



CONNECTING People To Jesus

St. Michael's of Richville, Michigan

What Are Your Spiritual Goals in 2024?



As I write this it's the second week of January. I wanted to put this article in last month's newsletter, but December was such a busy month with funerals and Christmas preparations that I fell behind a bit.

Bo Schembechler had a lot of colorful sayings when he was head football coach of University of Michigan. For example, he used to tell his players, "You are either getting better or you are getting worse. You never stay the same." He meant that you have to keep developing your skills, improve your physical strength and endurance, and continue to learn new techniques. If you are a lineman, learn how to block better. If you play defense, improve your skills in pass coverage. You need to keep getting better because you know the players at Ohio State, Michigan State, and Wisconsin will keep getting better.

How can you get better as a Christian in 2024? Specifically, what can you do to grow in faith and understanding of God's Word? How can you build a stronger trust in our Lord? Are there parts of Scripture that you struggle to understand? Do you feel, at times, that your life lacks purpose and meaning? Do people challenge your beliefs, and you are unsure how to answer them or defend your faith? Do you want to see St. Michael's be-

come more vibrant, active faith community? Would you like to see more people in worship and at the Lord's Supper?

As we start off 2024, I'd like to challenge each of you to grow in the following three areas. All of them begin with the letter "W". These are things that all of us can do.

The first one is **Worship**. It's no secret that church attendance at St. Michael's has declined over the last 20 years. We hit a peak about the time we celebrated our 150th anniversary. Sadly, falling church attendance is happening practically everywhere from Maine to California. We can't do anything about other churches, but we can do better here. I recently read an article that said many Americans think regular attendance now means once a month, or once every six weeks. How times have changed! The 3rd Commandment tells us that God expects weekly worship. Our time spent within these walls, however, is not supposed to be a mere ritual or some obligation we want to get out of the way. Rather, worship is meant to be a time when we gain a greater understanding of God's Word, when we bring our troubles before the Lord in prayer, when we hear the comforting words of Jesus our Good Shepherd. Weekly worship is a time when the church is filled with songs of praise. We receive comfort, peace, and hope through the words of the Gospel.

The second "W" is closely related. That is

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Word. Martin Luther emphasized “Sola Scriptura” (Scripture alone). Our teachings and beliefs are drawn from God’s Word, and our faith is strengthened by the Gospel. Jesus said, “*Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and they testify of me.*” The book of Acts tells us “*the Bereans were of more noble character, for they examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*” We have opportunities for group Bible study on Sunday morning both at church and at school. Our students have weekly chapel and daily devotions. Our Mary Martha and Laymen’s League meet regularly for devotions and Bible study. We have a few informal small group Bible studies that meet in member’s homes. And of course, everyone can pick up a Bible at home and read a chapter a day, or start and end the day with Portals of Prayer or one of the devotional books we have at St. Michael’s. I know of several members of our church who listen to online devotions at websites like lhm.org or kfuo.org (our Lutheran Church’s radio station).

The final “W” is **Work.** I think all of us know what it means to find satisfaction in our work. A gardener plants, cultivates, and weeds and sees how it has

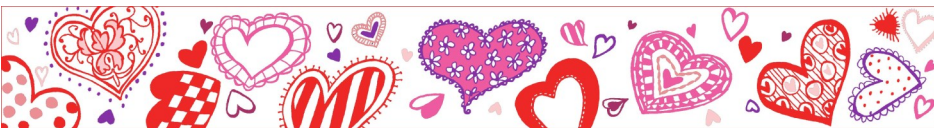
paid off. A cabinet maker can admire a newly remodeled kitchen and say, “That turned out really nice.” An auto mechanic can listen to the hum of a rebuilt engine that runs smoothly.

Jesus also calls us to work in His kingdom. Yes, we have work to do as God’s people! Our Savior said, “*We must do the work of Him who sent me*” and “*Ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers into His harvest field.*” I’ve had many conversations with former elders, VBS teachers, KidzMin volunteers, and others who said what they did for the Lord and His Church was rewarding. They touched the lives of others in a meaningful way, and their faith and love for God grew. The church is always in need of workers—not just pastors and teachers—but choir members, officers, ushers, offering counters, PTL and school volunteers, to name a few.

