



THE MIGHTY MESSENGER

JANUARY 2026 Volume 65, Number 1



H A P P Y N E W Y E A R

“O GOD, OUR HELP IN AGES PAST, OUR HOPE FOR YEARS TO COME”

God is eternal, timeless, and outside of time and space. But He is also the God who broke into time, into our time and into the world He created, with the incarnation of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior. A great deal of time passed between our creation and redemption, between the promised Messiah and His coming into this world. *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).* Now once again a great deal of time has also gone by since the time that Jesus came to earth to earn our salvation and the time of His return to earth at the end of all time. It is an exact time that no one knows (Matthew 24:36), but it is indeed a time that will surely come. In the meantime, we all have much work to do according to our Lord’s great commission to make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching (Matthew 28:19-20), and we need to be doing it now while we can for there is a time that is coming when no one can work (John 9:4).

I’ve found that most people know that “BC” stands for “before Christ,” but many people think that “AD” stands for “after (His) death,” when in fact it stands for the Latin phrase “Anno Domini,” that is, “in the year of our Lord.” In other words, 2025 was about that many years since Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem, but more importantly, it was a year that was on God’s calendar and in His perfect timing, a year of His providence in which He accomplished His sovereign will. God controlled every event of 2025 such that He was glorified, and as promised, He worked it all for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purposes (Romans 8:28). As we turn the page on one year and move on into the next, we can only reflect back on the past for, unlike God, we don’t really know what the future holds. But we can also reflect back on the past with thanksgiving and praise, and we can anticipate the future with the full confidence that our loving God will be with us. As He has been in the past, we can trust that He will be good for His Word and promises in the future.

As I reflect back on 2025, it was a rather monumental year in a number of ways. For Dana and I, it began with two months of Sabbatical - all of January in Florida and all of February on Grand Cayman Island. In Florida, we were able to spend a good long time with my 95 year-old mother, visiting her every day in her memory care facility. In hindsight, those were precious times as she was quite able bodied then and with-it enough to enjoy activities and outings. Little did we know at the time, that her health would decline considerably in the months ahead. After four summer trips to Florida, the last one for her funeral, we went up to Wisconsin for our 45th wedding anniversary, attended a wedding in Appleton, stayed in Green Bay, toured Lambeau Field, and visited with some relatives in my mother’s hometown of Shawano, WI. On the way home we stopped at Trinity Lutheran Church in Oshkosh where I was ordained 40 years ago, and even visited with my old senior pastor, Rev. Ron Meier, who was in a nursing home at the time doing rehab, but it was special he still remembered us.

Here at St. Michael, 2025 was a year of thinking a lot about the future. We spent months exploring the possibility of a capital campaign, interviewed three consultants, surveyed the congregation, and provided a Saturday morning retreat in which we heard the voice of the members and gathered information about our strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities. While we pushed the idea of a fund-raising campaign into an unknown future time, we did enter into a faith-raising campaign in which we devoted forty days to the “Giving Challenge” with a view to becoming more generous like Jesus. This proved to be a great blessing to our family, and I trust that it was for many other families in our congregation as well. What’s more, many of us determined in 2025 to read through the Bible in a year, and reported it to be life changing! Another great blessing that the Lord provided us with here at St. Michael was the large number who joined our congregation at the end of the year. Counting the children, it was a total of thirty new members,

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.

which included eight adult baptisms and one infant baptism. Praise God for adding so richly to the family of faith here at St. Michael!

Finally, in the spring of 2025 we entered into a call process for the next senior pastor. This included the formation of a large call committee which has met faithfully and worked diligently. After congregational surveying, and much Michigan District guidance, we await a call list from the District for the committee to review, interview, and ultimately recommend for the congregation’s call sometime in the spring. It remains to be seen what happens after that for we don’t know if the man will take our call or not, or when his start date would be. But I don’t plan to retire until 2027, and until then we will pray and trust the perfect timing of our God who has been our help in ages past, and will surely continue to be our help, and our hope, for years to come.



Dear St. Michael family,

Once again we received so many kind gestures of love and appreciation at Christmas. Thank you to all of you! And for the many anonymous gifts we received, we say thank you to you in this way – you know who you are and God does too! May the Lord bless our 2026 together, continuing to guide us and bless us according to His perfect will for us in Christ Jesus, our newborn King!

Pastor and Dana Naumann

Your St. Michael Staff has been abundantly blessed this year.

We are very grateful!

We thank everyone for the individual and the anonymous gifts and goodies.

You are all appreciated blessings.



Thank you to all for the wonderful greeting cards, goodies and gifts that were donated to the Homebound Gift Bags!



Gift of Life Michigan has led the nation in innovation and dedication to saving and healing lives, since 1971.

Hear from a representative, as we honor “**Life Sunday**” on **January 18** during our **Learning Hour** between worship services.

