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It's the Most Wonder-ful Time of the Year

by Pastor Ali Ferin

Every time that catchy Andy Williams song comes on the radio during the month of December, my cynical brain can't help but replace the word, "wonderful" with "stressful."

*"It's the most ~~wonderful~~-stressful time of the year...
the kids jingle belling and everyone telling you, be of good cheer!
It's the most ~~wonderful~~-stressful time of the year!"*

It has an honest ring to it, doesn't it? I'm no scrooge but in the Christmas season and the weeks leading up to it, my to-do list at least doubles while my bills follow suit. The cultural pressure to have a Pinterest-perfect holiday doesn't help, and with the added complexity of the pandemic it feels daunting to plan even the simplest, smallest of gatherings.

The wonder of the Christmas season is easily overshadowed by the shear stress of it all, and made even more heavy for those who are carrying grief, those who are ill, those living paycheck to paycheck, and those who are burdened with depression and mental health struggles. William's sickly sweet song responds to our reality by imploring us to simply "be of good cheer," but the Bible calls us to be filled with **wonder**.



The Gospel of Luke tells the story of Jesus' birth beginning with an angel of the Lord seeking out shepherds to tell them that their Messiah was born. The shepherds make their way to Bethlehem and find Mary, Joseph, and the newborn Jesus, telling them everything the angel revealed to them. Mary of course already knew what the shepherds spoke of (yes, contrary to another popular song, Mary *did* know) but even still, the text tells us that wonder fell upon them all. (Luke 2:18) Perhaps they were marveling at the mystery of their angel-filled evening, or awed by the ordinary miracle of human birth. Or maybe they were wondering what it could mean that the God of heavens and earth was before them; swaddled in scraps of cloth, rooting for his mother's milk, vulnerable and soft. The God of their ancestors whose marvelous works created the world, liberated the enslaved, and provided nourishment in the wilderness, was cradled in their arms. What might this mean? What might be possible now that the God of all that has been and all that will be, entered human time and space? In light of these revelations, the response of wonder now makes perfect sense.

We are invited to join Mary and Joseph in wonder this Christmas season. The world is dominated by systems and powers that make the work of the gospel seemingly impossible. The hungry fed? The poor made happy? The sick healed? The oppressed liberated? We might think, "Not here, not now, not possible." But the Christmas story invites us to imagine and wonder that God is among us and the work of the Gospel is possible and it is, in fact, already happening all around us.

Have you witnessed our Narthex area transformed into a free food distribution once a month with the help of faithful volunteers? It is possible.

Continued on page 4

CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRIES

2021-2022

Susie Farwell

Susie Modrow has served as the interim Children Youth and Family Ministries Director since September. January 9th will be her last Sunday with us as we prepare to welcome Natalie Romero on January 16th. Help us bless Susie into her next endeavors with a special sending at both worship services and a hot cocoa bonfire on the Fellowship Hall patio at 10:30 a.m. on January 9th. Thank you Susie for your ministry among us!

Welcome Natalie!

St. Michael's welcomes our newest staff member, Natalie Romero, as the next Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries! Natalie and her family have moved from New York to begin this exciting new chapter of their lives. Her first Sunday will be January 16th. Join us in welcoming Natalie to St. Michael's with a special liturgy in worship at both services and a fun event for all ages at 10:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall.



Confirmation News

7th - 9th Grade Confirmation

Wednesday evenings at 6:15pm in the Fellowship Hall. Masks are required for indoor class, and youth should come prepared with warm layers for outdoor activities.

- **Learning by Leading:** Confirmation students are required to volunteer 5x at church or in the community this program year. Youth can volunteer with their family or friends! Once a volunteer activity has been completed, head to www.stmichaelselca.com/confirmation to fill out the volunteer submission form. Contact Pastor Ali with any questions

Confirmation Retreat



The 2022 Confirmation Retreat will be held on Martin Luther King Jr. weekend. (January 16-17) This retreat helps youth understand healthy relationships and sexuality through a lens of faith. This is a required retreat each year.

