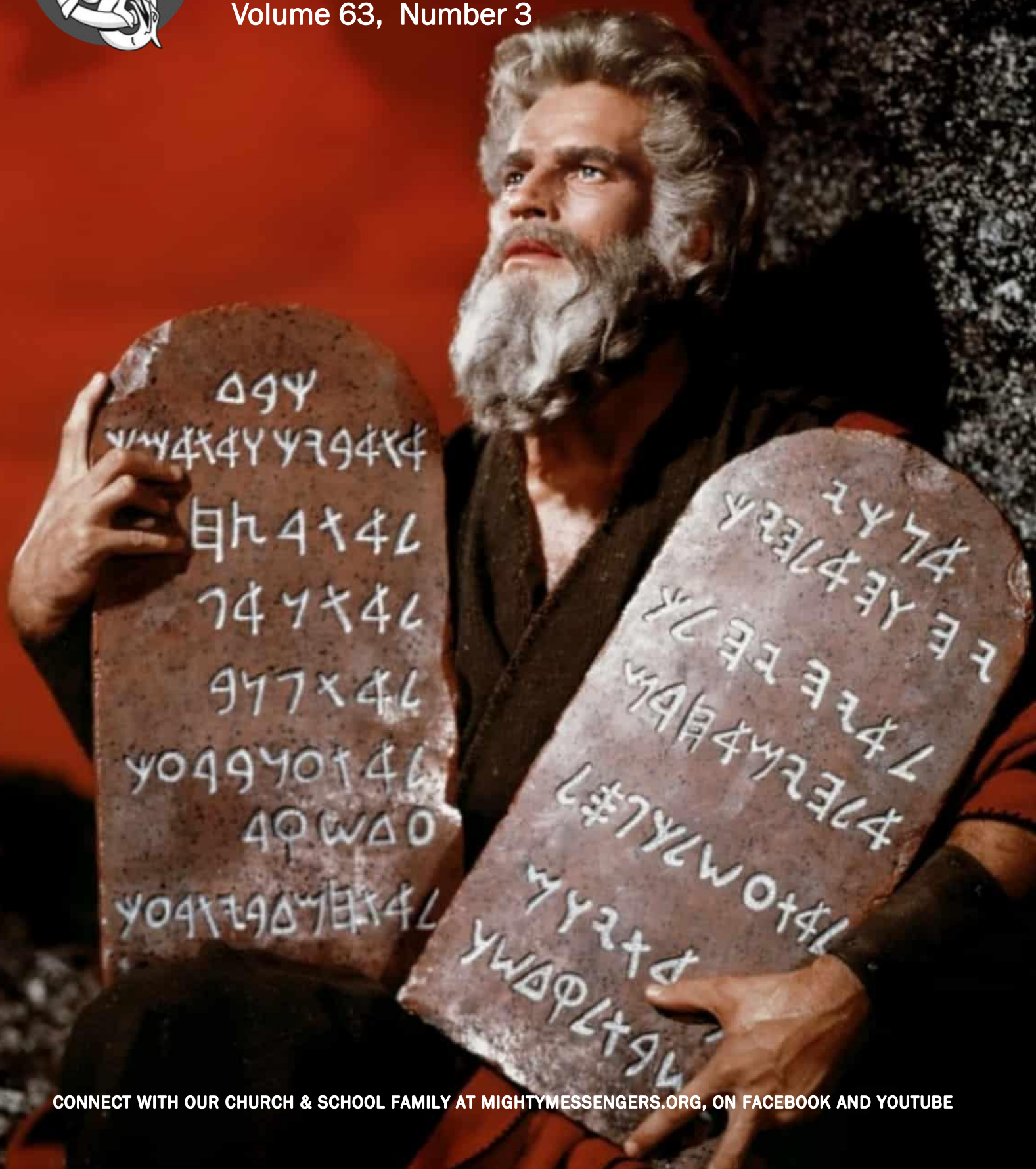




THE MIGHTY MESSENGER

March 2024
Volume 63, Number 3



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

LAW AND GOSPEL

Lutherans are not good at everything, but we are really good at the proper distinction between “Law” and “Gospel.” In fact, the founder of our Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, C.F.W. Walther, wrote a landmark book with that very title (at least in English, anyway) (<https://www.cph.org/law-and-gospel-how-to-read-and-apply-the-bible>). “Law” and “Gospel” are two distinctive teachings found all throughout the Bible, indeed in virtually every verse. A simple definition of the “Law” is anything and everything that God tells us that He wants us to do *for Him* (and for our neighbor). A simple definition of the “Gospel” is anything and everything that God has done and continues to do *for us* without any merit or worthiness in us (especially the free forgiveness that comes entirely on account of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross).

The “Law” is good in that it tells us God’s will and desire. But the “Law” is also bad in that it never acquits us or justifies us, but always accuses us and always condemns us because we are never able to keep it perfectly as God demands. While these two biblical doctrines are very distinct, and even seem to be contradictory of one another, they are both true at the same time. The “Gospel” does not water down or soften the “Law.” Instead, the “Gospel” fulfills and satisfies the “Law.”

The challenge comes when the distinctiveness of these two doctrines gets blurred and when “Law” and “Gospel” get mixed together. If you add the “Gospel” to the “Law,” in an attempt to soften the “Law” it ceases to be the “Law.” For example, some might say that the 10 Commandments no longer apply to us because we are forgiven of our sins. But forgiveness doesn’t change the “Law;” what it does is remove our liability and the just punishment for breaking God’s commands. Worse still, if we add the “Law” to the “Gospel” it robs the “Gospel” of its comforting and saving power. For example, some would acknowledge that Jesus’ death and resurrection earned the forgiveness of our sins, but then they also believe that it is still required of us to do some work of the “Law” in order to access that forgiveness that Christ earned for us. It is as if Christ’s saving work stored up merit before God, but we can’t access that merit without some effort on our part. In other words, we still have to merit the merit of Christ by our good works.