Some of you made New Year’s resolutions (and maybe broken them already!) But this is a resolution worth keeping: Let’s **worship** more frequently, get into God’s **Word** as much as we can, and **work** for our Savior “*while it is day before the night comes when no one can work.*”

In Christ Jesus,

Pastor Gillaspie



Lutherans Laymen’s League

Thank you for everyone that supported the LLL Greenery Sale by purchasing wreaths/grave blankets. The greenery is a welcome addition to the otherwise drab landscape of the cemetery. Thank you to Thrivent for making seed money available and make the sale successful. A portion of the proceeds have gone to Pastor Dan Conrad and wife Kathy for their ministry work in Mexico/Central America. Camp Lu Lay Lea and campers from St. Michaels will receive a stipend.

(PS: It may not seem like it now, but Spring will be here soon, and the LLL will be having their Peat Moss sale at the beginning of May!)



Blood Drive at the Park Hall on Tuesday, February 13th from 1 to 6 p.m. We will have pizza and T-shirts available.

Making appointments is appreciated by calling 1-866-642-5663.

We hope to see YOU there, giving the gift of life.

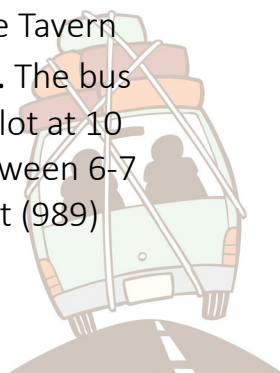
Sisters of Ruth

will be going to
 Papio's Restaurant in Reese on
 February 7 at 11:30. We will meet
 at the restaurant. Please let Luann
 know by February 6 if you plan on
 going so we have an idea on
 seating. You are still welcome if
 you don't RSVP. We'll find a
 spot for you!



**Bus Trip to Meadowbrook
 Theater**

In Rochester for an afternoon show
 and lunch at the White House Tavern
April 3rd. The cost is \$70.00. The bus
 will leave the church parking lot at 10
 a.m., and we will be back between 6-7
 p.m. Call Nancy Schluckbier at (989)
 529-0320.



Gifts and Memorials

In Memory

Loretta Daenzer

Choir— \$75.00

Frances Doud

Electric Sign— \$250.00

Ron & Susie Zwerk

Electric Sign— \$500.00

Shirley Lichtenwald

Altar Guild—\$345.00

Missions— \$10.00

Gary Ordway

Hot Lunch— \$25.00

Marion Gugel

Hot Lunch— \$115.00

Charles Barnett

Missions— \$10.00

Home Purpose—\$5.00

Electronic Sign— \$1,600.00

** A charitable donation from the estate of Eileen Rodammer was made to the Endowment Fund, one half to Home Purpose and the other to Share the Blessings.*

For God so loVed the world
 thAt He gave His
 onLy
 begottEn
 SoN,
 thaT whoever
 belIeves
 iNHim should not perish
 but havE everlasting life.

John 3:16, NKJV

Life Sunday 2024 was observed on January 21 with the theme “Just As ... I AM!” based on Ephesians 2:10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Every human life has value regardless of age, size, skills, circumstances, or needs. We as the church need to get involved and help, even if it is only one person at a time, especially in these times in which we are living!

I would like to say a very special thank you to Pastor Gillaspie for his Life message and to all who prayed for this event as well as a huge “Thank you!!!” to everyone who made a financial donation for Life Sunday. We collected \$1615 which will be donated to Focus on the Family’s Option Ultrasound, Lutherans for Life of Michigan and National, and LifeClinic Pregnancy Resource Center. Please continue to pray for these pro-LIFE organizations and all those working on the front lines for the cause of LIFE. Life is precious simply because it’s a gift from God, regardless of our age or circumstances, “Just as I am”!!!