Normally held at Camp Wapo in Amery Wisconsin, this year the confirmation retreat will be held at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Roseville and will not include any overnight sessions. The retreat is a joint effort between multiple Lutheran Churches in the Twin Cities and is led by a trained sex educator and local pastors, along with adult chaperones from each church. Registration is due by December 12th. Learn more and register at <https://www.stmichaelselca.com/confirmation-retreat.html>

Cookie Baking

December 5, 12:0 p.m.-3:00 p.m. Grades 3-5

Join us for lunch and cookie decorating! We will make some to taste and some to share with members of the community! Sign up here:

<https://www.cognitofrms.com/StMichaelsLutheranChurch1/CookieBaking>



High School Christmas Party

December 5, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Cost: \$5

Join us for a special meal to celebrate the Christmas season! Our Summer Service Trip will be revealed too! Start looking for that perfect item for the white elephant gift exchange!

This event requires an RSVP. Sign up here:

<https://www.cognitofrms.com/StMichaelsLutheranChurch1/ChristmasParty?v2>

Bake Sale to benefit the High School Summer Service Trip

December 19, 8:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Come support the high school youth as they raise funds for the Summer Service Trip! Each youth is expected to contribute items to the sale...you'll learn more about this during the Christmas Party.



Children's Christmas Program

Christmas Program

December 19 at the 11:00 a.m. service

Rehearsal 10:00 a.m.

The pre K-5th grade children will be sharing the story of the savior's birth with us.

Save the Dates

Sunday, December 5, 12:0 p.m.-3:00 p.m. – Grades 3-5 Cookie Baking

Sunday, December 5, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. – High School Christmas Party

Sunday, December 19, 8:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. – Bake Sale

Sunday, December 19, 11:00 a.m. service – Children's Christmas Pageant

Plan ahead for Summer Camp at Luther Crest

July 10-14, 2022

Cost: \$425 until Feb.14th

(free to high schoolers)

Grades 3-5

\$575 after

Enjoy all that Luther Crest has to offer by making memories, worshipping with friends, swimming in Lake Carlos, study the Bible, sing songs, do arts & crafts, cook outside, and grow in faith!

Register here: <https://www.luthercrest.org/camp1.html>

GHR ID is: **SMLC22**

Families provide transportation TO camp.

St. Michael's will provide transportation FROM camp.

Have you experienced the late night runs to Panera bakery to rescue day-old bread before it is trashed so that our community can be fed? It is possible.

Have you seen the storage unit in the back of our parking lot filled with household items and goods for Afghan refugees? It is possible.

These small glimmers of God working through this community of faith, incarnating the promises of the good news that Jesus ushers in, should not be discounted or seen as mundane tasks. They are God's promised future in-breaking into the here and now.

This Christmas season, I hope that good cheer finds you, but even more so, I pray that wonder overcomes you, that you might consider and enact all that is possible with Christ among us here and now.

Life of the Congregation

Welcome in Confirmation

We celebrate these 10th graders' faith, their voice, and their unfolding story as beloved children of God!

- Ian Grewe
- Lucas Grewe
- Eli Griggs-LeRoux
- Matthew Rolfs
- Hayden Sperbeck
- Christopher Then
- Henry Theilen Towne
- Megan Weston



Welcome in Baptism

St. Michael's welcomed Henry "Fitz" Hyland, beloved child of Becky Quinby & Gracie Hyland on November 21, 2021

In Memorial

St. Michael's held memorial services for Fred Christiansen on November 13, 2021, and for Harold Haugen on November 24, 2021.

Dates to Remember

Children's Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 19 at
11:00a.m.

Christmas Eve

Saturday, December 24,
4:30 p.m. & 10:30 p.m.

First Sunday of Christmas

Sunday, December 26,
10:00 a.m. service only
A service of Lessons & Carols

The Longest Night Service

Tuesday, December 21, 7:00 p.m.