The 10 Commandments themselves, the epitome of the “Law,” can also be misunderstood if we’re not clear on the “Gospel.” You see, the 10 Commandments, especially as Martin Luther explains them in the Small Catechism, often have both a negative and positive aspect to them. For example, with the 5th Commandment (“you shall not murder”), Luther explains it by saying: “We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need.” Notice there is the negative prohibition in the commandment (i.e., “do not hurt or harm our neighbor), but there is also the positive aspect of the commandment (i.e., “help and support him in every physical need). But it would surely be a mistake to label the negative prohibition in the commandment as “Law” (i.e., what not to do) and the positive aspect of it (i.e., what to do) as “Gospel.” The fact is, both the negative and positive aspects of the commandment are “Law” and they always accuse and condemn, especially when we also take into consideration the “spirit” of the law (i.e., wishing someone were dead, etc.). No, the “Gospel” with regard to the 5th commandment is that Jesus was murdered for us and that His innocent suffering and death on the cross are the sufficient sacrifice and full payment for all our sins, even the sin of murder, and that we receive His forgiveness by faith alone (simply believing it). That may seem like letting people off too easily, but the “Gospel” is just that simple.

Someone asked me the other day if a murderer can be saved. After pointing out to them that Moses, King David, and St. Paul were all murderers, I reminded them that our salvation is not the result of the fact that we managed to avoid doing a particular sin (i.e., keeping the Law), but rather our salvation is entirely based on what Jesus did for us and that His sacrifice is entirely sufficient to pay for all sin, even the worst of sin (i.e., the Gospel). If this raises concern that people will just get away with murder, we don’t address that concern by adding the “Law” to the “Gospel,” but rather we say what the Bible says: *“Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore*

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.

with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:1-4).