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

As we step into a new year together, it's hard not to pause and notice how different life may look compared to this time last year. For some among us, there are new family members — babies born, marriages celebrated, loved ones welcomed into our homes. For others, there are empty chairs and tender grief, losses that still ache deeply. Many have begun new jobs or seasons of life, while others have said goodbye to familiar routines, homes, or places. Even the world around us feels changed, sometimes in ways that leave us unsettled or weary. A year can hold a great deal. And yet, in the midst of all this change, the Lord continues to gather us. Week after week, He calls us out of our scattered lives and brings us together around His Word and Sacraments. Here, in worship, we are given something solid to stand on. The Word of God has not changed. Not one promise has faded. Not one ounce of grace has been diminished. The same Lord who carried us through the past year now meets us again—speaking, forgiving, strengthening, and sending.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8)

When we gather in His name, we are reminded who He is and who we are. He is still our Savior—crucified and risen for sinners. Still faithful. Still reigning. Still present with His people. In a world that shifts and surprises us, Christ remains our sure foundation, and His gifts are given freely among us, as we worship together.

As Mighty Messengers, we do not walk into this new year alone. We come side by side, hearing the same promises, confessing the same faith, singing the same songs of praise, and receiving the same mercy from the same Lord. Together, we are shaped and sustained by what He gives us here, so that we may carry His unchanging Word into a changing world. Having first received forgiveness, hope, and life from Him, we are sent to speak and live that same grace for others.

Whatever this year holds—whether joy or sorrow, familiarity or surprise—our Lord goes before us. He meets us when we gather, and He goes with us when we are sent. His mercies are new every morning, and His promises never expire.

Happy New Year in Christ.

Pastor Maske



WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US FOR WEEKLY WORSHIP

Saturdays at 5:00pm - *Informal Worship*

Sundays at 8:30am - *with the organ and Lutheran Service Book hymnal*

Sundays at 11:00am - *Contemporary Worship*

Holy Communion: The Sacrament of Holy Communion is offered at Lamplight the Saturday before a second or fourth Sunday; at 8:30am on second and fourth (and fifth) Sundays; at 11:00am on first and third (and fifth) Sundays

Supervised child care is provided throughout Sunday morning worship services.

During the Learning Hour (9:45AM-10:45AM) Sunday School is available for kids Preschool to High School, and Adults too!

Where's Jesus?

January 4, 2026 – Second Sunday after Christmas

Rev. Scott Zeckzer

The season of Christmas is coming to an end. The Christmas decorations are put away but don't put Jesus away. Jesus is still present, but where?

Sermon Text: Luke 2:46

Readings: Psalm 119:97-104; 1 Kings 3:14-15; Luke 2:40-52

Featured Choirs: St. Paul Lutheran High School Choir, Concordia, Mo.; St. Paul Lutheran School Choir, Fort Wayne, Ind.; Lincoln Lutheran High School Choir, Lincoln, Neb.

Featured Art and Architecture: Emmanuel Lutheran Church, New Haven, Ind.

The Baptism of Jesus

January 11, 2026 – The Baptism of Our Lord

Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III

At the Baptism of Jesus there was clear, powerful evidence that He was not only a man but also God—the Son of God. Christ had to be human and divine in order to be the Savior of the world. As the Savior, Jesus closely identified with the human race, and that is why He submitted to being baptized with John. This is wonderful, good news for us today.

Sermon Text: Matthew 3:13-17

Readings: Psalm 29:1-4; Isaiah 42:1-4; Matthew 3:13-17

Featured Choir: St. Paul Lutheran School Choir, Munster, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Muncie, Ind.

Who Is “The Real Jesus”?

January 18, 2026 – Second Sunday after the Epiphany

Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

What are people's first and lasting impressions of Jesus? Who do you think that He is? Will the “real Jesus” please stand up?

Sermon Text: John 1:29

Readings: Psalm 40:1-11; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42a

Featured Choirs: Holy Cross Lutheran Men's Chorus, Fort Wayne, Ind.; St. Paul Lutheran School Choir, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Emanuel Lutheran Church, Tipton, Ind.

Fishers of Men

January 25, 2026 – Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Rev. Shayne Jonker

Formerly, the disciples fished for fish. Now, they would fish for men, catching men for the kingdom, dropping the dragnet of Jesus' own sacrificial death and resurrection into the sea of this world and dragging whatever they caught onto the shore and into the church.

Sermon Text: Matthew 4:19

Readings: Psalm 27:1-9; Isaiah 9:1-4; Matthew 4:12-25

Featured Choirs: St. Peter's Lutheran School Choir, Fort Wayne, Ind.; St. John Lutheran Church Choir, Indianapolis, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Faith Lutheran Church, Roanoke, Ind.



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

Total Christian Television (TCT) network nationwide broadcast is

Sunday 11:30 AM

Battle Creek - WTLJ 54

Grand Rapids - WTLJ-DT 24

Kalamazoo - WJPG-LD 26

Worship Anew is available throughout the country on broadcast stations and worldwide through our website, apps, and streaming on Roku, AppleTV, Google TV, Amazon Firestick, and YouTube.