Second Sunday of Christmas

Sunday, January 2,
10:00 a.m. service only

Children Youth & Family Ministry COVID 19 Update

Stay up to date on current plans by signing up for the St. Michael's EBlast and the CYF Newsletter. The following guidelines will be in place as we prepare for Sunday School and CYF ministries:

- Masks are required indoors for everyone in Kindergarten and up regardless of vaccination status. Masks are recommended for PreK students.
- Tru-HEPA air filtration devices are being incorporated into several of our spaces that are regularly used.
- Leaders should keep windows open in rooms whenever possible, weather permitting.
- Use of outdoor space for lessons and activities as weather permits.
- All adult volunteers are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated.
- Cleaning of materials and resources immediately after use.
- Self-health screening for families and volunteers:

Do not come to church if you have....

- A fever (100.4 or higher)
- Chills
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Muscle aches
- Loss of smell or taste
- You or a member of your household is waiting for COVID19 test results
- You or a member of your household has COVID19 and is in isolation period
- You may be sent home from an activity if you exhibit or develop any of these symptoms at church.

Social Ministry Activities

Social Ministry Calendar

- November 24 – December 31: Winter Boot Drive
November 28 – December 19: Christmas Gift Drive
December 6: Rezek house Meal
December 12: Sandwich Making for Union Gospel Mission
December 14: Keystone Mobile Food Distribution
Daily: Panera Bread Delivery and Repackaging



Winter Boot Collection Drive

Winter weather has finally come! Naturally, our thoughts turn to BOOTS. YES, BOOTS. Boots are of high need for families in the Roseville Area Schools, and we want to help. Boots of all sizes are needed; toddlers through adults!



The drive begins on the 24th of November and runs through the end of December. We ask that you bring gently used or new boots. Boot tags can be found on the display at church or you can purchase them through a charity Target Registry at <https://www.target.com/gift-registry/gift/smlc-boots>

Donations can be placed in the green box in the narthex. As boots accumulate, we will pass them on to the Roseville Area Schools social workers. Let's make sure that everyone in our community has dry feet this winter! Thank you for your generosity.

-Social Ministry Committee

Holiday Gift Drive

In partnership with the Roseville Area Schools social workers, we will be providing holiday gifts for two families within our community. Gift tags will be available on the Christmas Tree in the Narthex starting November 28th (The first Sunday of Advent) and running through December 19th. Gifts can be placed under the tree in the Sanctuary - please do not wrap them and attach the tag to the gift. Thank you for helping make the holidays brighter for a family in need!



Volunteers Needed!

Volunteers are needed to pick up and/or package and deliver rescued Panera Bread. Learn more by calling Dave Yarusso or the church office. Or head to www.stmichaelsleca.com/local and click on the Volunteer button to find the sign up and details on this essential ministry in our community!

Our Guatemala Partnership

Christmas Traditions

We are all familiar with the myriad of traditions we have grown up with in the United States, but how do our friends in Guatemala celebrate Christmas?



Las Posadas: The Inns

From December 16th to the 24th, Las Posadas processions are celebrated every night. The nine days are significant, symbolizing the nine months Mary was pregnant. Starting at the church on the first night, images of Mary and Joseph are carried through the streets visiting 3 houses each night. These processions symbolize the difficult journey Mary and Joseph made from Nazareth to Bethlehem. And just like the familiar Gospel story, each night the travelling couple is turned away from the first two houses they visit because there is “no room at the Inn.” Finally, at the third house they are welcomed to stay. As they are given a place of honor in the home, the hosts greet the procession with food and beverages. At the final house on the final night of December 24th, a baby Jesus is added to the Holy Family.

Pyrotechnics

Special worship services and celebrations in the village are often celebrated with a very loud, industrial sized fire crackers. On several visits to Cimiento, we have been badly startled by the explosion of celebratory pyrotechnics just outside the window of the church. While everyone enjoyed a giggle at our surprise, they quickly learned to warn us before they lit one with an appropriate cross-cultural warning of “BOOM!” I can only imagine the delight they have on festival days like Christmas, lighting off these loud expressions of their joy.

Christmas Ponche : Christmas Punch

Just like us, Christmas celebrations often center around food. Tamales with pork or chicken are a staple on tables in Cimiento. Christmas punch is made from dried fruits, cinnamon and cloves and is served hot throughout the Christmas season.

