



CONNECTING People To Jesus

St. Michael's of Richville, Michigan

2026 Is Here!

Once again another year has passed and the New Year is just around the corner. I thought about starting this article with a rambling discourse on "the significance of the passage of time" like a semi-famous politician tried to do, but I'll spare you!

We have a number of important events, celebrations and, yes, some challenges ahead of us. We look forward to:

Our 175th Anniversary!

Many of us remember the spectacular 150th Anniversary and all the fun events: the parade; our Christmas Concert which was broadcast nationwide on the U.S. Farm Report; starting the Passion Drama; the historical displays; burying the time capsule; visits from former pastors, teachers, and others; and visits from dignitaries from the Synod. We have a 175th committee in place, and they have already met several times to plan upcoming events. Al Rodammer has agreed to chair this committee.

Calling another Pastor

Recently several people asked me, "Does our congregation really need two pastors?" I realize that calling a pastor is a time-consuming process and an added expense to our budget. But permit me to make a comparison with the two churches I served in Kansas. My two churches in Kansas had a total of about 225 members. St. Michael's has approximately 1,300 members. When I was in Kansas I had 6 or 7 elderly people who were shut-ins or in a nursing home. At last count St. Michael's has 23 who are shut-ins or in a nursing home. Back in Kansas I had 4 or 5 funerals a year. In the last five years St. Michael's has averaged about 20 funerals a year. In Kansas I had Catechism class once a week, and there were a few years where I didn't have a class because no students were in that age group. At St. Michael's I have Catechism class three times a week, and we are able to teach both 7th and 8th grade when we have two pastors. After Pastor Gadenken retired we had Rev. Larry Courson as an interim

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pastor. His ministry was a real blessing to St. Michael's. But after he left I was largely on my own in 2022, 2023, and half of 2024. It was very difficult to do just about everything by myself. We need to start thinking about a call committee when we turn the calendar to 2026.

Continuing to strengthen our School and Child Care.

Ten years ago we had about 125 students enrolled at St. Michael's. This year our enrollment is around 160. God has blessed us with the opportunity to give more and more young people a Christian education! In our Child Care we have over 200 total who attend, and for many of them this is the first time they hear about Jesus our Savior.

175 years of ministry is a remarkable milestone! Furthermore, it is evidence of our Lord's promise that, *"My word shall not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."* Jesus also said, *"On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."* No matter how many years go by we have His assurance that the Gospel will still be preached, the Church will grow, and Christ Jesus will keep us steadfast in our faith until He returns in glory!

Pastor Gillaspie

Youth Group Event

February 1, 2026.

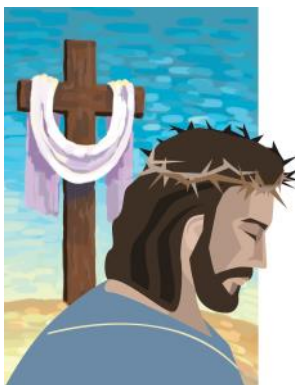
Snow Tubing at Snow Snake in Harrison, MI.

We will meet for early service at 7:45 at St. Michael's. Then we will have breakfast together before leaving to go tubing. We will tube from 10:00 till 12:00 noon. We will grab some lunch and plan to return back to the church around 2:30/3:00.

You must have a current 2026 St. Michael's permission slip filled out AND the snow snake waiver done. Cost is \$15.00 a person due the day of the event (actual cost is \$30.00 a person).

If you are planning to attend please RSVP to Mrs. Hoepfner by **January 26.**

Passion Drama Meeting
January 25th between
services, brainstorming
ideas for this
year's
drama.
Everyone is
invited.



Parents who are able to drive ... let us know.

Operation Christmas Child

"A big thank you to everyone who bought supplies for shoeboxes, packed their own shoebox and volunteered during collection week. We as a congregation and school put together 243 shoeboxes. We collected 1766 shoeboxes at our collection center and filled a trailer and a half with a total of 10,652 shoeboxes collected in the western thumb region. A huge thank you to everyone who provided cookies and soup. A huge thank you also to the volunteers who put in 96.5 hours during collection week to make this mission possible."

-Sara Knea

Church News

Installation of Newly Elected and Appointed Officers will be December 28th, 2025.

NO Wednesday Night Service

January 14th



We will be cleaning the church carpets the week of January 11th. In order to do the cleaning and allow time to dry, we will have to stay out of the building most of that week.

2026 Envelope Boxes are in members church mailboxes or on the table in the foyer.

Please do not use these envelopes until **January 1st, 2026.**

Offering Record Sheets are available for 2026.

Lutherans Laymen's League

Meeting

Monday, January 19th, Church Overflow Room
7 P.M.

