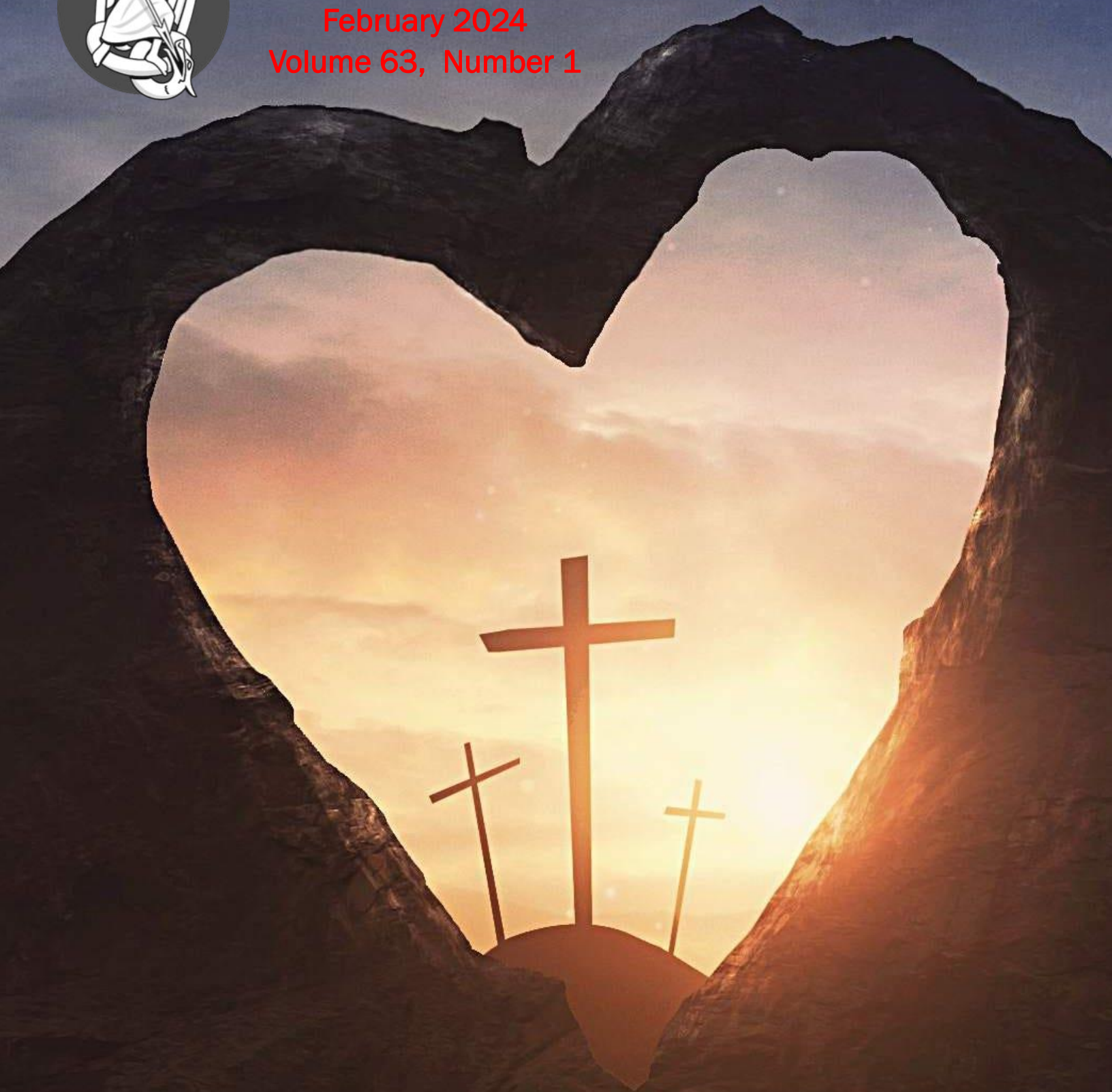




THE MIGHTY MESSENGER

February 2024
Volume 63, Number 1



CONNECT WITH OUR CHURCH & SCHOOL FAMILY AT [MIGHTYMESSENGERS.ORG](https://mightymessengers.org), ON FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE

“WHAT’S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH LENT?”

Ash Wednesday this year is both the beginning of the Lenten season and also St. Valentine’s Day. That’s a unique combination that does not come along very often. Last time Ash Wednesday was also St. Valentine’s Day was over a hundred years ago (in 1923) and then again ninety years ago in 1934. It will happen again in 2029 but then that’s it for the rest of the century. As Ash Wednesday is characterized by solemn pondering of the passion of Christ, along with repenting of sin in dust and ashes, we can’t help but ask the Tina Turner question, “what’s love got to do with it?”

If we define love as merely a mushy feeling of warmth and affection, or still worse, a pleasurable feeling of personal gratification, then it surely does seem to be the opposite of Lent. But what if we define love the way that the Bible does? Take, for example, the so-called “Love Chapter” of 1 Corinthians 13. Here *“love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends”* (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a). That sounds more like Lent because it sounds more like Jesus – sacrificial love that lays down one’s life for another (see John 15:13).

Jesus’ follower John describes himself as *“the disciple whom Jesus loved”* (John 13:23, etc.). He is the one who quotes Jesus saying to Nicodemus that *“God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). Love for us and for all people was God’s motivation for doing what was necessary to save us, even at the price of giving His Son Jesus into death for us. In his first epistle, St. John elaborates on this further and goes so far as to say that *“God is love”* (1 John 4:8) and what He has done for us in Christ is the very definition of love. *“In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through*

Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10).

As God takes the lead in loving, we respond by the power of His love and love Him back, and among other things, we do so by loving others. St. John says as much when he writes: *“We love because He first loved us”* (1 John 4:19) and *“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another”* (1 John 4:11). But what does it mean to love God back? How do we go about loving one another as we have been loved? This is where the 10 Commandments can give us direction. They always accuse us and convict us of sin, but even when we know the forgiveness of sin through faith in Jesus Christ, we can still benefit from the 10 Commandments as our guide for Christian living and as our response to the love that God has so lavished upon us through the gift of His Son.

As he writes to the Romans, St. Paul is the one who reminds us that love is the essence of God’s Law. *“Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’”* (Romans 13:8-9). So the 10 Commandments can be summed up with the single word, “love,” and subdivided into the two tablets of the Law, namely “Love for God” (Commandments 1-3) and “Love for Neighbor” (Commandments 4-10). Our Lenten journey this year is going to explore the meaning of each of the 10 Commandments and most importantly make application of them to our daily lives. Please join us in worship every weekend and every Wednesday as we learn what love has to do with our relationship with God and with one another in Christ.