El Nacimiento: The Nativity

Nativity sets in Guatemala are often small but usually brightly colored. When the family sets up the nativity, baby Jesus is not placed in the scene until December 25th. On Christmas Eve, if a family is not at church at midnight, they gather around the nativity in their home for a prayer. At that time, the baby Jesus is given to either the oldest or the youngest member of the family and they have the honor of placing the babe in the nativity. The nativity is left on display until Epiphany.

This year we will display several Guatemalan nativity sets outside the Sanctuary during Advent to help us remember our partners at Santa Cruz de la Esperanza and that we celebrate this season with them in our hearts.

Refugee Resettlement Update

Here's a brief update on the Afghan refugee family that St. Michael's is helping resettle in cooperation with the Minnesota Council of Churches:

- The St. Michael's congregation continues to embrace this family with cash donations, gift cards, clothing, household goods, and much more. We are very grateful for this outpouring of support.
- The family, including baby Khkula, who was born in October, is healthy. Mom, Guldasta, and baby are getting regular health checkups.
- Dad, Jamiullah, will soon be enrolled in a work program under the administration of the Minnesota Council of Churches.
- Some projects, like establishing reliable phone access, opening bank accounts, securing ID cards, signing up for WIC benefits, and the like have been completed. Others, like enrolling in SNAP (food stamp benefits) and registering for Social Security cards are in process. The complexity of these processes has been a real education for those members of the Refugee Resettlement Committee volunteering to work in that area and has provided us with a new appreciation for the challenges that people dealing with food and housing insecurity face.
- The Refugee Resettlement Committee and the Minnesota Council of Churches are still unsure of the status of Guldasta's parents and siblings who also have been evacuated to the US. St. Michael's is hoping to assist in resettling them in Minnesota but, as yet, that prospect is unclear.
- The Refugee Committee met one evening with Mahmood (Moody) Khan, a US citizen originally from Pakistan who has served the US military in Afghanistan, and Roman Khan Koatwall, who settled in the US from Afghanistan some years ago after serving the US military as an interpreter. The pair provided the team with a valuable overview of Afghanistan and its culture.
- As of November 1, the Refugee Resettlement Committee had logged more than 300 hours of volunteer time and about 700 miles traveled completing tasks to assist our family.
- If you are interested in assisting the Committee in a volunteer capacity, watch for announcements about needs in future editions of the *Messenger* and the *Friday Flyer* e-newsletter.

HEROES NEEDED (no cape required)

An intrepid team of volunteers from St. Michael's delivers **Meals on Wheels** 17 Thursdays each year. Sometimes these committed servants are unable to deliver, due to circumstances beyond their control. That's where you come in. If you can answer the call (or email) at the last minute (probably a day or two in advance), we want you. Contact Mike Krachmer if you are interested. Thanks!



Study & Fellowship Opportunities

Men's Bible and Brew

Thursday, December 16, 8:00 p.m. in the Courtyard Room
After choir, the Men's Bible & Brew crew will meet for a holiday celebration.



Women's Circles

Women's circles are a wonderful way to connect, build relationships, and join others in conversation and study.

The *Sarah Circle* meets the first Tuesday of every month at 9:30 a.m.

The *Elisabeth Circle* meets the first Wednesday of each month at 1:00 p.m.

Both of the Circle groups will be focusing on the study, "My Neighbor is Muslim", as we seek to better accompany the Afghan refugees our congregation is resettling.

Sarah Circle: **December 7 9:30 a.m.** in the Courtyard Room.

Elisabeth Circle: **December 8 1:00 p.m.** Outside the Courtyard Room. Dress warmly!

Desserters II Book Club

The Desserters II book club will meet **by Zoom** this year for another season of discussing interesting books. All are welcome to join the discussions held on the **4th Tuesdays of the month at 7:00 p.m.**

December: No Meeting

Jan 25, 2022 *The Yellow House* by Sarah Broom demonstrates “how enduring drives of clan, pride, and familial love resist and defy erasure”

DEI Matters

We welcome you to participate in a group to explore **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Matters**, using books and open, authentic conversations in a brave space. The focus this year is on our own race, racism, and white supremacy. These topics are geared toward adults and young adults. Reading will be done individually, using thought-provoking questions as a guide. Group discussion, via Zoom, will allow us to consider how and why these matters matter. The purpose of this program is to broaden our self-understanding through deep self-reflection and sharing our learnings with each other.