So yes, the “Gospel” gives us the forgiveness of sin, but it does not give us a license to sin. When Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery “*neither do I condemn you,*” He also said to her “*go and sin no more*” (John 8:11). If the “Gospel” seems too easy, we can’t put teeth in it by adding the “Law” to it. But we can rest assured that the “Gospel” has the power to change us, so that we will no longer want

to sin (even though we will always struggle with sin), but we will want to *live for God* and His will. As St. Peter put it: “*(Jesus) Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness*” (1 Peter 2:24). You can’t make the “Law” more tolerable by softening it with the “Gospel,” and you can’t make the “Gospel” less susceptible to abuse by adding the “Law” to it. No, we let the “Law” and the “Gospel” be what they are, distinct from one another, and yet related to each other in an important and wonderful way, to the glory of God.




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

Date	Liturgical Calendar	Topic
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 up-
lifting, 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

"HOW ARE YOU MEASURING UP?"

The 10 Commandments are hard. You have to be perfect. If you are not perfect, then you go to hell.

So, how are you doing?

Daily, most of the time, we say things like, "we are doing OK." In reality, however, we are not doing OK. We have stress at home, and at work, and in our own mind.

You have troubles.

**

While troubled, we fret. And we frantically try to grasp our duties or fail at home. We fight with our loved ones harshly. We scramble and lose and fail.

You and I fail.

Jesus never fails. He loves you so much. And he doesn't scramble for ground; Jesus conquers.

**

Lent is the time to focus upon the faithful triumph of Jesus. Focus up! Jesus wins!

For your bad days... JESUS WINS.

For your domestic troubles... JESUS WINS!

Jesus wins for you, TODAY!

**

The devil is a liar and a loser.

Jesus wins!

Pastor Maske



BRUNCH

10:00AM - NOON

Saturday, March 16

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

RSVP TO CHURCH OFFICE OR SIGN UP
IN COMMUNICATION CENTER!



677 Romence Rd, Portage

Christ Cleanses the Temple

March 3, 2024 – Third Sunday in Lent

Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III

Christ's cleansing of the temple was one incident in his fight against evil. His carrying on that fight is good news for us, and guides us as to how we believers are to live in today's world.

Sermon Text: John 2:13-16

Readings: Psalm 19:1, 7-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-16

Lifted Up

March 10, 2024 – Fourth Sunday in Lent

Rev. Thomas Eggold

There is not a story or sign in the entire Old Testament that points more directly to the Cross than the serpent on the stake. Here a bronze serpent hangs from a cross, and it was put there by God precisely because of sin. The sign of our sin and the image of the death we deserve is suspended between heaven and earth and between God and man. And there, on the wooden pole, God saved His people.

Sermon Text: John 3:14-15

Readings: Psalm 107:1-9; Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14-21

Greatness In His Glory

March 17, 2024 – Fifth Sunday in Lent

Rev. Shayne Jonker

Jesus alone was qualified, there is no one on earth who can lift this miserable cup of death to his lips and drink it to the bottom. There is no one on earth who can be baptized into our death and rise up out of it to life. Only Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh can stand in our place and do for all what we can't do for ourselves.

Sermon Text: Mark 10:45

Readings: Psalm 119:9-16; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Mark 10:32-45

The Suffering Savior

March 24, 2024 – Sunday of the Passion

Rev. Paul Shoemaker

Jesus took upon Himself the sins of all people for all time. On Calvary's cross He paid for those sins in full. His resurrection on Easter was God the Father's "Well done." He accomplished His task. His victory is complete.

Sermon Text: Mark 15:1-47

Readings: Psalm 31:9-16; Mark 15:1-47

Boy! Do I Love Him!

March 31, 2024 – Easter Sunday

Rev. William Mueller

Easter Sunday is so filled with joy! The sudden turn of events in the life of Jesus and His disciples. Even though He had told the disciples about it ahead of time, no one remembered this would be. Death is swallowed up in victory. In the resurrection of Jesus death is undone. The plug is pulled on death. And this brings us great joy!

Sermon Text: Isaiah 25:6-9

Readings: Psalm 16; Isaiah 25:6-9; Mark 16:1-8



*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, Carrol 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

EXCITING CHANGES COMING TO OUR MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM!