WE ARE CALLED

to make disciples of *Jesus*

The vision of St. Michael Lutheran is to be a growing congregation within our local community that is “*Making Mighty Messengers for Christ*” by helping people:

DEVELOP, by the power of the Holy Spirit working through His Word and Sacraments, a more vibrant and personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ that expresses itself in consistent prayer and worship; and to

GAIN practical, relevant, biblical insights for faithful Christian living both through personal Bible study and through our various Christian educational offerings such as Sunday School, Bible class, St. Michael Lutheran School; and to

BELONG to a loving and caring family of faith with a solid doctrinal heritage through active membership, ministry involvement, and Small Group participation; and to

GIVE of ourselves to others in loving Christian service and evangelistic witness within the congregation and beyond it to our local community and world.



TOWN HALL MEETING:
Sunday, February 4
between services in the Gym

VOTERS' ASSEMBLY:
Sunday, February 18
following the late service in Sanctuary.

+ Lead Me to the Cross +

“The Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ” (Galatians 3:24)

Date	Liturgical Calendar	Topic
February 14	Ash Wednesday (6:30 pm, and for all the Wednesdays thereafter)	<i>Introduction: Love and the Law</i>
February 17/18	First Sunday in Lent	<i>First Commandment: Have No Other Gods</i>
February 21	Lenten Midweek 2	<i>Second Commandment: Hallow God's Name</i>
February 24/25	Second Sunday in Lent	<i>Third Commandment: Worship God</i>
February 28	Lenten Midweek 3	<i>Fourth Commandment: Honor Authority</i>
March 2/3	Third Sunday in Lent	<i>Fifth Commandment: Don't Murder</i>
March 6	Lenten Midweek 4	<i>Sixth Commandment: Don't Commit Adultery</i>
March 9/10	Fourth Sunday in Lent	<i>Seventh Commandment: Don't Steal</i>
March 13	Lenten Midweek 5	<i>Eighth Commandment: Don't Lie</i>
March 16/17	Fifth Sunday in Lent	<i>Ninth Commandment: Don't Covet Another's House</i>
March 20	Lenten Midweek 6	<i>Tenth Commandment: Don't Covet Anything</i>

WORSHIP

Gathering around God's Word and Sacraments to receive His gifts & give Him glory.

We value worship, as we gather around God's Word and Sacraments, that is meaningful and uplifting, including clear, relevant preaching. We appreciate both traditional liturgy and hymns as well as contemporary music and desire variety and quality in all our worship services so that we might have a meaningful experience of praising and glorifying God with the best that we have.

Colossians 3:16-17



“THE CALM OF CHRIST”

I'm sure you have seen at least one movie or TV show about Jesus and his life and ministry. Some are better than others, but one common theme that seems to run through all of them is how Jesus is always calm. He is never flustered, but always speaks and acts with a great and kind serenity. This is juxtaposed to the confusion of the disciples, the wrath of the Romans, and the terrible living conditions. Most of the world had to undergo at the time.

Apply this to the actual gospel accounts, and you can hear through the words of scripture the calm of Jesus Christ. More and more we need to remember this calm of Jesus, especially because the world is getting less and less so. Nations are constantly rising against nations, and terrible tragedies seem to fill the news on a more regular basis.

Apply this of Christ to your own, and we recognize a couple of things: our lives may be fine, but there are seasons of stress and anxiety. We desperately need the calm of Jesus in a daily way, because our days can be long, difficult, and downright sad at times. We need the peace that only Jesus can give, because of the very fact that we cannot get it from ourselves or from any other person.

As we are filled with the peace of Jesus and we have also been called to extend this peace to the people that Jesus brings into our lives. Go with Joy; you are at peace with God. Take the peace that God gives you by the power of his Holy Spirit, through the power of his sacraments, and the peace that runs through every single page of scripture.

Go in peace, and serve the Lord.

Pastor Maske



Jesus Lifts You Up

February 4, 2024 – Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany

Rev. Shayne Jonker

Think of every healing you experience, whether it be getting over a cold or the flu, or something even greater, as more than dodging the bullet or getting a little favor from God. Think of it as a little resurrection. A little instance of being lifted up by the hand of God. Think of it, not as an end, but as a little sneak preview of a greater coming attraction, the day that Jesus comes to you and extends His hand to you and lifts you up from death to eternal life.

Sermon Text: Mark 1:31

Readings: Psalm 147:1-11; Isaiah 40:21-31; Mark 1:29-39

Significant Days Ahead

February 11, 2024 – Transfiguration Observed

Rev. Paul Shoemaker

Jesus transfigured Himself, revealing His glory to Peter, James, and John. He knew there would be significant days ahead, especially during Holy Week. By revealing His glory Jesus was sharing with His disciples what was in store for them in the glory of heaven. As we have significant days in our lives, we remember the transfiguration of Jesus to encourage us in our life's journey.

Sermon Text: Mark 9:2-9

Readings: Psalm 50:1-6; Exodus 34:29-35; Mark 9:2-9

What Good is This?

February 18, 2024 – First Sunday in Lent

Rev. William Mueller

Genesis 22 takes us to one of the more challenging sections of God's Word. Does God condone sacrificing your children? Of course not! But what is God up to in this incident where He tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac? What good is God up to in our lives when He allows all sorts of pain and problems?

Sermon Text: Genesis 22:1-18

Readings: Psalm 25:1-10; Genesis 22:1-18; Mark 1:9-15

Life's Greatest Question

February 25, 2024 – Second Sunday in Lent

Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

Can you answer *Life's Greatest Question*? Your eternal destiny, as well as your approach to everyday life, rests upon your answer. What's the question? How will you answer?

Sermon Text: Mark 8:29-31

Readings: Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 5:1-11; Mark 8:27-38



*We remember to pray for
Homebound friends:*

Caroline Barkow, Sally Beck,
Judy Chumas, Shirley
Cosgrove, Ginny Evans,
Dorothy Ferguson, Audrey
Glover, Maxine June, Bernie &
Pauline Kubacki, Phyllis
Kurlowicz, Carol Leipzig, Beth
Lowman, Carol McCarty*,
Nancy Miller, Dean Monck,
Joan Pfister, Wilma Ritchie,
Vic Schroeder, Marilyn Sible,
Joyce Stafford, Darlene Surch,
Carol Truhn, Ernie & Judi
VanOrman, Sharon White

TV MINISTRY YOU CAN TRUST!