We remember to pray for Homebound friends:

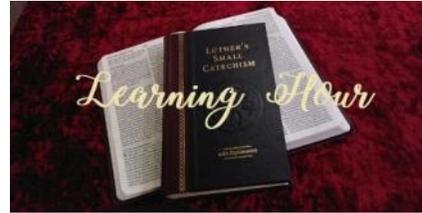
Jan Goertz Allan, Caroline Barkow, Sally Beck, Judy Chumas, Shirley Cosgrove, Bill Cremer, Ginny Evans, Sylvia German, Audrey Glover, Virgil Harrison, Harold & Carol Karnes, Bernie & Pauline Kubacki, Sandy & Joe Maya, Nancy Miller, Jim & Ardean Monck, Joan Pfister, Wilma Ritchie, Marilyn Sible, Ernie & Judi VanOrman, Sharon White

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



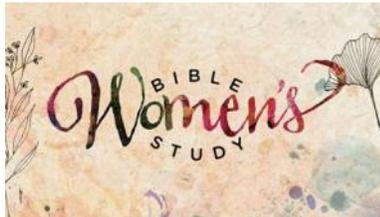
9:45 AM-10:45 AM

Begin in the Gym with Coffee & Donuts



**Book of Revelation
Bible Study
With Pastor Maske**

The Book of Revelation can seem mysterious—or even intimidating—at first. Its vivid images of beasts, storms, and cosmic battles may make us wonder, "What is this really about?" Revelation is God's loving call to repentance, faith, and trust. It reminds us that no matter what trials we face, Christ reigns triumphantly over sin, death, and all the powers of evil. Come with your questions, your curiosity, and your faith. Let's journey together through God's powerful book, hearing His gentle invitation to trust Him completely, rejoice in His triumph, and live confidently as His beloved children.



Tuesday Evening Ladies Bible Study is beginning our next study January 6th at 6:30pm. All interested ladies can contact Kim Ruesch kimiruesch@gmail.com or Barbara Schubert schubertbrs@gmail.com for more information.

Praying together strengthens our church and us.

Jan Chilcott coordinates the group for **Tuesday mornings**. Join them at 9:00 am in the prayer room. Pray warriors are welcome to join Virginia Hetrick and Barbara Schubert at **5:00pm on Tuesdays** in the prayer room. We pray for the confirmation class and their families and other requests as given to us. Come when you can, leave when you must, but come.



Want to receive prayer requests by email and join the multitudes that faithfully lift up petitions? Contact the Church Office to be included. Have a prayer concern/request? Contact the Church Office to share a few details, and we will be sure to let the Prayer Team know.

*“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid,
but gives us power, love and self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7)*

COMPLETING “THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS” CLASS

It is very frustrating to not be able to finish a book study, especially after you have spent several weeks on it and come to the last few chapters and a giant snowstorm keeps you from that last class! So, I would like to present the last few notes that I have for that last class.

First of all, I would like to remind you of what Screwtape said about the Christian girl that his “patient” had fallen in love with. He described her as “Not only a Christian but such a Christian – a vile, sneaky, simpering, demure, monosyllabic, mouse-like, watery, insignificant, virginal, bread-and-butter miss”.

The reason I want to return to this section is to remind everyone that this is what the devil thinks of each and everyone of us, who have faith and are engaged in the life that Jesus has led us to.

In Letter 26, Screwtape suggests that Wormwood should “teach a man to surrender benefits not that others may be happy in having them, but that he may be unselfish in forgoing them.” Then after the marriage, his unselfishness will be expected, but he will not be able to maintain it.

Letter 27 is about the “patients” prayer life. Screwtape suggests that Wormwood shouldn’t forget to use the “heads I win, tails you lose” argument. If the thing he prays for doesn’t happen, then that is one more proof that petitionary prayers don’t work; if it does happen, he will, of course, be able to see some of the physical causes which lead up to it, and therefore it would have happened anyway....”

In Letter 28, Wormwood has failed miserably and is looking forward to the potential death of his young patient dying during the war. However, Screwtape tells him this is the last thing he wants, the patient is a Christian. He would rather keep him alive, so Screwtape can have more time to work on him into his middle-age years.

Letter 29 is about “Fear”. Screwtape recommends defeating the patient’s courage and making him a coward so that his fear will undermine his courage and drive him away from God.

We read in Letter 30, that nothing Wormwood has done has worked. Screwtape now instructs Wormwood to capitalize on the man’s fatigue in hopes of weakening his resolve. Screwtape’s belief is that if a demon cannot make an intellectual attack on the patient’s faith, he should attack his emotions – especially when the man is fatigued.

In the final Letter, the patient has died and escaped safely into Heaven. Needless to say, Screwtape is furious with his nephew, as he hates to see “human vermin” be cleansed by the blood of Christ.

C.S. Lewis goes on to explain that the patient is now able to look back on his life and the struggle that went on between the angels and the devil for his soul.

Thank you to everyone who attended these classes. I hope this gives you closure for the class. God be with you and bless you.

Virginia Hetrick – Prayer Coordinator

HAVE YOU SEEN THE



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 Annual Report January 2026



*Education with Christ
at the heart of it.*

St. Michael Lutheran School and Christ for Kids Childcare Center are outreach ministries of St. Michael Lutheran Church, sharing the Good News of Jesus with students, their families, and the greater community, as well as providing a quality Christ-centered education. We believe that all children can learn and succeed, and therefore we welcome any student that our resources and training enables us to serve. This is accomplished through a caring staff of certified teachers, a commitment to continuous professional growth, and a pragmatic school improvement plan. We believe in teaching the whole child - spiritually, socially, emotionally and cognitively. Our goal is to provide a level of education that is more in-depth, broader in scope, and higher in quality than other educational options in the area.