The group is facilitated by Laurie Krachmer, a member of St Michael’s who has been engaged in diversity and inclusion work for the past 7 years and is a trained facilitator.

Meetings are at 4:00pm and last 60-90 minutes, depending on the need of the group.

To get the most out of this program, it is recommended that participants start the reading early in each month so you have time to pause and reflect.

December 19:

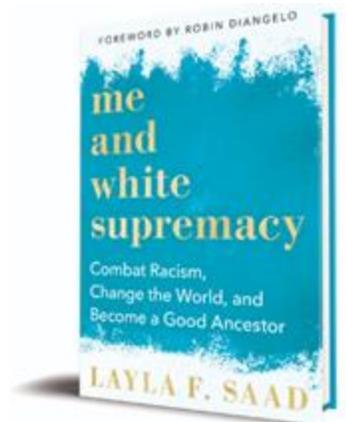
Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor by Layla F Saad
Forward through Week 1: The Basics

Instructions for December 19 DEI Matters Pre-work and Zoom Meeting

Each month, participants will read and reflect on the questions prior to the Zoom meeting. Use the Zoom link in the Friday Flyer email to log into the meeting.

Pre-Work:

- Breathe....
- Consider working through this book and reflection process with someone else, especially someone you trust to know you well and push back on you, and with whom you can do the same. While there is some room to record in the book, you may want to use a journal for reflection—as you read now and as you continue the journey in the future.
- Read the Forward through Day 7. When you get to Part II, I recommend you read one “day” at a time and make notes of your responses to the reflection questions for that day.
- Before the meeting, think about how much you are willing to share about your past and your experience working through this book. Be prepared for others to share very different experiences, points of view, concerns, emotions, etc.
- Questions we might discuss:
 - What is your response to the definition of white supremacy?
 - How were you taught white supremacy?
 - What have you learned about your white privilege that makes you uncomfortable?
 - How have you experienced white fragility?
 - How have you used tone policing?
 - How do you benefit from white silence?
 - Where have you recognized white superiority in your experience?
 - In what ways have you believed you are exceptional?
 - How are you complicit in white supremacy?



Faith in Daily Life

Wednesdays, 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.(ish) in the Courtyard Room

Faith in Daily Life is now focusing on our second book: *Blueprint: The Evolutionary Origins of a Good Society* by Nicholas A. Christakis. This will deepen conversation around how we are called to be a vibrant community of faith, living out authentic relationships with one another and the world around us.

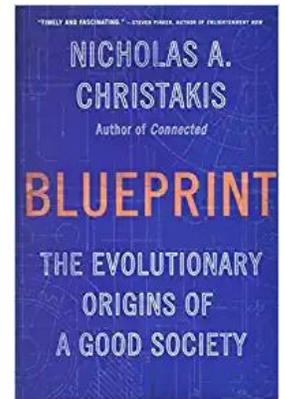
This year as we continue to adjust to COVID-19 we will be gathering in the Courtyard Room at St. Michael's. Tables and chairs will be set up, bring your own lunch or snack. Come in door #4 (by the main office).

Month 4: *Blueprint: The Evolutionary Origins of a Good Society*

Preface, Chapter 1: The Society Within Us, Chapter 2: Unintentional Communities

Wednesday, December 1*

Wednesday, December 15*



Thursday Morning Bible Study

Thursdays, 9:30-10:30 a.m. at St. Michael's

We are now moving into reading the lectionary texts with an eye toward how the Scriptures are often read and how we might learn, grow, and be challenged in looking at the Bible through the lens of others' experiences.

We will meet in the Courtyard Room. Meeting indoors, we ask people to wear masks, and encourage all who are able to be vaccinated.