[Access for Kalamazoo and Portage](#)

**Tuesday, Thursday & Sunday
6 AM & 10 AM**

Spiritual Channel 187

- 30-Minute Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod worship service
- Produced by Lutherans for the homebound, hospitalized...
- Includes the Gospel, Epistle, and Sermon by LCMS pastors
- Music by choirs, soloists, and small groups

Where else can I find these programs?

- ◆ Download the Hope-Full Living app on your phone



- ◆ Listen to Audio Only files at this worshipanew.org link
[Audio files](#)

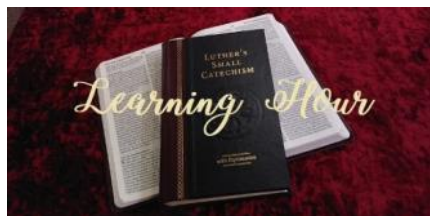
DISCIPLESHIP

Christian education is vital to our Spiritual health and growth.

*We value **discipleship** through the Christian education of children and adults of all ages as essential and vital to our spiritual health and growth. While we highly value people of every age, we are especially excited about our population of young families, many of whom come into our congregation through our Christian education programs for children.*

Luke 18:15-17





SUNDAY MORNINGS 9:45-10:45 AM

WHY A LEARNING HOUR?

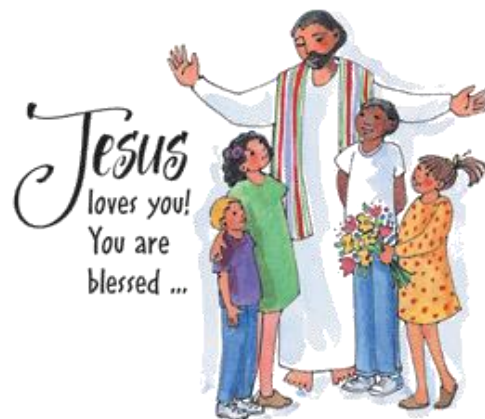
Christ called His followers to know the truth that would set them free, and the Bible repeatedly warns us not to fall prey to teaching that is attractive but empty. The Learning Hour feeds our minds and hearts on goodness and truth, helping us to better understand our faith and better resist the many things that would pull us away from the Gospel. Spending time together in God's Word is also a great way to develop deeper friendships.

Continuing Studies:

XPLORE - A study that examines the biblical basis of missions, the current state of world evangelization, the major world religions and unreached people groups, and the five habits all believers can adopt to grow in a World Christian lifestyle. You'll journey through God's Word and see His passion for His glory to be enjoyed by all peoples on earth.- You'll focus on how to participate in God's Work by Praying, Sending, Welcoming, Going, and Mobilizing.

The Engagement Project - *Learn more with these lessons that continue into 2024.* Go on a marvelous quest of seeking the face of God and seeing the Crown Jewel in His nature—a quest we hope and pray will deeply transform the Body of Christ. This will lead us to understand where we are in God's Meta-Narrative, and help us grasp the incredible vision that God has entrusted the primary work of the Kingdom to the common, everyday Christian. If God should so bless, and the Body of Christ would simply begin to do what He has asked us to do, it can change our lives, radically transform our families, and by God's grace, turn the world right side up. Learn more with these lessons that continue into 2024.

Exploring Our Faith - *What does it mean to have Christian faith? What do Lutherans believe? How is this similar and/or different from the doctrines taught by other denominations and religions?* You may be asking yourself these questions, especially if you are new to the Lutheran church. *What makes Saint Michael Lutheran Church special? How do we care for one another and become involved in what God is doing among us?* These and other questions may be yours, if you are thinking about joining our congregation, even by transfer from another LCMS church. Or perhaps you have these questions despite being a long time member! This course will address these questions and, if you are a prospective member, prepare you to join, you will find that our faith is Bible based, and you will get to know some of the existing ministry leaders in our congregation.



SHEPHERD GROUPS

Lay Minister	Family Names Start with	Family Names & include
Zachary Button 810-844-6870	A	Boelman
Harold DeFouw 269-569-6869	Bohren	Chadderdon
Dan Bryer 269-323-7416	Chilcott	D
Mel Schroeder 734-646-9652	E	Franzen
Dave Drzewiecki 616-560-2175	Frommann	G
Dave Johnson 269-599-2195	H	H
Bill Schinzer 269-366-5594	I	J
Ryan Bigelow 269-838-6062	Kahle	Lapekas
Mark Kahle 402-730-1914	Lausman	McNees
Howard McNees 269-720-3857	Messing	Nelson
Jeff Burnett 269-491-3700	Neumann	P
Andy Allan 269-370-7052	Q	Shook
Greg Wedel 312-961-4636	Shuler	Stolsky
Matt Heintz 269-290-8507	Sullivan	T
Arlan Wendzel 269-816-5632	U	Z

THERE IS ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW TO FIND IN THE LIBRARY AT ST. MICHAEL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL.

For your convenience, new books are on display just inside the door leading from the Welcome Center into the library. Our newest selections are all from Concordia Publishing House (CPH), the publishing arm of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

New CPH titles for adults include:

- Meditations on Divine Mercy by Johann Gerhard
- Blessed Be His Name by Kevin S. Golden
- *Afraid: demon possession and spiritual warfare in America* by Robert H. Bennett
- *Deliver Us: God's rescue story in Exodus* by R. Reed Lessing
- *Faith That Engages the Culture* by Alfonso Espinosa
- *The Lutheran Difference: an explanation & comparison of Christian beliefs* by Edward A. Engelbrecht (editor)
- *The Apocrypha: the Lutheran edition with notes* by Edward A. Engelbrecht (editor)
- *Making the Case for Christianity* by Korey D. Maas and Adam S. Francisco (editors)
- *The Big Book of New Testament Questions and Answers* by Michael Eschelbach
- *The Work of His Hands* by Jeffrey N. Williams
- *I Will Grieve for the Suicide* by Peter Preus
- *Jesus Said What?* By Christopher Kennedy
- New CPH titles for children include:
- *Arch Books Treasury: Life of Jesus*
- *Icky Sticky, Hairy Scary Bible Stories: 60 Poems for Kids*
- *Best-Loved Easter Stories: a collection of Arch Books*
- *A Child's Book of Prayers*
- *Not-So-Nice Bible Stories: Master Criminals*
- *The Work of His Hands for Kids* by Jeffrey N. Williams
- A variety of selections from the Arch Book series



If magazines are more your reading style, our rotating magazine display recently underwent an upgrade. You now will find magazines easier to peruse with the helpful addition of labels identifying each title. Of the 27 magazines on display, many are familiar to LC-MS Lutherans, such as *The Reporter* as well as *Lutherans Engage*, but you also will find other interesting choices, such as *Biblical Archaeology* or *The Joyful Noiseletter*.