Enrollment

The school ministry enrollment for the 2025-2026 school year includes preschool (44), K-8 (161), and childcare (66). The K-8 enrollment has grown at an average rate of 14 new students each year for the past five years. Since 2001, 285 individuals have joined St. Michael Lutheran Church through the school and childcare ministry.

Tuition Assistance

This year a total of \$57,300 of tuition assistance has been awarded to 23 qualifying families. This assistance benefits 33 children or about 20% of students enrolled in the K-8 program. Since 2005, \$663,074 in tuition assistance has been awarded to

qualifying families. Most of this funding comes from the annual golf outing, the Gerri Wheeler Scholarship Fund, and many generous donations. This fund is always in need of donations so please consider a tax-deductible gift this year.

Staffing

The school and childcare together employ 41 staff – 15 in the school and 26 in the preschool/childcare. There are a number of individuals, including tutors, psychologists, speech and occupational therapists, who frequent the school to meet the needs of our students. Portage Public Schools provides certified teachers for Spanish, art, band, and gym classes at no cost to the school in a partnership program known as Shared Time.

Ministry Projects

The school participates in a number of ministry projects throughout the course of the year. The following organizations will benefit from the efforts of SMLS students this year: Camp Concordia; Camp Luther Haven; Trunk or Treat; and the American Heart Association. Additionally, our students regularly send cards and letters to St. Michael Lutheran Church shut-ins and sing for residents of local assisted living facilities in the area.



MAKING MIGHTY MESSENGERS FOR CHRIST

Programs

The school continues to offer a strong academic program. Kindergarten students arrive in 1st grade as eager readers. Iowa Test of Basic Skills



standardized test scores continue to be above the national average and fall at the top of Lutheran schools in the Michigan District-LCMS. The curriculum meets or exceeds state standards. SMLS also offers a variety of enrichment classes after school or during the summer months, including Drama and Worship Team. The school has an excellent working relationship with Portage Public Schools. Bus service for our students is provided to our students and our school is a transfer point for PPS buses. PPS also provides limited special education services for qualifying students.

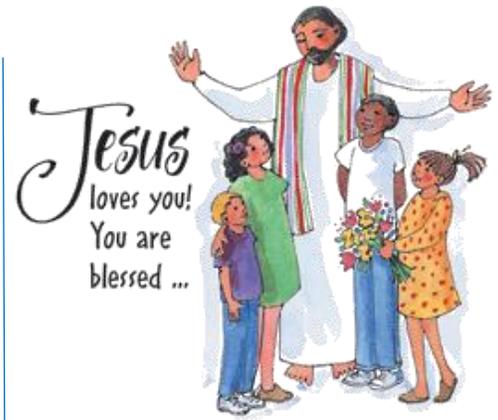
Sports

Our sports program continues to grow with more students participating than ever before. We now have a part-time paid Athletic Director who coordinates games, referees, and concessions. The school participates in an association of Kalamazoo area private schools for sports and frequently picks up games with area public and private schools. SMLS offers fall co-ed cross-country, girls' volleyball and basketball, boys' basketball and a running club. We continue to offer *Girls' On the Run* as well as a community basketball camps each August.



St. Michael is fully accredited by National Lutheran Schools Accreditation as well as two other accrediting organizations. We engage in intentional and continuous improvement to prepare students with an education for real-world success. We are continuing to enhance our STEM lab to provide STEM education for our students. We now have individual classes for all grades K-8 and all signs point to further growth in enrollment for the fall of 2026. There are many other exciting things going on in our program and we thank God for His continued blessings. This ministry would not be possible without the support and prayers from the St. Michael Lutheran Church congregation. Please continue to pray for the school ministry as we share the Gospel and strive to develop students who grow and succeed in all of their tomorrows.

Gregory Johnson, Principal



SHEPHERD GROUPS

| Lay Minister | Family Names Start with | Family Names & include |
|--|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kerry Batten 269-491-8128 | A | Boelman |
| Harold DeFouw 269-569-6869 | Bohren | Chenevare |
| Rich Conklin 616-889-0201 | Chilcott | D |
| Jeff Lauterbach 269-578-6415 | 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 | K | 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 |



Happy New Year!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Sun Jan 4th 9:45am Coffee Club
5-7 Youth Group – Bowling
- Tues Jan 6th 5:30pm – Youth Board Meeting
- Sun 11th 9:45am – Bible Study ‘Why Bodies Matter’
5-7pm Youth Group -- Sledding (*weather permitting*)
- Sun Jan 18th 9:45am – Bible Study ‘Why Bodies Matter’
5-7pm Youth Group - Tacos and Missions in Latin America
- Sun 25th 9:45am – Bible Study ‘Why Bodies Matter’
Youth Group – Ice Skating (*weather permitting*)



Students set up the Outdoor Nativity Set.