Everyone is invited to join our meeting where Pastor Gillaspie will be leading a bible study.

James Janson will be bring refreshments.

We look forward to seeing you there.



LUTHERAN HOUR RALLY

Sunday Feb. 1st

It will be in the sanctuary at St. Lorenz in Frankenmuth at 2 p.m.

Lutheran Hour speaker Dr. Michael Ziegler will give the message.

Our members are encouraged to attend .

YEAR END SUMMARY 2025

Baptisms— 11
Communicant Members— 986
Newly Confirmed— 9
Weddings—3
Transferred In/Received—12
Removed/Released/Transferred Out—26

Our Brothers and Sisters called Home to their eternal rest: *Betty Auernhamer 1/1; Nancy Klopff 1/2; Kenneth Kearns 1/21; Elaine Engel 1/23; Courtney Callahan 1/27; Cathy Weiss 3/19; Calvin Zwerck 4/16; Keith Bierlein 4/24; Donna (Rupprecht) Schoenow 6/20; Irene Tollfree 6/23; Kurt Howell 7/2; Dave Rushford 8/2; Carl Buetow 8/9; Jameson Doud 8/12; Marilyn Baesl 8/29, Wilbert (Willie) Wirth Jr. 10/23; Norman Petzold 12/16.*

New Members in 2025

- *Damian & Erika Bristow*; transferred from St. Matthew Lutheran, Bridgeport.
- *Loren Danzer*, transferred from St. Lorenz, Frankenmuth.
- *Nicholas, Wyatt, Harley, & Jameson Erbsch*, transferred from Trinity, Reese.
- *Jennifer Janson*, transferred from Trinity, Utica
- *Chandra Rasmussen, Beau, Avery, and Molly*; received by Profession of Faith



ST. MICHAEL'S LUTHERAN SCHOOL CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

School Theme: "You're a Piece of God's Plan" Jeremiah 29:11

Kindergarten –

Mrs. Hoepfner and Mrs. Jammer

Kindergarten is loving the snow! We are learning about some of our favorite Christmas traditions we use to celebrate the birth of our Savior. We are also learning where they come from. Some of the traditions we are learning about are the Advent wreath, the Christmas tree, the Nutcracker, and the Poinsettia. We will be having a special fun day of hands-on learning with 1st Grade before break. We are excited to have everyone attend our school Christmas Program.

1st Grade - Mrs. Janson and Mrs. VanDeVeer

Merry Christmas from 1st grade! We are working hard on preparing for our upcoming Christmas concert and are very excited about it. We are also studying how other countries celebrate Christmas, which the kids have really enjoyed. We will continue this study through next week as we add in fun Christmas activities with the Kindergarten class as well. I am really proud of the progress we have made in reading so far this year and am looking forward to the second half of the year!

2nd Grade - Mrs. Doan

We hung paper snowflakes from our classroom ceiling, built snow forts in the snow, learned about the Birth of Jesus in Religion class, read all kinds of Christmas books on the rug and had two different Advent Calendars that we took turns opening and reading. One was a chocolate candy calendar, and the other was a puzzle pc. Calendar. We had lots of Christmas practices; some for the Christmas Choir concert and some for the K-8 Christmas Program. We watched some Christmas movies, and yes, we also learned reading, writing, and arithmetic. It's been a good year so far. Looking forward to the next half of the school year.

3rd Grade - Mrs. Bierlein

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! The month of December has been crazy with all the extra December things that take place, but it has also gone by very quickly. In 3rd Grade math, we have started learning multiplication, and they have figured out that it's not as difficult as they thought. For science, we have been studying plant and animal life cycles. We are also reading and discussing the book *How to Eat Fried Worms*, as a class. They are really enjoying the novel.

4th Grade - Mrs. Knea

Fourth grade finished the novel "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" and were able to give ornament book reports. They are looking forward to January where they will have new things to learn and new goals to achieve! Have a blessed new year!

5th Grade - Mrs. Krause

Merry Christmas from the 5th grade! December has been a crazy month for us with snow days, program practice, and other fun activities like melting snowman labs, adding fractions, and finishing our second novel of the year. We look forward to our party day when we plan to make fleece tie blankets for Hurley Children's Hospital and to quote Mrs. Krause and the kids "December is go with the flow month". Happy New Year!

6th Grade - Mrs. Woodward

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! 6th Grade Science has been learning about the benefits and disease caused by bacteria. We swabbed areas of the school to see what kinds of bacteria would grow. 7th grade Science has been studying the earth's layers including the core, mantle and crust and the characteristics of each. The 8th grade Science has been learning about Covalent and Ionic Bonds and writing the chemical formulas for compounds. 8th grade Algebra has learned about dilations and is studying angles and triangles. 6th grade Math has been working on the greatest common factor and least common multiple. We have also worked on the Christmas program and learning to be flexible in December with snow days and other activities. We are also doing a Service project of putting together comfort bags for breast cancer patients.