For those of you who are interested, here is some Option Ultrasound financial information: Every \$60 donated saves 1 baby from abortion through this program. Or \$30 monthly for a year can empower 6 mothers to choose life. Committing to a monthly donation requires prayerful consideration. But every contribution makes a difference. If you wish to donate to Option Ultrasound at anytime, you may use this website <https://donate.focusonthefamily.com/lifeadvocate5>. Thank you in advance! As Pastor said in his sermon, The gift of life is precious!



Sincerely,
Dianne Stresman, Life Ministry Coordinator
Lutherans for Life of Michigan



Lent Begins February 14th



Since Easter is March 31st this year, that means the six week Lenten season begins early as well. Ash Wednesday is February 14th. We will begin our Lenten worship that night with the Imposition of Ashes.

As I write this article, we have not yet decided on a Lenten theme for our Wednesday services. We will announce that in the Sunday bulletins in early February. Tying in with my front page article, I encourage everyone to make an extra effort to

Worship as we follow our Savior’s footsteps to the cross. Lent is a season of repentance and a time of reflection and self-examination. Lent is that part of the church year when we focus on Jesus’ trials and temptation, the opposition of His enemies, His betrayal at the hands of a disciple, and His suffering and crucifixion. At the cross we see His incredible love for us which paid the price for our redemption. Jesus’ earthly ministry wasn’t limited to walking among us to preach, teach, and perform miracles . He was born in our flesh to pay that awful price for our redemption, to reconcile us to God the Father by a sacrifice we could not pay, to suffer not just physical pain but also the spiritual agony of being cursed for our sins. He was truly “*stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities.*” (Isaiah 53)

Following Jesus to Golgotha with you,

Pastor Gillaspie



Notes from the Music Director

“Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 5:18-20)

Epiphany, the great season of Light, sits between the celebration of Christmas (the arrival of the Light) and Ash Wednesday. During this Epiphany season we sing! We follow up all of the great carols of Christmas with songs about the Light of the World and what He came to do and to teach us. As we hear about the healings, teachings, and other miracles of Jesus during this season, we are led to thank Him by singing His praises.

Lutherans sing. Luther saw music as a great and glorious gift of God, second only to theology in its importance. In music, Luther saw a wonderful opportunity for his congregation to sing the great truths of scripture—and by singing them, they learned them well. Luther also viewed music as a great means of praising God, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians. Read through the hymns of Luther as they are found in LSB, and you will find that they cover each season of the church year and all six parts of the catechism. Luther had a lot to teach his people. We will do well to learn what Luther teaches about the work of God and the salvation that He brings to all people.

As you read this, we are nearing the end of the Epiphany season and are soon to enter into our Lenten preparation for Holy Week. At this time, then, I invite and challenge you to pay closer attention to the hymns that we sing throughout these seasons. All of them sing of Jesus and His great love for us; all of them have something to teach us. Read the hymns; if time permits, look one of them up before the start of the service; find a connection between the hymn and the bible readings of the day. Luther would be happy to see the Spirit at work in you!

(P.S.: If you would be interested in hearing more about this topic, join the choir as they rehearse on Thursdays at 7:00 in the church basement. We would love to have you come sing and learn more about the One to whom we sing!)

May God bless you and your study of His Word during these seasons!

-Dr. Jon Eifert



Stewardship Minute

HOW ARE YOU MANAGING ?

The Bible instructs us to manage our God-given Time, Talents, and Treasure, with God's will in mind. We are to love the Lord with all of our heart, mind, and being, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. As you know that's easier said than done! The 1st Commandment convicts us right from the start. Do we always put God first in our lives? Are we following His will for us? When considering our own priorities, do we put God 1st, family 2nd, and ourselves after that?

Do we struggle to manage our finances according to His will? Do we struggle to allocate our time well according to His will? How about our talents (we all have been gifted in some form) to support the ministry of our church and elsewhere? Are we just too busy with life that we don't have time to volunteer? This is a good time of the year to reflect on these questions. Ask God to direct your thoughts, plans, and activities.