Remember, if your name is in the church directory, then you have a library card on file and may borrow materials for 28 days. To assist you, the library is staffed with a volunteer every Sunday between services from 9:30 to 11 a.m.



LISTEN

Proverbs 3:5-6 - *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*



Isn't it interesting how God speaks to us in so many different ways? He speaks to us through his word, in nature, through other people, in tough circumstances, and in times of peace and quiet. During extremely emotional events in my life, God has spoken to me in Sunday sermons and most recently through a time of quiet and peace. It's as if he's telling me, "You waste too much of your time running from one place to another. You need to be quiet and find me in the quiet."

God can be subtle in pointing you in the right direction. However, if you don't recognize and act on those subtle hints, he eventually gets more serious. He goes to great lengths to get you to do what he knows is best! That's why I am sitting at home with my foot up contemplating His love for me.

When I lost Bud, God brought me peace in knowing that Bud was with him and finally healthy. He also showed me that I could dedicate more of my life to Him. As painful as that lesson was, I did experience his peace and found a more frequent prayer life and regular Bible Study time. I also threw myself into doing my work at church. Unfortunately, I still was not giving God the personal time he wanted. So, recently, God became a little more persistent in humbling me and making me appreciate what others do in His service and for His people.

Before surgery I was incredibly stressed and fearful. I didn't know what was going to happen. I broke out in welts thinking about the dangers of surgery, having someone else take care of me, and not being able to drive for eight weeks. I couldn't see beyond having surgery and being stuck at home.

After having the surgery, I felt humbled and was able to enjoy the company of my daughter. I had no desire to get out and no desire to go shopping. I was able to appreciate the people who worked behind the scenes by bringing us meals and those who reached out in prayer for recovery. I am really realizing how much more important relationships are than keeping busy.

Once again, God brought me peace in a stressful situation. He reminded me of how he always provides, and he again showed me the importance of being a part of his family. Let me encourage you to look at whatever struggle you're going through today as God redirecting you and offering you his peace. Take time today to meet him in the peace and quiet.

Blessings, *Virginia Hetrick* – Prayer Coordinator

HAVE YOU SEEN THE **PAPER GATOR** IN THE PARKING LOT?



*We earn money when you
recycle paper in our bin...*

The paper will be shredded and processed into hydro seeding mulch, lawn establishment products, lawn repair products, Fresh News® Cat Litter, dog litter, Fresh News® Small Animal Bedding, Fresh News® Small Animal Litter or recycled at paper mills, cellulose insulation manufacturers or other recycling facilities.

WHAT CANNOT GO IN THE BIN?

· Plastic · Metal · Trash · Glass · Cardboard

WHAT CAN GO IN THE BIN?

- Newsprint
- Catalogs/Magazines
- Junk Mail · Phone Books
- Office/School paper
- Hard and soft cover books
- Paperboard (*Grocery Item boxes*)
- Standard staples & paperclips are ok
- Shredded paper





St. Michael Lutheran School

[Www.stmikeschool.org](http://www.stmikeschool.org)

Education With Christ at the Heart

OPEN HOUSE

February 6, 2024

6:30 - 7:30 PM



St. Michael Lutheran School and Preschool, the only Christian school in Portage, is now enrolling for 2024-2025. St. Michael offers Christ-centered, quality academic programs for grades Preschool through 8th. The program is open to all. Tuition Assistance is available for those who qualify.

Christ for Kids Childcare center offers Christ-centered childcare for children as young as six weeks. Programs offer low student/teacher Christ for Kids offers year around, full-time childcare, Monday through Friday.





EVANGELISM

Reaching out with the saving Gospel and proclaiming His truth to all people.

*We value **evangelism** and believe that the good news of the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the main message of the church. We care about meeting all human needs but recognize that the most important need people have is for a love relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and so we reach out with this saving Gospel and proclaim the truth of God's Word to all people without compromise. Acts 1:8*

SEE WHAT'S (WHO'S) GOING UP TO LAC BROCHET

The children of Lac Brochet, Manitoba were very blessed to receive the Christmas stockings and the special gifts within them that we mailed up to them in big boxes back in November. Now, through the knitting group that Mary Wright has at St. Michael, we became connected to a woman and her husband who over a three year period knitted 17 blankets that they donated to us to send to Lac Brochet. So once again we packed up big boxes and mailed them to the far north. Dora Antsanen, a Dene friend of our LAMP team, works for an organization who will deliver the blankets to people in need within the community. We are blessed to continue to encourage our friends in Lac Brochet both with the warmth of these blankets and especially with the warming message of the love of Christ.



With the beginning of this new year comes the time to prepare to travel once again up to Lac Brochet. We have not yet set the dates, but it will likely be July 25 to August 4 or August 1-11. If you are interested in hearing more about the LAMP ministry and the opportunity to travel with us this summer, we plan to have an **informational meeting between services on February 11 (9:45 am in the library)**. Feel free to attend if you would like to be a more informed prayer partner for the team and community, and please attend also if you would like to learn more about what it would mean to be a part of the traveling team.

EXPERIENCE
blown up stories
that share life's
biggest truths



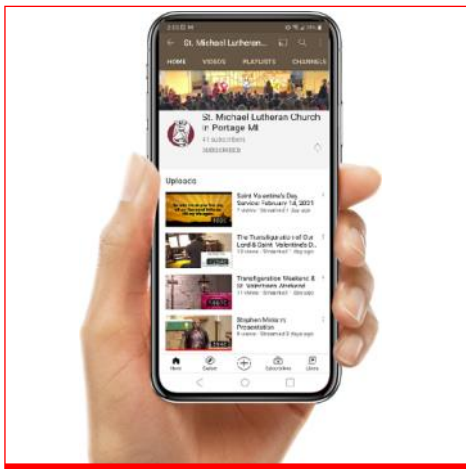
*Pancake Dinner
Served by Youth*

5-6:30PM

SMLS Students Sing at 6:15PM

February 13 at 6:30PM

**St. Michael
Lutheran Church**



STAY CONNECTED

YouTube YouTube

On the St. Michael page, You can find sermon videos, Bible classes, guest speakers, children's devotions and Vacation Bible School lessons. Find us at: St. Michael Lutheran Church in Portage MI