December 2	Malachi 3:1-4 Baruch 5:1-9 (alt.) Luke 1:68-79 Philippians 1:3-11 Luke 3:1-6	My messenger is a refiner and purifier The return of scattered Israel In the tender compassion of God the dawn from on high shall break upon us. A harvest of righteousness on the day of Jesus Christ Prepare the way of the Lord
December 9	Zephaniah 3:14-20 Isaiah 12:2-6 Philippians 4:4-7 Luke 3:7-18	Rejoice, the Lord is in your midst In your midst is the Holy One of Israel Rejoice, the Lord is near One more powerful is coming, baptizing with fire
December 16	Micah 5:2-5a Luke 1:46b-55 Psalm 80:1-7 (alt) Hebrews 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-45 [46-55]	From Bethlehem comes a ruler You, Lord, have lifted up the lowly. Let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved. I have come to do your will Blessed are you among women / Magnificat
December 23	No Class-Christmas break	
December 30	No Class-Christmas break	



Yoga Devotion

Yoga Devotion continues through December 20. Classes are 6:30 p.m. Classes will be held in person and will be on zoom!

The cost is \$63. Here is registration link:

<https://yogadevotion.com/class/yogadevotion-flow-with-sandy-st-michaels-lutheran-church-roseville-mn-zoom-and-or-in-person/2021-11-08/>

Please pay via the link

When you register you will receive a ticket with a zoom invitation. That Zoom invitation will be your entry for each class.

Beginners are always welcome! If you would like to try a free class to learn more about yoga, please contact Mary Drache for the zoom link and join us!

Music @ St. Michael's

Adult Choir	
Rehearsal Schedule	Worship Schedule
Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. Fellowship Hall	December 5, 11:00 a.m. December 12, 8:45 a.m. December 24, 4:30 p.m. & 10:30 p.m.
Adult Bells	
Rehearsal Schedule	Worship Schedule
Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m. Balcony	December 19, both services
Youth Choirs	
Rehearsal Schedule	Worship Schedule
Wednesdays in the Courtyard Room 6:30-7:15pm Celebration Singers 7:30-8:15pm Spirit Choir	December 12, both services
Youth Bells	
Rehearsal Schedule	Worship Schedule
Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m. Balcony	December 5, both services

Children's Music News

The season of Advent brings to us a time of waiting and preparation. We wait for the birth of Jesus. We prepare for gathering with friends and family. The excitement around the holidays this year seems to have increased over the last few months with anticipation of returning to some sense of normalcy despite still living through the pandemic.

The St. Michael's children's music groups began rehearsing in September. Since then, we have participated and assisted in leading worship each month. As Christmas approaches and as we look ahead to 2022, it is our hope to have more singers and ringers join us each week.

One of the most anticipated events among young singers at St. Michael's is the spring musical. Due to the Covid closure in March 2020 and continued online worship and rehearsals in the spring of this year, we have not performed a musical for two years.

It is my hope that we will be able to do a musical this year, however most productions require a minimum of 15 people. We need many more singers to make a musical possible this year. In addition to singers/actors, we will also need people to work behind the scenes. Please let me know by **December 15** if your child is interested in participating in the musical or if you (or your child) would be able to help behind the scenes.

Musical rehearsals will begin in February (on Wednesday nights) and continue through performances on Sunday, May 15. Performances typically take place during both services in the sanctuary. This year, it is possible that we would take our performances outdoors to the stage by the Fellowship Hall patio.

If you would like more information about children's music at St. Michael's, or if your child is interested in singing and/or ringing, please contact me. Thank you!

Cory Bock
Director of Children's Music
cory@stmichaelselca.com

We Want You to Know...



This year, the ELCA published “A Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to American Indian and Alaska Native People,” in which the church confesses its sins toward Indigenous peoples and lists the commitments it will begin working toward as it responds to its original “Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery” from 2016.

One commitment found in each document is to formally acknowledge the original inhabitants of North America. The declaration states, “We commit to begin the practice of land acknowledgments at all expressions of the church.”

St. Michael’s Lutheran Church is located on the original and ancestral homeland of the Dakota people, and we give thanks for their presence here since time immemorial. We also wish to recognize and honor all our indigenous siblings who have and continue to call this land their home.