7th Grade - Mrs. Lamb

Happy December! Time it sure is flying.

6th Graders—Literature has started reading the Classic Novel *Where the Red Fern Grows*. In Social Studies we've tested on our US States & Capitals and are studying the US in general. In Math, we are diving deeper into geometry topics like triangles & angles but also continue to have lots of work with fractions & mixed numbers.

7th Graders—In English are working on Verbs, Social Studies we finished our Unit on Ancient Egypt and are now learning about Ancient India. Pre-Algebra - We are working on Similar Figures, Proportions, & Scale Models. 7th Graders took a field trip to the Castle Museum in Saginaw recently. We enjoyed learning about some local history and seeing the unique architecture. It's worth a visit if you've never been there. We love field trips and are hoping to see the Planetarium or SVSU Art Gallery in January. I hope everyone has a very Merry Christmas and Blessed 2026.

Resource Room - Mrs. Newton

Mrs. Keinath and I are working hard to see as many of our scheduled students as we can! Between Christmas service practice and snow days, this has been an interesting challenge! All of our students are working hard to be better readers!

Media Center/Upcoming Events - Mrs. Brown

A big thank you to all that came to the Scholastic Book Fair in November! This was one of the highest grossing book fairs ever! Funds from the fair will be spent on some exciting new books for the Media Center!

Winterfest is rapidly approaching! This year's theme is "The Price is Right!" Winterfest Auction is February 21, 2026. Tickets will go on sale on Friday, January 23, 2026. Tickets will also be available between church services on January 25 & February 1, 2026 with the last tickets being sold on Friday, February 13. **Ticket prices have changed to \$35 per ticket or \$275 for a reserved table of 10***

Athletic Department

Athletics had 2 very successful fundraisers with our water bottle/cup sale and cookie sales. Thanks for all your support! We would also like to thank the 8th grade and PTL for their purchase of a new ball cart and basketballs. Basketball is finishing up here in December. A basketball is already practicing with games to start in January.



Winterfest Auction

The Winterfest Auction to benefit the school's Media Center will be held on February 21, 2026.



The theme this year is
"The Price is Right!"

Tickets will go on sale on Friday, January 23, 2026. Tickets will also be available between church services on January 25 & February 1, 2026 with the last tickets being sold on Friday, February 13.

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Mary Martha Guild

January 5, 7 pm
Church Meeting Room.

We will be making Valentine cards.

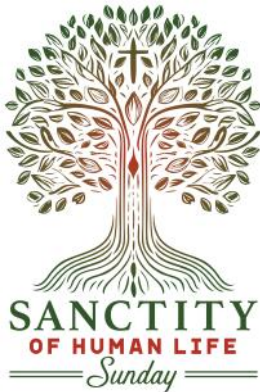
Join us to create a card, write a message or just come to chat and enjoy fellowship. A mite offering will be taken to support missions, devotion and singing, a short business meeting and refreshments.

Come and learn how to be a Lutheran Woman in Mission.



Lutheran for Life's Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

Right to Life of Michigan sponsored its second annual Michigan March for Life on November 6, 2025, in Lansing. It was another excellent opportunity for advocates for life of all ages and political persuasions from across the state to join with one voice on behalf of women and children, including the unborn! The prolife movement is growing and gaining influence and support. Praise God!



Lutheran for Life's **Sanctity of Human Life Sunday** will be observed in Lutheran churches across our nation on *Sunday, January 18, 2026*. This year's theme is "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made," based on Psalm 139:14, "*I praise you Lord for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*"

A special door offering will be collected on Life Sunday and Wednesday, January 21, for Lutherans for Life and Focus on the Family's Option Ultrasound. Both of these prolife organizations work with families giving them HOPE that is only found in our newborn Savior Jesus. Please plan ahead for these mission opportunities and pray for the efforts of Life Sunday.

Lutherans for Life is offering online and in-person opportunities for **Life Week 2026**. From January 18-24, you can learn about life issues from the comfort of your home. All presentations will be online Zoom presentations. All live presentations will be at 8:00 PM ET, with the exception of Saturday, January 24, which will be at 9:00 AM ET. You can join all the Zoom meetings by going to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83862063962>. The meeting ID: 838 6206 3962 and the passcode: 823940. (It's really not too hard; if I can do it, so can you!!) If you have any questions? Go to <https://lutheransforlife.org/life-week-2026>.

