 at 3:00p and 5:00p. Thank you to our director, Liz Edwards for all of her work in putting these recitals together!

Time to register for Second Semester classes in St. Michael Academy of the Arts!

- Academy private lessons and group classes begin January 9. Kindermusik classes resume Tuesday, January 10.
- **Register for new classes!** Sign up for music lessons by visiting our website at <https://academy.stmfw.org/>
- Thank you to Becky Grim and all who participated in our November art class. We look forward to offer more of these opportunities!

NEW BIBLE CLASS—INTENTIONAL ADVENT

Advent is a season meant to intentionally bring us to the celebration of Christmas and the coming of our Savior to this world. Yet, we usually have so many obligations and events that before we know it - the season has passed. On December 4, 11, and 18 at 9:30 am in Luther Hall, the Visual Faith group will be leading a Bible study designed to invite you to be intentional about this journey to the manger. During this time together you will be in group discussion while working on take-aways to aid in your reflection time throughout the week. This is a great study for anyone wanting to lean into their advent season.

NEW BIBLE CLASS—FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY

Join us during the Sunday school hour, January 15 through March 12. The cost per individual/family is \$79.99 which includes all the virtual materials needed for the class. If you would like a physical notebook, please order it online. Important Note: individual/family finances are not discussed during the class! Please register at <https://www.fpu.com/1156792>.

J.O.Y. GROUP (Just Older Youth 55 and older!)

Tuesday, December 6 and December 20

Pastor Bruckner leads us in Bible Study the first and third Tuesdays!



PRAYING FOR OUR NATION—December 7/21

Join us at 1:30p in the Lobby as we pray for our leaders and our nation. We will meet regularly on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Please connect with Christine Harrison for more information and to engage in this ministry (charrison75@comcast.net).

PURLS—December 6/20



This fun group meets from 1:00p-3:00p on the first and third Tuesday of each month. Everyone who knits, crochets or wants to learn is welcome to join! The St. Michael PURLS knit and crochet shawls that are available to give to a person who is ill, suffering a loss, or in the midst of a life crisis. A supply of shawls is available in the lobby for members to take and present to someone in need. Direct your questions to Pat Armstrong through the church office.

COFFEE BREAK WOMEN'S STUDY—January 11/25

New members welcome! We will meet the second and fourth Wednesday from 9:15a-10:45a in Luther Hall over coffee and God's Word as we study *Rediscover Jesus*. Questions? Contact Janet Olson at jmo11434@gmail.com. If you're planning ahead, mark your calendars for February 8/22, March 8/22 and April 12/26.



BOOK CLUB—Thursday, December 15, at 10:00a

Book club will meet the third Thursday of the month in the conference room. This month we are reading *Marple: Twelve New Mysteries* by Agatha Christie. Bring a children's book to donate to Kate's Kart as a Christmas gift!

CONNECT GROUPS

This season, St. Michael will be developing connect groups. Our prayer is that all members find and engage with a connect group on a regular basis. These groups will be a great way for all of us to find connection and belonging in the St. Michael community. If you are willing to lead a group or have questions, please contact our Director of Belonging, Celine Newman. If you would like to get connected to a group go to <https://stmfw.org/connect>.

MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST—December 17 in the Gym

All men are invited to attend this group to share in breakfast, devotion, and prayer. We meet at 8:00a on the third Saturday of each month. For more information, contact Dennis Brink at 238-4046 or Dennis.Brink@att.net.

LUTHERANS FOR LIFE

The mission of St. Michael's Lutherans for Life (LFL) Team is to equip our Church to be a gospel-driven champion of life from conception to natural death. For more information, contact Dennis Brink at 238-4046 or Dennis.Brink@att.net. Our next meeting is Tuesday, December 6 at 7:00p in room 13.



STEPHEN MINISTRY equips members of a congregation with the skills, knowledge, and spiritual support to provide distinctively Christian care to those who are hurting. Are Stephen Ministers Counselors? No, they are trained lay caregivers. Their role is to listen and care--not to give advice or counsel. Stephen Ministers are also trained to recognize when a care receiver's need exceeds what they can provide. When that happens, they work with care receivers to help them receive the level of care they really need. To request care from a Stephen Minister or find out more about Stephen Ministry at St. Michael, contact Linda Kraus at 446-4347.

WHO BENEFITS FROM STEPHEN MINISTRY?