The start of a New year gives us the opportunity to consider the coming year, to make plans and dreams for what this year will hold. For our youth, we begin looking towards spring sports, driving for the first time, the end of the school year, or exciting travel. Whether it is college, travel or band and sports teams, we get excited about these new opportunities that we will have in our future.

While our youth might dream about freedom, their own car, a great job and excitement for their futures. What do we dream about for them? When I think about my own children, I do desire that they get an education, and a good job, etc. However more importantly than any of these things I desire their salvation. I desire that they know the Lord and can proclaim with all the saints 'I believe that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, born of the virgin is **my Lord**'. I want them to know in their baptism who they are, as a **redeemed and beloved child of God**. I desire them to know the scriptures and to know their Father. That they might approach our heavenly Father as his dear children asking their dear father to care for their needs. This is what we want not just for our own children but also the children and youth of our church family.

As we think about the future it is important to remember that the future is built upon our habits, what we do and learn now. We have healthy teeth in our old age because we brushed them every day for years before that. In the same way we are to practice spiritual disciplines, like reading the scriptures daily, praying for ourselves and others, attending the divine service and bible study. Through the gifts that the Lord has given to us, in His Word,

our Baptism and the Lord's Supper, **God gives us the forgiveness of our Sins, Salvation and Life eternal.** *What could be more important than this gift to pass on to our children?* Through the preaching of the Word, the Divine Service and through our great bible study / sunday school teachers God has provided for us a community to strengthen us in the faith and walk with us in the difficult moments. God fills us up through these means.

As you look forward to the new year to come, **make being filled, encouraged and forgiven a regular part of your life.** Make this a priority above and before all else. Encourage our youth and youth families in their vocations. Thank the young mother in the pew with silly, noisy children, sit with them. Offer a ride to bring the youth to church and make it more manageable for busy families to fit everything into their schedule. Encourage and pray for these families helping them to build habits which ensure that in the future Christ remains the center of their lives because they know who they are and live each day wrapped in His love and forgiveness.



Decorating cookies and celebrating the season with hibatchi dinner.





More than 40 members of our congregation discovered the benefits and blessings of daily Bible reading in 2025 by taking up the challenge of the 66:1 Bible reading campaign.

Our shared goal was to read all 66 books of the Bible in one year. We tracked our progress by counting chapters and logging them via a Google Form or on index cards kept on the bulletin board outside the church office.

Our efforts began with 28 participants but kept growing. There were 39 people reading by midyear, with another four joining us even after that. We celebrated our progress with a pizza party July 13 and had several readers encourage us by sharing their experiences.

Our goal of reading 60,000 Bible chapters, set by Pastor Toman in late 2024, was dependent on at least 50 people each reading the entire Bible. Our results will fall short but nevertheless are impressive. As of this writing, Dec. 19:

- Seven people already have finished reading the Bible.
- Another 11 have read at least 90 percent of the Bible.
- Six people are 80 to 89 percent finished.
- Altogether, the team has read **35,717** Bible chapters.

Our final tally will be higher than 35,717, as this preliminary figure excludes our reading in December. Nearly all participants calculate and submit their data at the end of each month. Expect to learn the outcome of the 66:1 Bible reading campaign in January.




at the CENTER
WTR '26

FEBRUARY 20-22, 2026

A CHRIST-CENTERED, FUN WEEKEND GETAWAY FOR KIDS IN GRADES 6-12

Alongside engaging activities, we'll have opportunities for spiritual growth within worship sessions, teaching, and small group discussions. SpringHill is dedicated to providing a safe and nurturing environment to gather together in fun, and to ignite or deepen young faith.

WINTER TEEN RETREAT ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

- SpringHill's Famed 700ft Tubing Hill
- Paintball
- Indoor High Ropes Course
- Game Room with Board Games, Foosball, Ping Pong, Pool, Giant Chess
- Ice Skating and Snowshoeing (depending on weather)
- Sports Team Tournaments: Broomball, Basketball, Volleyball
- And More!








FEED THE MOB

It's almost time for our "Superbowl" sub sandwiches! Subs will be available Feb 8, 2026. Watch for the order forms coming soon. All proceeds go to support the Youth Group.

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



THE LUTHERAN HOUR RALLY & SUMMIT Celebration



Event Schedule

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31

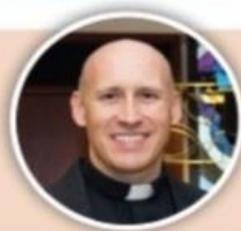
Congregational Ministry Summit

St. Lorenz Worship and Event Center, 850 W Genessee Street, Frankenmuth, MI

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1

The Lutheran Hour® Rally Worship Service

St. Lorenz Lutheran Church, 1030 W Tuscola Street, Frankenmuth, MI



Featuring Keynote Speaker
and The Lutheran Hour Rally Preacher
Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler
Speaker of The Lutheran Hour

Potluck 12:00–1:00 p.m.

Pre-Rally Entertainment: 1:00–2:00 p.m.

Featuring Marty Miller (Christian Musician)

2:00 p.m. The Lutheran Hour Rally Worship Service

(Satellite Location) St. Michael Lutheran Church

7211 Oakland Drive • Portage



RSVP by scanning QR Code:

“Super Reader” Book Fair has defeated the villainy of boring books with sales topping \$5,000 for the second year!