God doesn't need anything, but He wants a loving, trusting relationship with us. He gave us the ULTIMATE GIFT---His only Son in which to believe on

Him for our eternal salvation. How can we enhance our relationship? Be in the Scriptures, be in worship, be in prayer, be in service! Be a generous giver and not a taker!

We learn in the Bible that we cannot serve two masters. We cannot serve both God and money. Choose God! Let Him direct your path. God has chosen each and everyone of us to be His child. We are blessed beyond measure. Let us give back to Him and serve our neighbor, our church family in our daily lives. Jesus provided the examples to follow. Ponder this: Is a change needed? To what is God calling me to do, in which to serve him, as we strive to honor Him and give Him the glory? How can we be better at proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel?

Your Board of Stewardship hosted an estate planning workshop this past month. It was very well attended with about 40 members receiving planning materials. Quite a few members completed their wills, healthcare power of attorney, and other documents. We will likely do this again next year.

✠ Financial Report as of		12/31/23	
MISSIONS			
Missions Collected YTD	Goal \$50,000	\$	33,124.89
Non Budget Missions Collected YTD		\$	1,083.00
HOME PURPOSE			
HOME PURPOSE Balance as of 07/01/23		MTD	YTD
Home Purpose Income		\$ 219,378.66	\$ 747,951.68
Home Purpose Expenses		\$ 129,883.70	\$ 763,840.83
Thrivent Choice in-H.P. \$ 718.00		\$ 89,494.96	\$ (15,888.95)
School Income		\$ 4,900.35	\$ 76,292.26
School Expenses		\$ 7,570.54	\$ 59,333.80
		\$ (2,670.19)	\$ 16,958.46
Child Care/Preschool Income		\$ 44,910.99	\$ 287,601.74
Child Care/Preschool Expenses		\$ 40,171.31	\$ 270,027.32
Thrivent Choice in Childcare \$ 12.00		\$ 4,739.68	\$ 17,574.42
Home Purpose Balance (includes Child Care/Preschool/School)			\$ (93,433.68)
New Construction Balance as of 07/01/23		MTD	YTD
Income	Goal \$200,000	\$ 13,285.00	\$ 40,885.04
Expenses		\$ 13.29	\$ 48,135.14
New Construction Fund Balance		\$ 13,271.71	\$ (53,644.60)
Franklin Ave Mission	Goal \$5,000	\$ 280.00	\$ 1,280.00
Capital Improvement Balance as of 07/01/23		MTD	YTD
Collected	Goal \$80,000	\$ 7,118.00	\$ 197,377.30
Expenses		\$ 46.63	\$ 51,797.00
Capital Improvement Balance		\$ 7,071.37	\$ 77,364.96
			\$ 171,809.34

Grant applications are now available for the church endowment fund. You may find a form on the St. Michael's website or in the church office. Return the application to the church office before March 30, 2024.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. My phone # is 989-971-3340. If you need, you may call me at work at 989-792-7461. —Pam Bierlein

Love is **PATIENT**,
 Love is **KIND**.
 It does not **ENVY**,
 it does not **BOAST**,
 It is not **PROUD**.

♥ 1 Corinthians 13:4-6 ♥

Passion Drama

Don't forget to get your Passion Drama sign up sheets filled out and returned early. If you have a "normal" spot you would like to help with again this year, just make a note on your slip and we'll try to fit you back into those spots. We hope you can share this with family and friends from all over to either help volunteer or attend the drama this year. Slips can be put in Joshua Doud's mailbox or emailed to stmichaelpassiondrama@gmail.com



In Christ,

Joshua Doud

Passion Drama Sign-up sheets for March 22nd and 23rd 2024. These can be returned to Joshua Doud's Mailbox at church or emailed to stmichaelpassiondrama@gmail.com, or you can call **989-325-2059** to sign up. Please write names of volunteers in the box under your desired task(s)

Family Name _____ Phone # _____

Email _____

Cast	Set up	Tear down	Cookies	Greeters	Kitchen
-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	-	-

St. Michael's Lutheran Church
3455 S. Van Buren Road
Reese, MI 48757

We
love
because
He first
loved us.

1 John 4:19