Facebook

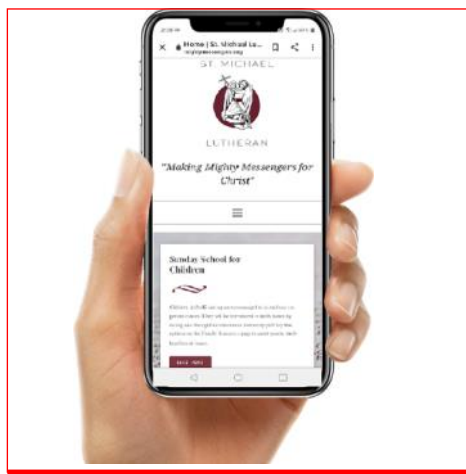
Find devotions, special event announcements and more:
@StMichaelLutheranChurchPortageMI

Office Contacts:

Church + 269-327-7832
School + 269-327-0512
Christ For Kids + 269-327-4889

mightymessengers.org

St. Michael's website is full of helpful information.



YOUR MISSION DOLLARS AT WORK . . .

Thank you for your prayers and generous support over the last year! 2023 was a year of establishing rhythm in the congregations, as well as strating new ones (SanJuan). We are looking forward to this new year with new opportunities to serve the community and most importantly to share the Gospel.



We ask for your prayers for a new young adult/university ministry gathering, the establishing of the mental health clinic in the mercy house, and for new members in Ponce. -- James & Christel Neuendorf

Pastor Jonathan Naumann prepares for class in the new regional office, in his role as Chaplain to all missionaries in the Latin America and Caribbean region.



Pastor Jonathan has been teaching a course on the Lutheran Confessions, focusing on the Formula of Concord. He comments, *"Leading this course in Spanish, as well as preaching in Spanish, attending faculty meetings in Spanish, and having conversations with people in Spanish (who know no English) has really challenged my language skills, and I dare say improved them. I have a long ways to go, but it is exciting to see how far I can go this year."*

Pastor Jonathan made visits in September and October to Peru and the Cayman Islands to encourage our LCMS missionaries in those locations. What a great surprise it was when Pastor Jonathan discovered that he is related to about half of the members of Safe Harbor Lutheran mission in Grand Cayman! His grandfather, Rev. Henry Naumann, who was an LCMS missionary in Cuba, married a member of his congregation who had come from Grand Cayman. After Castro became the dictator of Cuba, many of her relatives returned to the Caymans. And so with joy, Pastor not only met relatives, but witnessed the continuing fruit of his grandfather's mission work in Cuba.



OUR MISSION

"South Asia Lutheran Mission is organized to promote education and literacy, through teaching and publishing outstanding resources, with emphasis on the needs of South Asia."

Pastor Gorkhali, who in 2022 had observed Pastor Naumann's teaching of the Small Catechism in Nepal, himself taught the Small Catechism in five locations in Nepal, in 2023. The teachers, building upon the publishing work of SALM from 2022, in which we produced the illustrated Nepali edition of Luther's Small Catechism, were able to distribute almost 2,500 copies of this book to the men, women and children who participated in the teaching events.

SALM Director, Pastor Edward Naumann also visited Kenya, to teach at the Lutheran School of Theology, a Confessional Lutheran Seminary in Kimuka, Kenya, where students from different countries in Africa gather for training, to become certified and accredited pastors and evangelists.



How to Donate: You can make a donation in two ways: by check, made out to SALM and mailed to:
South Asia Lutheran Mission, 782 15th Street Oakmont, PA 15139
Or by secure card payment, by visiting our website:
SouthAsiaLutheranMission.com/support

Thank you for your support!





GIVE LIFE TO YOUR STORY™

Dear St. Michaels Lutheran Family,

Thank you for your partnership in God's mission to reach the youth of Kalamazoo and Colonial Acres! We have had a front row seat to watch God do some pretty amazing things! In our city life club, we have some awesome and faithful volunteers who love on these teens, just like I would picture Jesus loving on them. We have heard teens say things like, "I feel loved and welcomed here," "I feel like I belong," and "Thank you for having this space." These comments are proof that God is working in their lives.

I just want to relive three events we had this year that were life-changing for our teens outside our weekly clubs. In March, we held a "lock-in," where we stayed up all night playing games, eating nachos and a 5am ice cream bar. However, in the middle of all that, we had a time of testimony where three leaders shared their stories followed by a time of sharing the Word. As a result, some kids accepted Christ!



Then there was camp! What a difficult but amazing week it was, partnering with Stateline YFC to put on a great week of camp for teens. Most of those teen had never been out of the city before. They were able to leave behind their difficult home environment and have a chance to meet God in a new way. From Kalamazoo, over 20 teens made first-time commitments and 30 teens recommitted their lives to following Jesus. Then we had JLK in Colonial Acres, which was an amazing event itself for the community. The community was loved on, and my team and I were able to connect with 22 new families, some of which have started attending club regularly.

Lastly, I want to finish up by sharing what God did this Christmas. We had a partnering church provide laundry baskets full of household items for all our teens' families. Then another partner came alongside us and provided Christmas meals to everyone as well. Our teens and their families are feeling God's love through you all and your wonderful partnership in the work that God is doing in Colonial Acres.

Ways you can be praying:

- For more ministry leaders to love on teens.
- Our relationships to grow with the families of our teens.
- That 2024 would be a year 16 of our teens accept Christ into their lives.
- For God to continue to grow me as a leader in this ministry and that He will use me beyond ways that we can imagine.
- For camp 2024 meetings starting back up in January.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler and Meghan".

Tyler and Meghan Gjeltema
City Life Site Director - Colonial Acres

MAKING MIGHTY MESSENGERS FOR CHRIST

Recently, a question was posed to me from the KIDZMATTER.COM ministry team. They asked about wisdom and important steps for making a Vacation Bible School successful, as well as what are some really good reasons why to continue hosting a program. I wanted to share my answers with you, the friends of St. Michael that have made it possible in recent years...

Dear Children's Ministry Leaders of the World,

We finished another wonderful Vacation Bible School (VBS) program, just six months ago. The blessings were many! Everyone loves to hear about numbers; it is the way so many people judge success . . . or lack thereof. I have a phrase I like to use, "Numbers matter—every number has a story, and every story matters to God."