Your purchases brought the joy of reading to our school students, improved our teachers’ classroom libraries, and most importantly, funded our library’s supply of new children’s books for yet another year.

As our library’s only fund-raiser, a successful book fair is essential for providing the students at our Lutheran school with new and quality reading materials. Because we get to keep 35 percent of the book fair’s profits, this year’s event will bring \$1,786 in new titles to our shelves. These will be among the most popular choices when each SMLS classroom visits the library once a week to borrow books.

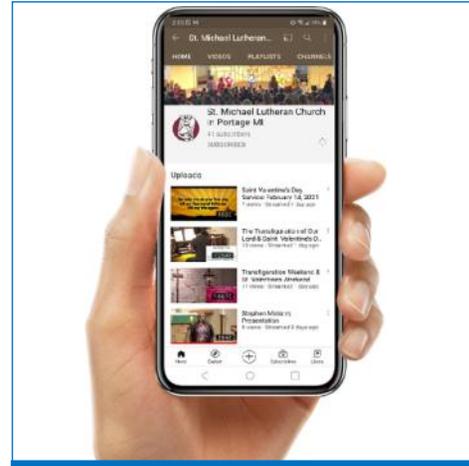
Already 37 new books, purchased from the book fair’s own inventory, are in the process of being added to the library’s shelves. Among them are the newest titles from popular series such as “Diary of a Wimpy Kid” and “I Survived,” as well as Christian titles such as two vintage collections of the bestselling Arch Books from Concordia Publishing House.

We will be adding more books over the coming months. Last year’s book fair brought 132 new books to the library, and we expect a similar result for this school year. All will be purchased through Lowry’s Books & More in Three Rivers, our book fair vendor.

Since the book fair’s conclusion just before Thanksgiving, we have been seeking feedback using an online survey. The 21 responses collected so far have been mainly split between parents and middle school students, with school and church staff also participating.

Nearly all reported having a positive experience at the book fair, which they said met or exceeded their expectations. Respondents overwhelmingly supported having Christian books at the fair (although most said they did not buy any). As for future book fairs, 80 percent had a “neutral” to “strongly support” response to continuing with Lowry’s as our vendor. Conversely, the possibility of returning to Scholastic, a national book fair vendor, was more opposed (40 percent) than supported (14 percent).

These and other responses will be helpful in decision-making related to future book fairs, which hopefully will be as enjoyable and as successful as our 2025 book fair. Thank you, everyone – church members, parents, grandparents, and students – for your tremendous support! You are our superheroes!



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

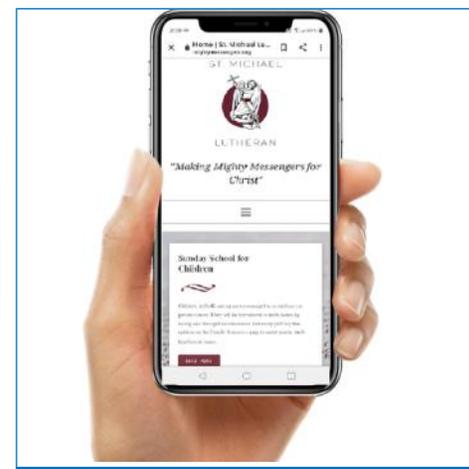
Facebook
Find devotions, special event announcements and more:



@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.



SERVING THE LORD IN

Belize

NEWS FROM GROTH FAMILY



November 2025

jason.groth@lcms.org

The Gift of Play



November in Belize

In November, the authorities set up a significant number of enforcement checkpoints throughout the country. The purpose of each checkpoint varies—some officers check for valid insurance stickers, others ask to see a driver's license, and those stationed closer to the borders are typically from Customs, asking where travelers have been and where they are headed.

Belize is a small nation with limited revenue streams, relying heavily on tourism and import duties. These Customs checkpoints are part of a broader effort to identify and reduce the flow of illegally imported goods.

One practical effect of these checkpoints is that traffic can back up quickly, especially along major roads and during peak travel hours. It is not unusual to find yourself in a long line of cars waiting to pass through. As we've learned, it is key to give yourself plenty of extra time when traveling. These delays are simply part of life here and approaching them with patience and understanding goes a long way in maintaining peace of mind.



To be added to or removed from this mailing list, send an email message to jason.groth@lcms.org with the word ADD or REMOVE in the subject line.



In November, I was able to accompany two short-term teams in Seine Bight. The first team was a dental team. They offered free cleanings. The next team built a playground next to Saint Alphonsus School. This was a great gift to the community. We sanctified the moment with readings from God's Word and prayers for peace in the community.

First Belizean Lutheran Pastor Ordained

On November 30th, we gathered at Castillo Fuerte Lutheran Church in Trial Farm for a truly remarkable day in the life of the Belizean mission. As we celebrated the First Sunday in Advent, we were blessed to witness the installation of Rev. Roldan Rios—the first Belizean pastor in the Lutheran Church of Belize. After completing his colloquy with Pastor Micah Wildauer and being examined and certified by seminary professors in the Dominican Republic, Pastor Rios has now

begun his ministry among his own people.