Everybody benefits from Stephen Ministry. Those receiving care from Stephen Ministers benefit because they receive prayer and support throughout the crisis they face. Stephen Ministers benefit through the spiritual growth they experience from being involved in meaningful ministry. Our pastors benefit because caring ministry at St. Michael is expanded, and fewer people will slip through the cracks. Most of all you benefit from the knowledge that special care is available to you should you need it. In addition, you now have a place where you can refer a friend, neighbor, coworker, relative, or anyone else you know who is going through a difficult time so that they can receive special care when they need it most. Stephen Ministry makes St. Michael a much more caring place! Call Linda Kraus for more information at 446-4347.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The words merry and happy aren't always the feelings some of us have during this time of the year. Sometimes we wish for times past, people past and long for things not accomplished. Let a Stephen Minister listen to your thoughts or concerns. Man or woman we are here for you. Remembering Jesus is the greatest gift of the season! Call Linda Kraus for more information at 446-4347.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. Philippians 4:6

EMMANUEL-ST. MICHAEL LUTHERAN SCHOOL

With so many schools in the area to choose from, making the decision about where your child will begin their education is easier said than done. We invite you to join us on January 18 or February 15 for our Kindergarten Information & Enrollment session to get a clear picture of what ESM is all about. With a long history of academic achievement, Emmanuel – St. Michael Lutheran School exceeds the standard for excellence of education in northeast Indiana. However, at ESM we hope to provide even more. At ESM, our deep commitment to investing in the whole family while also providing excellent academics ensures that your child will be prepared for their future calling, confident in who they are in Christ, and have a sense of community as they grow. LEARN MORE AND REGISTER at www.esmeagles.com/enrollment/kindergarten-open-house

KINDERGARTEN Information and Enrollment Sessions:

- Wednesday, January 18 OR Wednesday, February 15
- 6:30pm - 8:00pm | Getz Road Campus - 2131 Getz Road

PRESCHOOL Information and Enrollment Sessions:

- Thursday, February 2 | Getz Road Campus - 2131 Getz Road
- Thursday, February 9 | Union Street Campus - 1123 Union Street
- 6:30pm - 7:30pm
- Information session for parents



QUESTIONS? - Contact Erin Clark, Director of Admissions | 260.422.6712 | eclark@esmeagles.com



EMMANUEL-ST. MICHAEL LUTHERAN PRESCHOOL

As a parent, we understand that no one knows your child's unique needs better than you. Finding a school that will reinforce the values you are instilling at home is crucial. Children at Emmanuel - St. Michael Lutheran Preschool play, learn, and actively explore God's world under the guidance of caring, dedicated staff. With TWO campuses and flexible program options, you'll be sure to find the right fit. We invite you to join us on February 2 or February 9 for our Preschool Information & Enrollment sessions to get a clear picture of what ESM is all about. LEARN MORE AND REGISTER at www.esmeagles.com/earlychildhood/enrollment/early-childhood-open-house



Exciting things are happening in ESM preschool! After reading the story “The Kindness Quilt”, preschoolers at the Union Campus met with their 8th grade buddies to create their own “Kindness Quilt” on which students were able to draw and list ways they can show kindness to others. Be sure to check it out in the lower level at the Union Campus. Preschoolers at the Getz Campus have been enjoying some outdoor learning experiences in the new outdoor learning space. Using medicine droppers with colored water is a wonderful way to create a masterpiece in the snow! Be sure to check out that space next time you are at St. Michael. December brings in the themes of Gingerbread and Jesus’ Birthday.



Great things happen every day in ESM preschool classrooms where children are encouraged to question as they play, learn and actively explore God’s world. If you would like to learn more, please contact Jennifer Ackmann at 422-6712 or at jackmann@esmeagles.com. Enrollment season will begin soon and we are expecting full preschool classes for the upcoming school year, so don’t delay! Come and see why preschool at ESM is a great place for children to learn and grow as they experience all the wonders of God’s world!

YOUTH welcomes Emma Deines in January!



St. Michael welcomes Emma Deines, our new Director of Christian Education (DCE) Intern! Emma is from St. Charles, Missouri, and grew up attending Immanuel Lutheran Church and Immanuel Lutheran Day School. Emma played field hockey at Lindenwood University before she felt God's call to Concordia University Nebraska. At Concordia, she took on a dual major of DCE and Elementary Education and will graduate following her internship.

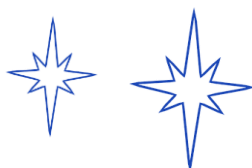
Emma loves to spend time with my family and friends and traveling to National Parks to hike. She enjoys watching and playing all sports, but her favorite is ultimate frisbee and mountain biking.