We got to present the Gospel to 197 kids attending throughout the 5-days, and we had 216 people attend a celebration for the whole family and congregation, as part of our Saturday evening worship time.

Despite the great turnout, it was the easiest VBS yet for me as the leader. You see, I had in mind to "retire" afterwards... But I just couldn't do it! I love VBS!! We always say it is for the "Gospel Outreach" to the community, but it is just as much of an uplifting, faith-growing event for all the volunteers, and a witness to members of the church.

So I thought I would share the great wisdom I've gained that allowed us to host such a successful VBS so easily. Here are some simple steps I recommend you follow at your church this year:

1. Pray continually ... and plan early for some Awesome GOD-filled goals.
2. Make sure you have 76 incredibly responsible, creative adults volunteering to help you out. Volunteers are the heart and soul of any successful VBS!
3. Insist that 90% of those are returning from serving last year, so they know exactly what to do and can provide an amazing program for the kids each session with minimal instruction from you.
4. Then find a few extraordinarily talented new folks to replace the people that have moved on during the last year. There is always room for more!
5. Get about 32 super-responsible middle school and high school students to be Crew Leaders and Team Leaders. I find it works really well if they're the most faithful, encouraging group of teens you've ever worked with.
6. Find a lady who says, "Make snacks for 305 people each day - for five days? No problem. I'm on it." Proactive problem-solving minimizes stress and ensures a smoother execution!
7. This one may be tricky, but it's worth a shot - hope that you have friends to make and take care of the most amazing decorations for you.
8. Finally, have even more adults and students contact you and volunteer right before VBS - so many that you struggle to figure out where to use them all. Trust me, this is a problem you can get used to! ~ Thank You, God!

Well, that's it. Now you know the secrets and your next VBS is sure to be a breeze. I am looking forward to this season, myself!

Tammy Songer

- Vacation Bible School Coordinator
St. Michael Lutheran Church, Portage, Michigan



COMING...
JULY 21-27,
2024

FELLOWSHIP

Reconciled through Christ, actively loving and caring for one another.

LUTHERAN SCHOOL WEEK:

Education with Christ at the Heart

CONNECTED

We value fellowship and want a friendly church that is like a loving family that actively cares for one another in times of need. When inevitable conflicts arise among us, we desire to be reconciled to one another, to communicate honestly and lovingly with each other, and to worship, work, and play together in peace and harmony.

Acts 2:42-47



School Devotions each day.



Fun glow-in-the-dark play at Airway Lanes.



Women's MINISTRY BRUNCH

10:00AM - NOON

Saturday, March 16

COME ENJOY GREAT
FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP
WITH A FRIEND OR
FAMILY MEMBER

RSVP TO CHURCH OFFICE PLEASE!



677 Romence Rd, Portage

MAKING MIGHTY MESSENGERS FOR CHRIST

AFTERNOON OF AWARENESS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING EVENT

The hosts of the Human Trafficking Event would like to thank everyone for attending this important conference. We were very pleased with the attendance and your willingness to learn about this topic. We would like to thank everyone who assisted us in preparing for, setting up, helping us with tech, and allowing the event to be run so smoothly. The pies and refreshments were amazing! Blessings, Donna Zelner & Renita Wollberg



CELEBRATING THE SANCTITY OF ALL LIFE STAGES

With a variety of hands-on and informational activities for all ages
LIFE TOGETHER in fun and fellowship! Provided by Parish Education Board



SERVICE

Good stewardship of time, talents and treasure for the work of ministry.



We value service and good stewardship of our time, talents, and treasure within our congregation and community. We put a high premium on the volunteer ministry of our members, believing that the primary role of our professional church workers is not to do all the ministry themselves but to “equip the saints for the work of ministry.”

*Ephesians 4:12
Romans 12:4-8*

KNITTERS SHARING BLESSINGS WITH MANY



From the most darling baby sweaters, hats & scarves for the homeless to beautiful patterns of afghans, these ladies are busy. They meet every Friday afternoon from 2:30-5pm in Allan Hall and you are invited to join them. Shown here are 17 very warm blankets that will be shipped to our friends in Lac Brochet. They were produced over the last three years by one of the husbands, that has learned the craft. Thank you, Jim for sharing with our friends in the north!

Officers renewing 2-year term:

Vice President	Rob Kuhlman
Assistant Parish Fellowship Director	Judy Schroeder
Assistant Lay Minister Director	Greg Wedel
Assistant Evangelism Director	Kathie Seufert
Assistant School Board Director	Matthew Colby
Assistant Church Properties Director	Mark Vickery

Officers renewing 3-year term:

Endowment Fund Director	Todd Foster
Endowment Fund Trustee	Julie Vickery

Lay Ministers renewing 2-year term.

Ryan Bigelow	Jeff Burnett
Dave Johnson	Mark Kahle
Bill Schinzer	Greg Wedel

Incoming officers:

Assistant Youth & Young Adults	?
Assistant Small Group Director	?
Assistant Stewardship Director	?
Assistant Parish Education Director	Nonie Knight
Lay Minister	Rich Conklin

Thank you to those stepping down from service:

Dar Swift, Deb Hackett, Lindsey Luma, Heather Bigelow, Cindy Hunter, Lisa Robert, Dan Bryer