St. Michael Lutheran School began in 2001. Each year a new grade level was added until the first middle school class began at the start of the 2009-2010 school year. Due to smaller class sizes, our 7th and 8th grades have been combined using an alternating curriculum, so that when students graduate from the 8th grade, they will have met all of the state requirements and be amply prepared for high school.

With the continued growth of our school, we are currently working on plans to expand the middle school to include stand-alone classrooms for both 7th & 8th grades beginning in the fall of 2025. This will mark the first time we will have stand-alone classes K-8. This change will accommodate current and future growth in our program. We will also convert and outfit a classroom to serve as a STEM lab. Our plan is to departmentalize instruction in grades 6-8 and provide an environment that will better prepare students for a high school experience. There will be more information to share over the next few months as preparation and subsequent site changes are made to accommodate this new plan.



*Education with Christ at
the heart of it.*

Greg Johnson, Principal



*Empowering the team for
implementing the mission and
ministry programs of St. Michael.*

LEADERSHIP CAUCUS

March 9th in Allan Hall

This event is for ALL Parish Planning Council members.
Directors and Assistant Directors.

Plus, this year we are expanding it to include any of the board members that would like to attend. Breakfast items and fellowship time beginning at 8:30 AM. We will be done shortly before Noon.



NEW BANNERS PURCHASED RECENTLY

Last year, a group of members got together and formed a Banner Committee for St. Michael. Since then, they have prepared a record book of all the existing banners, repaired old banners, and made a new banner for our LAMP mission. The group meets regularly to select banners for the upcoming church seasons.

To support this effort, our Women's Fellowship group organized a cookie sale at the end of last year. Proceeds were used to purchase four new banners, two for Easter and two for Pentecost. These banners will have their debut in our sanctuary this spring. Watch for them!

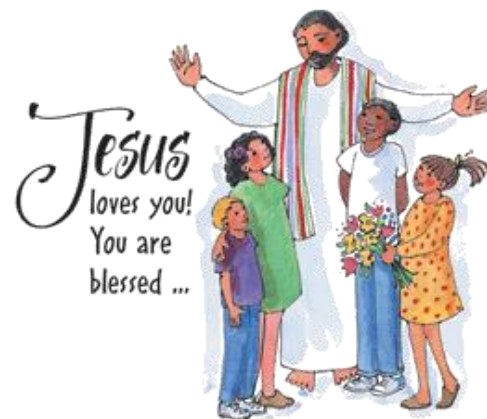


NEW RESOURCES AVAILABLE!!

Some new books have been added to the library collection, that can help any volunteer who is preparing an object lesson for the children's message on Sundays. Perhaps this will be a resource for volunteers that are unsure of what they can present.

They have been placed on the shelf called "Church Life & Leadership" in the Adult Collection in the corner near the door to the Welcome Center.

If you would be interested in sharing a children's message in worship, please contact the church office for available dates.



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
Rich Conklin 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

Why we do

VBS

8 Reasons to say
"YES!" to VBS

**EXPERIENCE
MONTHS OF DISCIPLESHIP
IN JUST ONE WEEK.**

A traditional VBS involves
3 hours a day for 5 days.
That's 15 hours
of discipleship!

**VBS POSITIVELY
IMPACTS CHILDREN
IN THE COMMUNITY.**

VBS is a catalyst that extends
our reach beyond
regular attendees.

**VBS CREATES
LIFE-LONG MEMORIES.**

Adults can remember songs they
sang, crafts/games, bible stories
they learned through this type of
experience in childhood.

**CHILDREN HAVE FUN
WHILE BEING EXPOSED
TO THE GOSPEL
AND JESUS' LOVE.**

Parents find it to be an
enriching experience.

**VOLUNTEERING AT
VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL**

Creates new ways to serve the
Lord and meet new people,
or have fun with friends.



**VBS-THEMED ACTIVITIES
OFFERS EXCITEMENT AND
A CHANGE OF PACE**

Giving families a reason to be
excited about church.