Emma is excited to join the staff at St. Michael! Her hope is that she can learn more about being a leader, grow as a DCE, and use what she has learned in school to help grow the community of St. Michael. She is looking forward to meeting the congregation and getting to know the city of Fort Wayne!

YOUTH NIGHTS IN DECEMBER

High School Youth will meet on Sunday, December 3 and 18 from 6:00p-8:00p

Middle School Youth will meet on Sunday, December 18 from 4:00p-6:00p



CLHS

CHRISTMAS AT THE EMBASSY



Join us for our annual Christmas at the Embassy concert at 4:00p on Sunday, December 11 at the Historic Embassy Theatre. Kick off the Christmas season with sounds from our bands, choirs and orchestra students. It's a tradition that you won't want to miss! Tickets are \$12 for students/seniors and \$18 for general admission.

JOIN US FOR THE CONCORDIA CLARITY WEBINARS

There's a lot to think about when finding the right school, so let's break it down! Join Concordia Lutheran High School administrators, coaches, and teachers as they talk about what makes Concordia special, from academics to extracurriculars to our foundation in faith. Register online <https://go.clhscadets.com/concordia-clarity-webinars> and watch past webinars at the same link. The final webinar is at 7 PM on December 6. Join us as we talk about Our Foundation in Faith with Mr. Jacob Pennekamp, Head of School.

GIVE A PIECE OF HISTORY THIS CHRISTMAS

Are you interested in purchasing a piece of Concordia's history? Concordia is selling pieces of the original 1963 gym floor in support of the continued renovations to The Cage. Prices range from \$30-\$125, as well as requests for other sizes. Purchase a piece by contacting Greg Rehberg at grehberg@clhscadets.com or (260) 483-1102.

ST. MICHAEL FINANCIAL UPDATE

January to October 2022

INCOME	Actual	Budgeted	Actual vs budget
Offerings	\$ 1,180,360	\$ 1,360,608	\$ (180,248)
Facility	\$ 5,888	\$ 6,250	\$ (362)
Interest	\$ 4,614	\$ -	\$ 4,614
Grants	\$ 46,369	\$ 43,321	\$ 3,048
Fellowship	\$ 613	\$ -	\$ 613
ESM/CLHS Support	\$ 4,557	\$ -	\$ 4,557
Misc.	\$ 8,140	\$ 6,100	\$ 2,040
Total Income	\$ 1,250,541	\$ 1,416,279	\$ (165,738)
EXPENSES			
Missions	\$ 20,507	\$ 30,116	\$ (9,609)
Education	\$ 542,233	\$ 540,125	\$ 2,108
Youth & Family	\$ 15,002	\$ 19,050	\$ (4,048)
Administrative	\$ 32,626	\$ 42,675	\$ (10,049)
Pastoral Support	\$ 5,118	\$ 7,933	\$ (2,815)
Worship	\$ 11,998	\$ 15,450	\$ (3,452)
Boards & Committees	\$ 17,168	\$ 10,723	\$ 6,445
Utilities, Maintenance & Supplies	\$ 145,345	\$ 137,576	\$ 7,769
Salaries	\$ 374,572	\$ 427,942	\$ (53,370)
Taxes and Benefits	\$ 111,635	\$ 146,403	\$ (34,768)
Nursery, Gym Setup, Worship	\$ 4,330	\$ 7,527	\$ (3,197)
Total Expenses	\$ 1,280,534	\$ 1,385,520	\$ (104,986)
Net Income (Loss)	\$ (29,993)	\$ 30,759	\$ (60,752)

End of the Year Projections

As reported at the congregation meeting on November 20, our YTD financial status as of the end of October shows \$30,000 less income than expenses. St. Michael has traditionally received around 11% of our annual offerings in December. **Therefore, we encourage you to complete your financial commitment for 2022 by the end of the month, or if possible, to include an extra gift to the Lord for the ministry of this congregation.**

At the same congregation meeting, a 2023 budget was approved with a slight increase in projected offerings. As you consider your giving plan for 2023, please keep the following in mind:

1. St. Michael Ministry Staff

This next year, 2023, will be the first year since 2019 that St. Michael is fully staffed. We thank God for providing a new Senior Pastor for our congregation this fall, and we look forward to adding a DCE Intern in January. While there has been an income surplus the past few years, it was largely because we didn't have all staff positions filled.