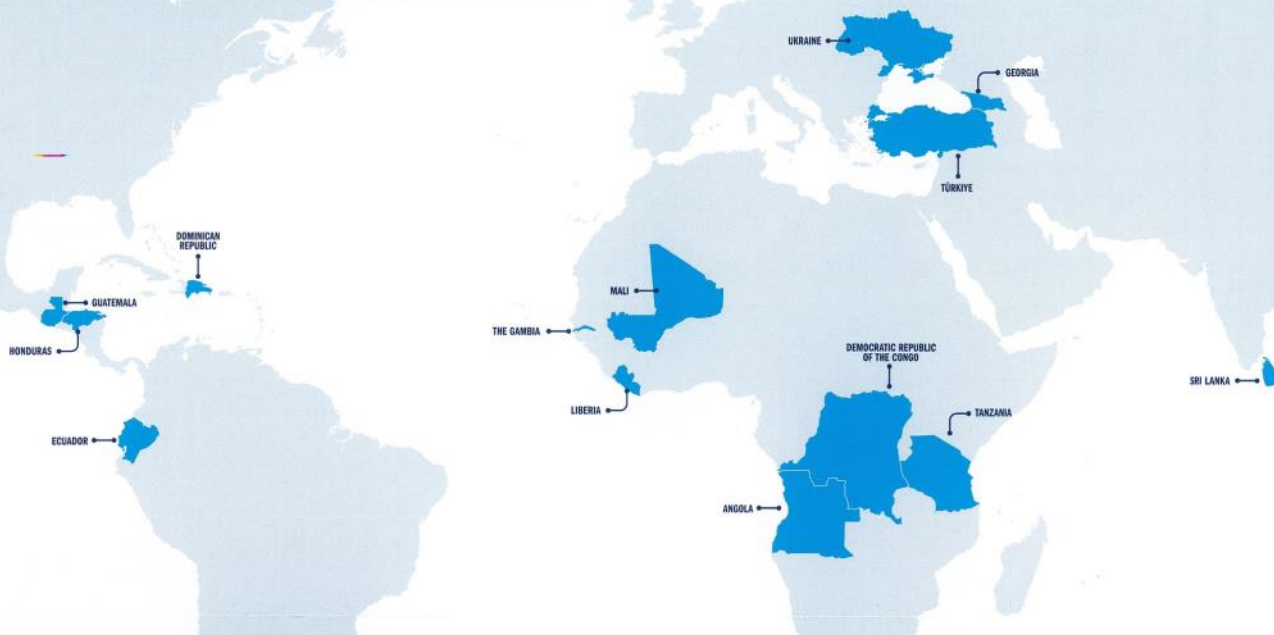
NOMINATIONS STILL BEING ACCEPTED!

BALLOT FOR FEBRUARY VOTERS' ASSEMBLY



facebook.com/LuthWorldRelief
instagram.com/LuthWorldRelief
youtube.com/LutheranWorldRelief

WHERE DID LWR QUILTS & KITS GO IN 2023?



551,700

QUILTS & KITS

IN 14 COUNTRIES



194,983
QUILTS



190,043
SCHOOL KITS



123,920
PERSONAL CARE KITS



35,490
BABY CARE KITS



7,264
FABRIC KITS

COUNTRY	SHIPPING WAREHOUSE	QUILTS	SCHOOL KITS	PERSONAL CARE KITS	BABY CARE KITS	FABRIC KITS
ANGOLA	Minnesota	24,140	7,250	18,600	4,830	3,600
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO	Maryland	12,375	13,650	11,670		
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	Minnesota		15,225	32,550	14,700	
ECUADOR	Maryland		13,650			
GEORGIA	Minnesota	38,080				
GUATEMALA	Minnesota	9,520	27,840			
HONDURAS	Maryland		12,480			
LIBERIA	Maryland		27,300			
	Minnesota		13,282			
MALI	Minnesota	45,798	14,500	9,300	4,200	1,800
SRI LANKA	Minnesota		14,326			
TANZANIA	Maryland	26,400	1,300	6,000	1,800	1,684
	Minnesota	2,040	9,860	6,200	4,200	180
THE GAMBIA	Minnesota		13,920			
TÜRKIYE	Maryland	11,880		14,400	5,760	
UKRAINE	Maryland	24,750	5,460	25,200		
TOTAL		194,983	190,043	123,920	35,490	7,264

This shipping information is from LWR's 2023 fiscal year (Oct 2022 - Sept 2023).

GENERAL INFORMATION

FAITH FORMATION

CHILDREN - Sunday Morning Classes are available during the 9:45 AM Learning Hour

TEENS - Classes are available during the 9:45 AM learning hour on Sunday mornings; Confirmation studies for 6-8th grade are on Wednesday evenings during the school year at 5:45 PM; Youth Group meets on Sunday evenings at 5:00 PM

ADULTS - Topical studies are available during the 9:45 AM Learning Hour on Sunday mornings; various Bible study groups, prayer groups, and activity groups meet during the week. *Exploring Our Faith* is for those that are interested in learning more about being Lutheran, and especially being a member of St. Michael. This course is taught in the fall and winter.

NURSERY

Childcare is available for infants up to 3 years old on Sunday mornings during classes and worship times in Room #205 located off the Communication Center.

BAPTISM

Anyone desiring baptism should visit with a pastor who will set up a meeting and schedule an appropriate time.

WEDDINGS

We believe that marriage is a sacred union of one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24-25), and that God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride the Church (Eph. 5:32). A Wedding in the church is an act of worship. The purpose of a church wedding is to thank and praise God and to petition His blessings upon the couple who solemnize their marriage before Him.

ENEWS DEADLINE

Please consider items you might need to submit to the Church Office for the next email newsletter, as you read the current one. Items need to be submitted by 4:00 PM on Thursdays.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

To insure a quality product is available for the membership, please consider items you might need to submit to the Church Office for the next monthly newsletter, as you read the current one. Deadline is the 20th of each month.

CHANGE OF NAME / ADDRESS / PHONE / EMAIL

You can always call the Church Office or use the form on the website to reach out and share a message with us!

<https://www.mightymessengers.org/contact-us/>

DECEMBER FINANCIALS

2 Months

11/1/2023 - 12/31/2023

Church Revenue	\$ 124,057
School Revenue	\$ <u>214,015</u>
Total Revenue	\$ 338,072
Total Expenses	\$ <u>360,887</u>
Net Surplus (deficit)	\$ (22,815)
Expense Budget	\$ 365,638
Under/(Over) Budget	\$ (27,566)
Working Cash Balance	\$ 6,656
Mortgage Balance	\$ 649,129

Designated Fund Balances

Endowment Fund	\$ 634,847
Building Contingency	\$ 17,406
Parking Lot Fund	\$ 15,000
HVAC	\$ 31,853
Technology Refresh	\$ 11,260
Sunday School	\$ 752
Youth Donations	\$ 20,281
Youth Accounts	\$ 4,525
Good Samaritan	\$ 3,667
Memorials	\$ 13,070
L.A.M.P. Mission Trip	\$ 9,414
Quilting	\$ 298
POBLO South Asian Ministry	\$ 3,596
Church Worker Scholarship	\$ 585
School Improvements	\$ 31,778
Tuition Assistance	\$ 48,238
School Music	\$ 759
School Sports	\$ (83)
Flower Fund	\$ 3,147
CFK Mission Expansion	\$ 86,873
Women's Fellowship/LWML	\$ 3,871
Faith Budget	\$ -

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

November '23 Avg.	298
December '23 Avg.	374
Annual Avg. 2023	327
January '24 Avg.	378

REQUEST FOR ENDOWMENT FUND DISTRIBUTIONS DURING 2024

The Endowment Committee is seeking requests for use of the annual General Endowment Fund distributions. We will have approximately \$9000 to distribute. In past years, money has been used for Lutheran World Relief, quilting material, Youth for Christ/Colonial Acres, library, and Christ for Kids, just to name a few.