**VBS HELPS CONNECT
FAMILIES THAT MAY NOT
MEET OTHERWISE.**

Whether you have a small group of
kids, or serve snacks to the larger
group, it's about nurturing
relationships.

COMING...
JULY 21-27,
2024

**VBS CREATES GROWTH
IN THE FAITH JOURNEY.**

All ages are reached through the
Gospel. People need a Godly
atmosphere to experience Jesus.
Every person counts!

WILL YOU SHARE YOUR VB-YES!?

Registration opens April 1st

AT PEACE IN ANY STORM

"God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in time of trouble. So, we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea. Let the oceans roar and foam. Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge! Psalm 46:1-3



Imagine that you are flying in an airplane and, let's say, a door pops off! The yellow silicone cups (oxygen masks) come down and you must make an immediate decision about whose oxygen mask you fasten first.

The answer is: you should put your own mask on first or you will not be able to help anyone else if you pass out.

This is a good example of the person who finds it difficult to trust God amid personal battles. Instead of turning to God (or the oxygen mask) this person becomes fearful, making it more difficult to receive the help God wants to send. They tend to worry and fret about what they should be doing or how they should handle this situation but what they are really doing is struggling against letting go and letting God take care of them.

We allow ourselves to indulge in doubts and fears, and consequently we are plunged into darkness, and turmoil and cannot find peace. Which is exactly what we need for the healing process to complete its work.

The next time you are faced with a challenge that makes your knees shake and your heart lurch, think of yourself as the person on that airplane. First put on your oxygen mask and breath in God's grace, calm yourself in His presence and ask for His guidance so you will know how to meet the challenges at hand.

While you pray, remind yourself that the spiritual struggles you face probably won't be overcome in an instant. Instead, they require that you continually surrender, trust in Christ for all that troubles you, and stand in the faith he gives you.

Also, remember you are never alone! Call a prayer warrior to be with you through your struggles.

Blessings, *Virginia Metrick*, Prayer Team



STAY CONNECTED

YouTube

On the St. Michael page, You can find sermon videos, Bible classes, guest speakers, children's devotionals 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:

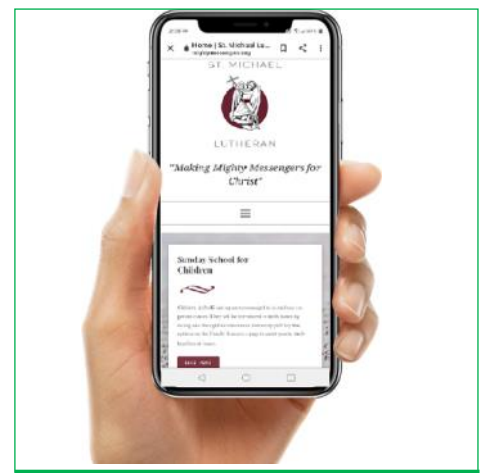
Church + 269-327-7832

School + 269-327-0512

Christ For Kids + 269-327-4889

mightymessengers.org

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



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

LAMP TRIP TO LAC BROCHET



Prayers Needed:

- 1) Pray for the recruiting the SMLC LAMP Team to go to Lac Brochet, Manitoba **August 1 –11, 2024.**
- 2) Pray for the people of Lac Brochet—coming out of a cold dark winter.
- 3) Pray for the new LAMP Team to connect and be able to arrange meeting times to prepare for the trip.
- 4) Pray for all the communications with Lac Brochet to work out the details of our trip in August.
- 5) Prayers of thanks for all the people who are helping send things to Lac Brochet. *They loved the blankets!*

Are you are interested in hearing more
about the summer LAMP trip?

Talk to Dana Naumann

269-808 -7832 or dana.naumann@gmail.com

A Message From Mariah Chilcott:

Hi Church Family,

Since the English seminar has ended, I have decided after a lot of prayer to join a program through YWAM called Viva Hope.