2. BELONG: Connect groups

"Belonging" is a major priority for us at St. Michael, so much so that we have added a Director of Belonging to our staff. We want everyone to feel a sense of belonging here and one way is to grow the number of Connect groups we have. If you haven't already, please sign up to be in one today.

3. BECOME: In-person attendance is increasing

The average in-person attendance is around 500 people per weekend, which has been increasing since coming out of the pandemic. We also know that some of our members continue to watch online.

4. BLESS: Outreach ministries and missions

St. Michael is blessed to have a Missional Pastor who is dedicated to identifying opportunities for us to connect with community ministry partners as well as missions near and far. There are opportunities available for everyone to bless others in a variety of ways.

5. MUSIC MINISTRY

The music talent and music commitment at St. Michael is phenomenal. Because of the musical gifts in our congregation, our Worship Director just added an additional praise band that will lead worship once a month on Saturday night. Additionally, there is numerous ways to be a part of the music ministry here.

There are a number of reasons to give thanks to God for the ministry at St. Michael. From one of our new members, Keagan Stuckey: "I am so thankful for each and every person who has helped in my walk with Christ. I am very thankful for the life that has been given to me and I can't wait to see what more He has in store for my future!" May 2023 be a year where we grow further in connecting people to Jesus and each other!

If you have any financial questions, feel free to reach out to Tammy Bruns, Executive Director, at tammy@stmfw.org. If you have not yet made your 2023 giving pledge, it's not too late to do so. Also, for those who use offering envelopes, pick up your 2023 envelopes from the table outside the church office.

Automated Giving

St. Michael offers electronic giving for members. Visit our website and click on "Giving".

THANK YOU to our Kroger shoppers!

St. Michael has 55 households that donated \$168 last quarter!

BELONG BECOME BLESS

REDEMPTION HOUSE

Instead of taking meals to the houses on December 4 and 18, we will have dinners and Christmas parties at both houses on **Saturday, December 17** at 6:00p.

The regularly scheduled meals will be January 8 at Wayne Street and January 15 at Fairfield. If you would like to help and join us, please contact Linda Chapman, 260-417-3052.

GAP MINISTRY—December 17/18

St. Michael believes in the importance of prayer. God Answers Prayer members want to pray for you and with you. Cindy Mendenhall will be available after the Saturday worship service; Christine Harrison and Diane Simms will be available Sunday in the conference room.

ST. MICHAEL MISSION

Connecting People to Jesus!



OUR MANDATE

"I appeal to you, by the mercies of God...be transformed." Romans 12:1-2

OUR MOTIVES

We are to be Christ Centered , Discipleship Directed, Family Focused and Mission Minded



LWML NEWS

Plans are in the works for the National Convention in Milwaukee, WI, June 21-25. Indiana District has a bus reserved to pick us up in Fort Wayne, deliver us to the convention and bring us home. The cost of the bus is \$150, so if you want to reserve a spot, let Linda Chapman know as soon as possible.



Camp Lutherhaven



IMPACT is a High School Winter Retreat, held January 13-15, planned and led by the Leadership Impact Team (LIT) of High School aged individuals that are selected by Camp Lutherhaven for the event. In other words, Impact is by High Schoolers for High Schoolers. Under the direction of Lutherhaven, this will be an event that focuses on connecting in relevant and authentic ways with participants. Because the leadership team is intentionally made up of peers and role models their own age, participants experience a ministry impact carefully and prayerfully crafted from those immersed in the uniqueness of teenagers growing with Jesus in a complicated world.



Thank You! Thank you! Thank you!

Dear friends at St. Michael,

Thank you to our entire St. Michael family for your prayers and cards at the loss of Randy's father. We are truly blessed to belong to such a caring congregation.

Randy, Tina and Jaden Hoover



Dear Christian Friends,

This is not how I planned to begin my life in Columbus, Ohio! Your wonderful cards are a boost to my spirits. I am thrilled to hear from you all. I really need to be reminded that God is with me. Thank you for all your prayers,

Mickey Buschman



Dear JOY Group,

Thank you so much for your love, care and support for ESM! The teachers were overwhelmed by St. Michael's support for them as the many gifts were delivered to the classrooms. Thank you for organizing this event to help spread joy! May God richly bless each of you as you so faithfully serve Him! With admiration and thanks,

Jen Ackmann



Dear JOY Group and St. Michael,

Thank you for buying the PE department new footballs and more! These items will be helpful throughout the coming years!