In response to the request of the AMERICAN INDIAN ALASKA NATIVE LUTHERAN ASSOCIATION and our Bishop Patricia Lull, we join the Saint Paul Area Synod in 225 days of remembering the children who have died in Indian Boarding Schools. We pray for the communities who suffered the loss of their children. Their relatives are now receiving their remains with grief and honor for burial in their homelands. We repent of the role of the Christian churches who supported the taking of the children to the schools and have remained ignorant of the harm and trauma caused over all this time. We commit to 225 days of remembering the children in this congregation, in worship and in learning more to restore loving relationship and work together toward God’s vision of beloved community between American Indian Alaska Native relatives and non-Native relatives, who are all God’s people.

More Ways to Serve

Worship Leaders and Volunteers Needed

Being back in the sanctuary or outdoors for worship again opens up some additional volunteer opportunities for St. Michael’s members. Check SignUp Genius for opportunities to volunteer for: **Ushers, Lectors, and Providing sanctuary flowers.**

Visit Sign-up Genius to see the opportunities awaiting you. The quickest way to get there is to visit St. Michael’s website: www.stmichaelselca.com and click on the Volunteer Sign-up icon

Thank you!

In this year’s stewardship materials, we celebrate the strong roots and traditions from which we grow, and the new fruits we are bearing in this season. It is because of your commitment we are able to enrich programming and adjust to change. Because of your giving we are able to respond to the needs of the world. Because of the seeds you plant through your time, talents, and financial giving we are able to branch out and grow in faith.



Thank you to everyone who has dropped off the 2022 Pledge Cards. You may still send them in to the office or drop them off in the *Faithful in Giving* box with any offerings when you are at worship.

A Church at Work

Church Council Corner

The Church Council met on Tuesday, November 9, 2021

In addition to checking in with the Committees and Teams, the following items were of note:

- Treasurer Brian Cihacek summarized the congregation's financial status as "tracking as we should at this time of year" with our expenses and revenue. We are in a stable condition and anticipate coming in well over the next couple of months.
- Pastor Ali presented a proposal from the Advocacy Committee which was formed as an ad hoc committee earlier this year. The proposal is to incorporate our current work in the area of Refugee and Immigration support into a pilot program for engaging in larger advocacy work. This proposal was viewed favorably by the council. The pastors and Executive Committee are going to look at specifics in the areas lifted up by the team and will bring the resolution back to council. In addition, the Council thanked Advocacy Team members Barb Yarusso, Dennis Skovsted, Amelia Cihacek, and Mike Krachmer for a job well done.
- Members of the Executive team and Property Committee are preparing for the congregational conversations on November 21 and November 23.

The next church council meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 14, 7:00 p.m.

2021 Budget Overview and Financial Update

	October Actual	October Budget	YTD Actual	Annual Budget
Income	\$57,380	\$65,134	\$637,515	\$812,713.44*
Expenses	\$57,068	\$68,961	\$623,945	\$812,713.44
Net Balance	\$312	-\$3,827	\$13,570	\$0.00

On November 9, St. Michael's was notified that the 2021 PPP Loan was forgiven on 8/30/21.

*At the Annual Meeting on January 24, 2021, the congregation approved use of the reserve funds of \$46,409.00, if needed, to meet the budget at the end of the year. This is included in the Annual Approved budget of \$812,713.44. Through October we have not had to utilize any of these funds.

The Congregation, Council, and Finance Committee felt comfortable with this due to the consistent giving of the congregation, the stewardship of expenses by staff and committees, and being able to transfer funds into the reserve fund at the end of 2020.



Annual Meeting

Save the Date for the St. Michael's Annual Meeting, January 30.

Along with the usual church business, including approving the budget for 2022, a plan and financial package for the repair and weather-proofing of the Sanctuary walls, as well as will be voted on.

SMART Update (St. Michael's Assessment & Reopening Team)

As we move through November and December, busy times in our life together, the team addressing COVID-19 continues to be hard at work.

First off, we continue to track the significant rise in COVID-19 in our community and across the state. We are aware of the anxiety that takes shape for many as we talk about exposure, quarantine, and even pausing activities. Our on-going goal is to continue to gather and be community with one another during this challenging time... and to continue to strive to keep people healthy and safe. We do this knowing that there is, again, the real possibility of pausing events if the current trajectory doesn't change in coming weeks.