Viva Hope was started in 2014 by an international couple, the husband is Brazilian and the wife is American! They both had dreams and a vision to see the kids in Brazil grow in the Word and not of the world. Their focus is kids ages 7-14 and through working with the kids they are able to go more into the community.

We will have classes for the kids to learn things such as ballet, cooking, soccer, jiu-jitsu, art, hygiene classes, and possibly English classes! While the kids are in classes we also have times of discipleship for the moms who come to drop their kids off. Every Sunday we do "home visits" which means we will be going to visit the kids' homes and see how they live, what kind of atmosphere their home life is, and just to be with them and their families.

I have been in Brazil for one month and a few days!! I have had good days, bad days and in the middle days. In many ways I have been challenged and stretched out of my comfort zone. I have been learning so much more Portuguese, enjoying the



This is a photo of some of the people I will be working with. We were in Itupua, Santa Catarina, Brazil on a restful weekend getaway before we begin our program.

food, and learning a lot more about the culture, myself, and God.

Thank you for all of your prayers and I ask that you continue to pray for me as I am still adjusting and as I step into this season with Viva Hope. We officially start working with the kids February 19th. I am looking forward to what God has for me in this next season.

Blessings, Mariah

PANCAKE DINNER, MUSIC AND INFLATABLE STORIES ...



"Very Enjoyable Evening!"



Thank You to all that served!

FELLOWSHIP

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

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

LAY MINISTRY STUDENT LOAN FUNDRAISER

The cost of higher education is high. Many students needed student loans to complete their studies. Federal student loans alone total over \$1.7 trillion. An average of \$38,000 per borrower. This debt can be overwhelming, particularly for young families. The government is looking at ways of forgiving some federal student debt. Many employers are looking at ways to help employees with their debt. Our seminaries are trying to cover the cost of tuition when other forms of assistance fall short. And we are trying to help our church and school staff members with their student loan payments as well.

The Board of Lay Ministry is hosting a luncheon again this year, just for this purpose. The luncheon will be held on Sunday, April 21 at 12:30 pm (right after the late worship service). We will be providing entertainment this year, as well. You will not want to miss it. You, your family, and your friends are all invited.

Reservation cards will be placed in your church mailboxes this month. You may make your reservations by filling out the cards with your name and entrée selections. The cost for the luncheon and entertainment will be \$15 per person.

There will be a free-will offering at the luncheon with all of the proceeds going to our Student Loan Fund. This is a great opportunity to help support our staff, have a nice Sunday dinner, and enjoy the fellowship of other members of our church.

Be sure to mark your calendars for this special event!



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/>

JANUARY FINANCIALS

3 Months

11/1/2023 - 1/31/2024

Church Revenue	\$	188,399
School Revenue	\$	<u>322,004</u>
Total Revenue	\$	510,402
Total Expenses	\$	<u>520,486</u>
Net Surplus (deficit)	\$	(10,084)
Expense Budget	\$	537,380
Under/(Over) Budget	\$	(26,978)
Working Cash Balance	\$	19,387
Mortgage Balance	\$	643,228

Designated Fund Balances

Endowment Fund	\$	706,108
Building Contingency	\$	18,633
Parking Lot Fund	\$	15,000
HVAC	\$	31,853
Technology Refresh	\$	9,704
Sunday School	\$	897
Youth Donations	\$	20,893
Youth Accounts	\$	4,525
Good Samaritan	\$	4,002
Memorials	\$	13,070
L.A.M.P. Mission Trip	\$	9,514
Quilting	\$	184
POBLO South Asian Ministry	\$	3,596
Student Debt Fund	\$	450
Church Worker Scholarship	\$	585
Luth Medical Emerg Fund	\$	250
School Improvements	\$	24,317
Tuition Assistance	\$	46,807
School Music	\$	759
School Sports	\$	(120)
Flower Fund	\$	2,987
CFK Mission Expansion	\$	86,873
Women's Fellowship/LWML	\$	3,583
Faith Budget	\$	-

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

December '23 Avg.	374
Annual Avg. 2023	327
January '24 Avg.	378
February '24 Avg.	297

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*

TREASURE AUDIO BIBLES UPDATE

In November of 2021 St. Michael Lutheran Church and School joined together with an organization called World Mission (recently renamed Unknown Nations) to raise money to purchase **Treasure** solar-powered audio Bibles to be shared with unreached people groups throughout the world.