The celebration continued with the confirmation of Javisaeli Keren Teck, whom Pastor Rios instructed and joyfully welcomed into the Church. We give thanks to God for these milestones and pray that He will continue to raise up faithful Belizean men to serve His Church, just as He has done in Pastor Roldan. May the Lord of the harvest sustain and bless this growing church body for years to come.



Shining Light on the Most Vulnerable

One of the highlights of November was the opportunity to visit my friend Christie in Seine Bight. Christie lives with cerebral palsy, and every visit with her is a reminder of the joy and resilience God weaves into every life. I accompanied a visiting nurse for a health check, and we were grateful to learn that Christie continues to be in relatively good health.

What stood out most, however, was her laughter—the kind that fills a room and reminds you of the Lord's tenderness toward His children. Moments like these, shared in homes and on humble floors, are where mercy and righteousness meet. Please keep Christie and her family in your prayers, that God would continue to uphold them with His strength and surround them with His love.

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

2026 ENDOWMENT DISTRIBUTIONS

This is the time of year when the Endowment Committee asks members for requests to help fund St. Michael Lutheran Church ministries. Many of the ministries at St. Michael Lutheran are included in budgets. However, sometimes there is not enough money to accomplish all that you would like to do.

In 2026 there will be about \$10,000 from the non-dedicated endowment fund that could be used. In past years, the individual amounts distributed have ranged from \$500 up to several thousand dollars. All that is needed is for you to fill out a simple form. The blank forms are available in the church office, or you can get one via email from Todd Foster (toddalicebus@yahoo.com). Forms are to be turned into the church office or any endowment committee member by February 15th. In the past years, we have received requests for more money than we have, but usually not too much more, so there is a good chance you could receive some money to help accomplish your ministry goals.

Todd Foster (Chair), Rick Jacobs, Julie Vickery, Dave Johnson, Rob Kuhlman



Annual Church ELECTIONS

SEEKING NOMINEES

Per our By-Laws, St Michael members will soon be voting. In February, we will be electing Assistant Board Directors, Endowment Committee Members, and one-half of the members of the Board of Lay Ministry. There is also an outstanding need to find a Director for the boards of Youth & Young Adult Ministry, Parish Education and Small Groups.

The Parish Planning Council is asking that you earnestly pray that God will reveal to us all those St. Michael members who can and are willing to lead us for the next two years in these positions. We know that

only prayer will bring us the right people at the right time. So please be in prayer.

If you know of someone that would be a perfect candidate for one of the positions stated above, or if you yourself would like to be considered, please contact the Nominating Committee Chairman: Mark Ruesch.

The next Town Hall Meeting will be between Worship Services in the Gym on February 8 . The Voters' Meeting will be on Sunday, February 22, 2026 following the late Worship Service.

GENERAL INFORMATION

FAITH FORMATION

CHILDREN - Sunday Morning Classes are available during the 9:45 AM Learning Hour. Mondays 3:15-4:30 PM Kid's Knitting Group. Wednesdays 5:15-6:30 PM Life Skills Class.

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 5:30 PM; Youth Group meets on Sunday evenings at 5:00-7:00 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, unless holidays fall within the last week of the 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/>

NOVEMBER FINANCIALS

1 Month

11/1/2025 - 11/30/2025

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Church Revenue | \$ 118,533 |
| School Revenue | \$ <u>112,197</u> |
| Total Revenue | \$ 230,730 |
| Total Expenses | \$ <u>166,173</u> |
| Net Surplus (deficit) | \$ 64,557 |
| Expense Budget | \$ - |
| Under/(Over) Budget | \$ 230,730 |
| Working Cash Balance | \$ 79,337 |
| Mortgage Balance | \$ 923,802 |

Designated Fund Balances

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Endowment Fund | \$836,183 |
| Building Contingency | \$ 36,136 |
| Parking Lot Fund | \$ 30,000 |
| HVAC | \$ 853 |
| Technology Refresh | \$ 1,368 |
| Sunday School | \$ 1,253 |
| Youth Donations | \$ 9,354 |
| Youth Accounts | \$ 4,468 |
| Good Samaritan | \$ 4,087 |
| Memorials | \$ 14,984 |
| Fellowship | \$ 4,226 |
| Champion Church Network | \$ 401 |
| L.A.M.P. Mission Trip | \$ 6,810 |
| Quilting | \$ 841 |
| POBLO South Asia Ministry | \$ 10,596 |
| Student Debt Fund | \$ - |
| Church Worker Scholarship | \$ 400 |
| Luth Medical Emergency Fund | \$ 250 |
| School Improvements | \$ 10,953 |
| Tuition Assistance | \$ 26,108 |
| School Music | \$ 1,983 |
| School Sports | \$ 2,552 |
| Flower Fund | \$ (8) |
| Building Utilization | \$(52,785) |
| LWML | \$ 2,697 |
| Women's Fellowship | \$ 1,181 |
| Faith Budget | \$ - |

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

Annual Avg. 2025 389

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Sept. '25 Avg. | 346 |
| October '25 Avg. | 366 |
| November '25 Avg. | 338 |
| December '25 Avg. | 583 |

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

Thank you SMLC&S!!!