Kevin McQuigan



Dear JOY Group,

Thank you for spear heading the donation of items needed by ESM teachers! The donated balls and bean bags are a great help! Thank you for your generous spirit and servant heart!

Gretchen Weerts



Dear St. Michael,

THANK YOU for your time and money spent to support the Union Street Resource Room serving grades 4-8! You are blessed to be a blessing in the Christian ministry at ESM!

Kelly Steffen



Dear JOY Group,

What a PERFECT name for your wonderful group, and also the perfect word to describe what your loving actions bring to others! I am full of GRATITUDE as well, as I set my eyes on all of the donated goodies for my classroom and students! We are already putting them to good use in 6-7th grade! How extremely KIND of you to think of the teachers in this way! We are so thankful for the generosity of the St. Michael members and definitely thankful for everyone's prayers! ESM is blessed with two caring and supportive congregations! May God bless you all!

Kristen Labahn



Serving in December 2022

	Dates	Saturday	Sunday	
			8:00	10:45a
Altar Guild	Liz Edwards, Karen Martin, Sherry Buuck			
Elders	December	Ryan Meyer	Mark Muntzinger	Zach Evans
Acolytes	3/4	Reid and Aaron McDonald	Savannah Bostwick, Jordyn Setser	Maggie Evans, Henry Mueller
	10/11	Caroline Stamm, Emilia Yoder	Adriana Briney	Ethan Loggins, Jacob Schult
	17/18	Caroline Bartel, Kain Sprunger	Gracelyn Sprunger	Riley McNamara, Matteo Passoni
	24	Reid and Aaron McDonald, Maggie Evans, Naomi Hendrickson, Ashlyn Reiter, James Sprunger, Avery Meeks, Kingston Sprunger		
	25 10:00a	Will Biggs, Jaden Hoover		
	31/1 10a	Adam Ruch	Will Biggs, Ben Fowls, Gracelyn Sprunger, Kingston Sprunger	

December Anniversaries

God's blessings to...	Day	Years	God's blessings to...	Day	Years
Christopher and Gina Connelly	1	21	Mike and Glenda Birkenbeul	18	51
Mike and Tamara Pick	2	39	Sam and Jan Hoffman	23	33
Kent and Susan Scheiwe	4	29	Troy and Camille Bartel	27	25
Steve and Carolyn Loggins	7	48	Chris and Alicia Levitt	27	19
Michael and Jo Sienk	7	54	Bill and Marilyn Barlow	28	65
Jeff and Jenny Fearnow	8	15	Rick and Kelli Swaidner	28	23
Jim and Mitzie Reiter	11	58	Mike and Mary Ratty	29	43
Chris and Brenda Williams	11	30	Jared and Lisa Zumstein	29	15
Tommy and Karen Smith	16	34	Mark and Danielle Webb	30	28
			Matt and Hallie Urban	31	5

BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS—December 17/18

Please pray for Barrett Schroeder; Brae Sprunger; Sophia Stir; Selma Urban; Vivian Vachon; Emerson Wolfe; Freddie Wren

ELDERS

Beginning January 1, 2023, St. Michael will resume its practice of having the common cup as an option at Sunday worship services when Holy Communion is offered. Both individual cup and common cup will be available on these Sundays.

WHO IS YOUR ELDER?

If you are not sure who your elder is, you may call the church office at 432-2033. You are encouraged to contact your elder any time you feel a spiritual need or concern! Find their email below and phone number in F1Go. They are also listed on the church bulletin board!

Craig Patterson cpatterson@beckmanlawson.com
 Ryan Meyer ryanlmeyer68@gmail.com
 Adam Hahn..... jjandak@cinergymetro.net
 John Baker..... jdbake22@gmail.com
 Bob Kaiser bobrkaiser@live.com
 Harry Jones..... hmejones71@aol.com
 John Hein..... JHein@brotherhoodmutual.com
 John Hendrickson.... jlh1051@gmail.com
 Keith Miller..... keithcherimiller@frontier.com

Mark Muntzingermark@marksbodyshopincftw.com
 Michael Kuhnmdkuhn8214@gmail.com
 Nathan Nix.....nathananix@gmail.com
 Paul Selking.....pselking1@gmail.com
 Zach Evanszdevans@hotmail.com
 Tom Latin..... thomasjlatin@hotmail.com
 Jeremy Allyn.....energymanallyn@gmail.com
 Bob Cole.....bob51cole@aol.com