Through the generosity of many church members and the creative and energetic efforts of many students, we raised an unprecedented amount of \$7,367.56, which allowed Unknown Nations to purchase 184 **Treasures**. Because each solar-powered **Treasure** is estimated to reach up to 144 people (because they listen in groups), that amazing effort provided the gospel message to an estimated 24,496 people who had never heard the name of Jesus before. (In 2018 we raised \$606.05, which purchased 15 **Treasures** and reached an estimated 2,181 people.)

Unknown Nations continues to work diligently to get the gospel message to the ears of unreached people groups. The following is the testimony of two families who were affected by hearing God's Word for the first time via a **Treasure** audio Bible just this past month. Because studies show that up to 70% of these unreached people are oral learners, who are either illiterate or prefer to learn orally, the **Treasure** continues to be a very powerful tool, especially with its availability in over 6,000 dialects.

We will be providing the opportunity to once again partner with SMLS students and Unknown Nations in September of 2024! More details will be forthcoming as that timeframe gets closer. In the meantime, please pray for this upcoming campaign, asking God to use St. Michael mightily in expanding His kingdom and sharing His message of salvation with many who have not yet heard. AND, if you would like to learn more about how to pray weekly for specific unreached people groups, please check out the Unknown Nations website:

<https://www.unknownnations.com/pray>



The spring rally for LWML Battle Creek Zone is Saturday, April 6 from 10:00 am. - 12:00 noon with a light lunch afterward. Come to St. Paul, 349 Capital Ave. NE in Battle Creek to learn about how your mite money is working here in the USA and around the world. Learn about the upcoming convention in Grand Rapids this summer, the theme being "Taste and See how the Lord is Good" Psalm 34:8. Enjoy fellowship and devotion with like-minded sisters in Christ. All are welcome. See you there.



UNKNOWN NATIONS

TREASURE UPDATE

February 2024 | Closed Asian Country



Testimonies From A Closed Country

We received these testimonies from inside a closed country in Asia. God recently opened doors for our indigenous leaders to begin working in this area, and we've been so encouraged by the fruit coming from their ministry. They've asked us to refrain from mentioning this country's name in any written communication. Preaching openly about Jesus is grounds for harsh punishment.

The first testimony involves a young man who had heart disease. He had spent all of his money on doctors and medicine. One day, this young man heard his neighbor playing his Treasure audio Bible and was attracted by the words coming from the device. He went near to listen, and while he stood there for 10 minutes a peace came over his mind.

As he was listening, he learned that "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Then he started thinking, *I'm dying from heart disease... and there's a gift of eternal life. So why should I not get behind Jesus Christ?* This young man fully gave his life to Jesus. He has also been completely healed from the heart disease. Praise the Lord!

The second testimony came from the man pictured above. He shared through a translator, "When I was unknown to Jesus, my life and my full family's life was in very bad condition. No way to live, no food, no clothes, and life was fully in sin. When the pastor introduced us to Jesus, he gave us one yellow device. I and my family listened and realized that Jesus is the only way to eternal life and the Prince of Peace. We all family members dedicated ourselves in the hand of Jesus and start following Jesus."

Please pray for these new believers as they are still very young in the Lord. Pray that the Holy Spirit would keep them safe and strengthen them day by day. Please also lift up our indigenous leaders who are risking their lives to share the gospel in this closed country. Ask God for supernatural boldness and protection as they walk forward in their ministry.

"When the pastor introduced us to Jesus, he gave us one yellow device. I and my family listened and realized that Jesus is the only way to eternal life and the Prince of Peace."



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.



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