What we can say, though, is that we feel very lucky that people at St. Michael's take this pandemic seriously and strive to care for their own health and the health of their neighbors. Thank you!

With regard to updates, our work continues to be creating "layers of protection." Following the work of many epidemiologists we look at 1) vaccination rates as shared with staff and leaders in our congregation 2) indoor ventilation 3) physical distancing 4) air filtration 5) masks and 6) the particular activities/events we are engaging in. All of these guide what we feel is possible for us at this time.

Items of note

- **Masks:** we continue to require masks in the church building and sanctuary. These continue to provide one means of protection. The Minnesota Department of Health looks for people to wear masks properly (above the nose, below the chin) and also to not use vented masks.
- **Physical Distancing:** in most schools and public buildings there has been a move to 3 feet (or greater) physical distancing. We are making that adjustment in the sanctuary (note the removal of the blue tape). We do ask that when seated in the sanctuary you do not have anyone seated directly in front of or behind you—to allow for space (especially due to speaking and singing).
- **Food and Beverages:** the church allows for very limited food and beverage at any events. Children and youth activities allow for food in small groups following school protocols—6' physically distanced, facing the same direction, masks placed back on as soon as finished. Some small groups of adults (15 or less) allow for food if those in the group are vaccinated, physically distanced, in a room with air filtration, and placing masks back on after eating. We are not serving coffee, treats, or meals indoors for large groups due to indicators of more significant spread of COVID-19 at events where masks are removed and physical distancing is lessened.
- **Youth Lock-ins/over-night events:** for the next few months lock-ins and overnight events will be changed to not having over-night stays to minimize any opportunities of exposure. This will be revisited later in the winter.
- **Choral groups:** as we move into Advent and the Christmas season we anticipate a larger number of people in the sanctuary. The stage will be set up at the front of the sanctuary to allow for the full choir to sing and, at times, the entire choir to be seated at the front. As this group is vaccinated and the majority have also received their booster, as well as masked, we are looking at ways to adjust seating and also continue to provide music that is rich and meaningful for all who gather for worship.
- **Staff:** we continue to encourage all staff who are able to receive their vaccination booster. We have been thrilled to have a staff that is fully vaccinated, but are aware of break-through cases and want to continue to protect those who serve so faithfully. Ideally this also makes sure that our pastoral staff are available to provide hospital, nursing home, and assisted living visits as called upon.

We will continue to meet and assess next steps in the coming weeks. And, again, a deep word of gratitude to you all!

Sincerely,

The St. Michael's Assessment & Reopening Team

Sandra Eliason
Brad Froslee
Deb Legan

Sarah Osterman
Dennis Skovsted
Hal Tiffany

Jone Tiffany
Karen Wilkerson

Nominating Committee

The 2022 Church Council Nominating Committee will begin work soon in preparation for the January Annual meeting. If you are interested in learning more about serving on Church Council or in any of the other Leadership positions at St. Michael's, contact Pastor Brad, brad@stmichaelselca.com, or Pastor Ali, ali@stmichaelselca.com.

Holiday Office Hours

The Church Office will be closed on December 24th and December 31st.

Please be aware that end-of-year gifts must be received by Thursday, December 30, 2021.

Not getting your *Friday Flyer*?

Are you having a problem with our weekly e-newsletter, the *Friday Flyer* not showing up in your primary inbox? First check your other inbox folders—it often shows up in a spot called the *Promotions* folder. Or it could be in your *Spam* folder. If a search of those yields nothing, then contact Lisa Koland at office @stmichaelselca.com, and we'll find a way to make sure the newsletter gets to you!

Notes about the *Messenger*

Got something for the January *Messenger*?

The *Messenger* submission deadline is Friday, December 17.

Making the *Messenger* Green

If you prefer to read your upcoming issues of St. Michael's monthly *Messenger* newsletter on our church website instead of having a paper copy mailed to you, please notify the church office. Another option is to receive the *Messenger* via e-mail. Just let the church office know your preference.



St. Michael's Staff Directory

St. Michael's Lutheran

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Wenshuai Zhang

Children's Choir Accompanist

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Nursery Care Provider

Elliot Polzin

Custodian



St Michael's

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