With your generous contributions through the Women's fellowship cookie sale, we raised **\$730!!!!** After some deliberation it was decided to give the majority of the proceeds to Christ for Kids to purchase a crib for the infant room. This will allow another family to join our St. Michael family through the child care program. Praise God!!!

Save the date - Monday, February 9th, 2026, 6:30pm, Women's fellowship will be meeting out on the town for a bite to eat, a warm drink and of course fellowship. Location to be determined. Sign up will be out early January 2026.



**6:30 PM
FRIDAY,
JANUARY 16**



All Women Invited!

This is a very easy game anyone can enjoy.

Bring a friend!

\$5 To Reserve Your Seat at the Table

***SNACKS, GIVEAWAYS and
LOTS OF LAUGHTER!***

**Register before January 13th in Church Office,
or between Worship Services in Communication Center.**



MagicBob as an Illusionist, Magician, and Escape Artist, presents an entertaining and wholesome program.

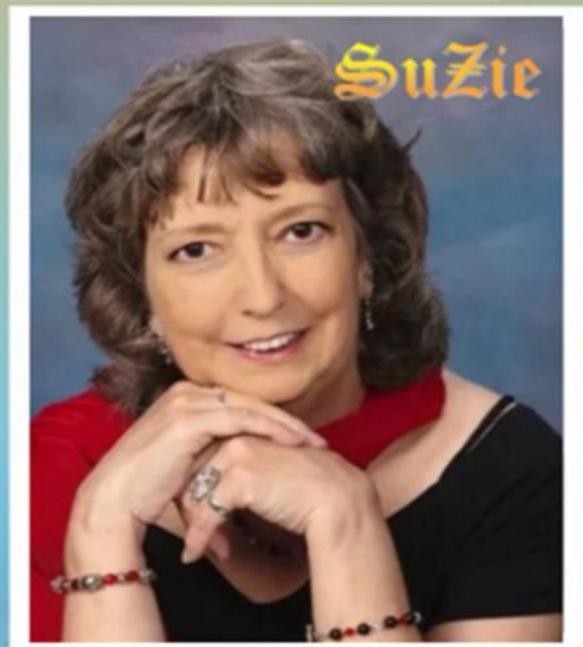


Chalk Artist SuZie adds a devotional highlight to enhance an entertaining program of MagicBob's illusions.

PANCAKE SUPPER

YOUTH GROUP SERVING PANCAKES & SAUSAGE

5-6:30 PM in Gym



Entertainment by: MagicBob & Chalk Artist SuZie



**MAGICAL
PRESENTATION
BEGINS AT
6:30 PM**

**DELICIOUS FOOD!
FUN FOR ALL AGES!**

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

BUSINESS & FINANCE MANAGER

Jennifer Stauffer
jstauffer@mightymessengers.org

CHURCH ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

CHILD MINISTRY COORDINATOR AND

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

Megan Cummins

SIXTH GRADE TEACHER

Emily Lauterbach

SEVENTH GRADE TEACHER

Julie Prentice

EIGHTH GRADE TEACHER

Lisa Lam

CHRIST FOR KIDS CHILDCARE DIRECTOR

Emily Ritchie
eritchie@mightymessengers.org

PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

Cheryl Julian
Alicia Keinath
Becky Mohler

WORSHIP MEDIA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Chris Rudowski

WORSHIP MEDIA SPECIALIST

Lorraine Dudash

CHOIR DIRECTOR

Carolyn Bertrand

ORGANIST

Keith Eiser

MORNING SONG DIRECTOR

Jane Connon

VOLUNTEERS:

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Mark Ruesch

VICE PRESIDENT

Rob Kuhlmann

TREASURER

Jeff Lauterbach

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Ryan Nelson, Director
Mark Vickery, Assistant Director

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Matt Colby, Assistant Director

BOARD OF SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

Vacant, Director
Vacant, Assistant Director

BOARD OF STEWARDSHIP

Dan Marshall, Director

VOLUNTEER MINISTRY COMMITTEE

Vacant, Chairman

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Vacant, Chairman

BOARD OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT

Vacant, Director
Jerry Kuss, Jeff Burnett

YOUTH GROUP LEADER

Deaconess Caitlin Ramirez

BOARD OF LAY MINISTRY

Mark Kahle, Director
Greg Wedel, Assistant Director

ALTAR GUILD

Kristi Rudowski

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
Lynda Rea, Karen Shuler

STEPHEN MINISTERS

Lane Bertrand, Pam Sward, Karen Taylor
Zachary Button, Peter Robert, Ann Olson
Bill Semrau, Kathy Zakarias

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Aaron Allen, Director
Kathie Seufert, Assistant Director

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ADULT EDUCATION COORDINATOR

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Mary Wright

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Judy Schroeder, Assistant Director

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP / LWML

Kathy Zakarias

SPORTS MINISTRY

Shannon Miskovich

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

Todd Foster, Dave Johnson, Rick Jacobs
Julie Vickery, Rob Kuhlman