If you are interested in applying for some portion of this money for a 2024 ministry, please note the following:

Members, ministry leaders and Board Directors are encouraged to identify mission and ministry programs within the Church or School that you believe need financial support above and beyond those provided through the normal budget and apply. Or, if there is a worthwhile community or global ministry, you can apply for money for that.

Please complete a Grant Request form and submit to the Endowment Committee by February 15th (electronic or hard copy). These forms are available in the church office.

You will be notified of the outcome by mid-March.

Please contact any of the Endowment Committee members if you have questions.

Rick Jacobs, Julie Vickery, Dave Johnson, Brad Hunter, or Todd Foster

LCMSFoundation
TODAY | TOMORROW | FOREVER

Julie Burgess
Julie.burgess@lfnd.org
713-822-5284

A good gift plan within one's estate plan can help manage taxation.

Kelly and Lisa were having lunch. Both of their husbands have passed in the last couple of years, and they are learning to take over the responsibility for finances. This has been a big transition for both. Kelly said to Lisa, "I have adapted well. I have come to appreciate all that Howard did all those years. The one thing that still intimidates me is the taxes. I am thankful I have a good tax preparer that makes this less stressful."

Lisa responded, "For the first time in my life I am paying more attention to taxes as well. In my mind, I never really made the connection between my contributions to Church and other ministries and the

amount of tax we pay. This year my Church is in a campaign to enable a building expansion for more ministry. Joe and I had already settled on a certain portion of our estate that we would give to our Church. My tax lady told me that if I give some of that now in the campaign, I can reduce my income taxes this year by 60%. I think that will make a difference in paying for the higher-than-expected pharmacy bills I have been having. It is amazing how the Lord provides His gifts at just the right time, in the right way."

Is the Lord leading you to use His gifts for ministry purposes? Would you like to discuss whether gifts now or in the future make more sense, especially considering taxes? Your LCMS Foundation Gift Planning Counselor can help.



Welcome!

We believe that the more you study the Bible and encounter God in prayer, the more you learn to trust Him with all you have. Carve out time in your day to nurture your relationship with God and spend time encouraging others.

We believe the best way to follow Jesus is through forming community and sharing our faith with a heart of generosity, not just with money and time, but with our love, appreciation, praise and encouragement.



STAFF:

SENIOR PASTOR

Rev. Dr. Paul R. Naumann
naumann@mightymessengers.org

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Rev. Daniel Maske
dmaske@mightymessengers.org

ASSISTANT PASTOR

Rev. Jason Toman
jtoman@mightymessengers.org

BUSINESS & FINANCE MANAGER

Jay Koski
jkoski@mightymessengers.org

CHURCH ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT AND CHILD MINISTRY COORDINATOR

RECORDING SECRETARY
Tammy Songer
tsonger@mightymessengers.org

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Greg Johnson
gjohnson@mightymessengers.org

SCHOOL SECRETARY

Sharon Robinson

KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

Brenda Heintz

FIRST GRADE TEACHER

Maralyse Worm

SECOND GRADE TEACHER

Annie Hecht

THIRD GRADE TEACHER

Jennifer Humbarger

FOURTH GRADE TEACHER

Dawn Heid

FIFTH GRADE TEACHER

Emily Lauterbach

SIXTH GRADE TEACHER

Julie Prentice

SEVENTH/EIGHTH GRADE TEACHER

Lisa Lam

CHRIST FOR KIDS CHILDCARE DIRECTOR

Emily Ritchie
eritchie@mightymessengers.org

PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

Becky Mohler Cheryl Julian
Jessica Lonc Alicia Keinath

WORSHIP MEDIA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Chris Rudowske

WORSHIP MEDIA SPECIALIST

Lorraine Dudash

CHOIR DIRECTOR

Carolyn Bertrand

ORGANIST

Keith Eiser

MORNING SONG DIRECTOR

Jane Connon

SEXTONS

Brian Chapman
Matthew Wright

VOLUNTEERS:

PRESIDENT

Mark Ruesch

VICE PRESIDENT

Rob Kuhlmann

TREASURER

Kristi Rudowske

BOARD OF CHURCH PROPERTIES

Ryan Nelson, Director
Mark Vickery, Assistant Director

BOARD OF EARLY CHILDHOOD & SCHOOL MINISTRIES

Mike Grotelueschen, Director
Matt Colby, Assistant Director

BOARD OF SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Angie Heimlich, Director
Lindsey Luma, Assistant Director

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

Vacant, Director

VOLUNTEER MINISTRY COMMITTEE

Dar Swift

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Lisa Robert

BOARD OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT

Heather Bigelow, Director
Cindy Hunter, Assistant Director

YOUTH GROUP LEADERS

Jerry Kuss, Jeff Burnett,
Heather Bigelow

BOARD OF LAY MINISTRY

Matt Heintz, Director
Greg Wedel, Assistant Director

ALTAR GUILD

Kristi Rudowske, Linda Fry

LECTORS

Virginia Hetrick, Jan Chilcott

PRAYER MINISTRY COORDINATORS

Barbara Schubert, Virginia Hetrick

USHERS

Mike Minger - Early Service
Jesse Hogue - Late Service

STEPHEN MINISTRY LEADERS

Pastor & Dana Naumann, Virginia Hetrick
Heather Crampton, Lynda Rea, Karen Shuler

STEPHEN MINISTERS

Lane Bertrand, Bob & Pam Besser,
Zachary Button, Peter Robert,
Bill Semrau, Kathy Zakarias

BOARD OF EVANGELISM & MISSIONS

Valerian Kwigizile, Director
Kathie Seufert, Assistant Director

GREETERS

Arlene Groll, Mark & Jan Chilcott

BOARD OF PARISH EDUCATION

Kristen Shook, Director
Deb Hackett, Assistant Director

ADULT EDUCATION COORDINATOR

Jesse Hogue

CRADLE ROLL

Jan Jett

BOARD OF PARISH FELLOWSHIP

Vacant, Director
Judy Schroeder, Assistant Director

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP / LWML

Arla Mayhew

SOFTBALL

Shannon Miskovich

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

Todd Foster, Dave Johnson, Julie Vickery,
Brad Hunter, Rick Jacobs