- **Sunday, January 18:** Fearfully and Wonderfully Made... As God's Own with Rev. Dr. Aric Fenske. The topic is Life Issues: Created-Redeemed-Called Biblical foundation; every life is valuable.
- **Monday, January 19:** Fearfully and Wonderfully Made... With a God-Given Identity with Rev. Darrell Debowey. The topic is Life Issues: Identity; Creation vs. Evolution, focus on the science that supports Creation; family; sexuality; marriage;

vocation of singleness.

- **Tuesday, January 20:** Fearfully and Wonderfully Made... Despite the Pre-natal Diagnosis with Rev. Daniel Freeman. The topic is Life Issues: Down Syndrome; Trisomy 13/18; Pregnancy Loss; Disabilities (physical and mental); Pre-natal testing.
- **Wednesday, January 21:** Fearfully and Wonderfully Made... For a Forever Family (adoption and foster care) with Rev. Derek and Gretchen Roberts. The topic is Life Issues: Adoption; foster care; behavioral disorders; familial/cultural loss.
- **Thursday, January 22:** Fearfully and Wonderfully Made... For Life with Y4Life speaker Dr. Donna Harrison. The topic is Life Issues: Apologetics; Sexuality; Human development.
- **Friday, January 23:** Fearfully and Wonderfully Made... Even When it Hurts with YA Speaker Chrissie Gillet and 4 other panel speakers. The topic is rape; incest; adoption; depression; suicide; self-harm.
- **Saturday, January 24:** Fearfully and Wonderfully Made... To Serve and Be Served with Adult, Y4Life, and YA speaker Rev. Matthew Harrison and Youth speaker Rev. Todd Peperkorn. The topic is Life Issues: End-of-life; physician assisted suicide; importance of sacraments; servanthood and vocation; Autism/Asperger's/Tourette's; PTSD.

Then top off the week by attending the in-person events from Thurs through Sat, Jan 22-24, in Washington, D.C., at the March for Life for adults, while the youth are at the Y4Life conference. Find more information on these opportunities by going to the Lutherans for Life Facebook page or online at lutheransforlife.org. Gather, learn, and gain ideas for support and action at these events!

Y4Life in Washington, D.C. – January 22-24, 2026

Join the Y4Life Conference and March for Life this year in Washington, D.C. Meet other students and life leaders from across the nation at this mountaintop event! Not only will participants learn more about life issues and take part in the March, but by registering through Y4Life, students also receive a discount on hotel rooms and guided opportunities at the March. Questions? Email Michelle Bauman at michelle@y4life.org.

Rejoice and embrace that each of us is fearfully and wonderfully made! May God continue to bless us all this new year!

Gifts & Memorials

In Honor Of:

Marvel Bekemeier's 90th Birthday
- a donation has been given to the
Endowment Fund by his family.



Sisters of Ruth

will meet at church on
January 7th
for pizza at *noon*.

Bring Christmas
cookies for dessert.



✝		Financial Report as of		11/30/25	
MISSIONS					
Missions Collected YTD		Goal \$50,000		\$	21,931.01
Non Budget Missions Collected YTD				\$	1,036.00
HOME PURPOSE		MTD		YTD	
Home Purpose Balance as of 07/01/25				\$	(71,597.09)
Home Purpose Income		\$	135,882.17		\$ 626,461.21
Home Purpose Expenses		\$	146,805.41		\$ 725,306.60
Thrivent Choice in-H.P. \$ 2,561.00			\$ (10,923.24)		\$ (98,845.39)
School Income		\$	3,587.38		\$ 38,598.05
School Expenses		\$	3,607.50		\$ 54,607.11
			\$ (20.12)		\$ (16,009.06)
Child Care/Preschool Income		\$	63,127.70		\$ 295,664.65
Child Care/Preschool Expenses		\$	69,660.38		\$ 329,456.51
Thrivent Choice in Childcare \$ 63.00			\$ (6,532.68)		\$ (33,791.86)
Home Purpose Balance (includes Child Care/Preschool/School)					\$ (220,243.40)
New Construction Balance as of 07/01/25		MTD			\$ 12,690.88
Income Goal \$25,000		\$	2,726.00		\$ 8,537.00
Expenses		\$	-		\$ 20.35
New Construction Fund Balance		\$	2,726.00		\$ 21,207.53
Franklin Ave Mission		Goal \$5,000	\$ 2,530.00		\$ 3,520.00
Capital Improvement Balance as of 07/01/25		MTD			\$ 144,257.67
Collected Goal \$80,000		\$	5,637.00		\$ 22,427.50
Expenses		\$	-		\$ 7,248.56
Capital Improvement Balance		\$	5,637.00		\$ 159,436.61

St. Michael's Lutheran Church
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