



St. Michael Messenger

St. Michael Lutheran Church

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Great is your love, higher than the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Psalm 108:4

As a child growing up, I wanted everything that my older sisters had. Their 45's, their clothes, their makeup, and any of their trendy trinkets that they thought were cool. In my eyes, my sisters were more beautiful than any Hollywood starlet. Me being the youngest of the six children, I would sneak into their bedrooms while they were at school to play their records and to examine those adored trendy trinkets that they would never let me lay a hand on when they were home. One thing in particular that I remember, besides a taxidermy groundhog given to my sister by an admirer (I coveted that groundhog), was a cream-colored resin statue of a big-eyed man with his arms stretched out wide and engraved with the words, "I love you this much." It was also a gift to one of my sisters by an admirer, and even though it was not as cool as the groundhog, to think that someone outside the family used the word love to express their affections was way cool. The stretched-out arms of the statue indicated that this admirer loved her with his whole being, to the full extent of his capacity.

Children especially need to grasp how much they are loved. That is why millions of bedtime books like *I Love You Near and Far* by Marjorie Parker and *I Love You to the Moon and Back* by Jamie Brooke try to quantify a parent's love in a way that a child can understand. A favorite in our house when my son was growing up was *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney, a beautiful story about the love between a parent and a child.

The psalmist in the verse above uses the same sort of approach to quantify God's love. He indicates that God's love is bigger than the biggest thing we can think of. It is "higher than the heavens."

Just imagine. When God wants to express how much he loves us, he stretches out his arms past billions of stars, comets, supernovas, and galaxies in His unfathomably large universe and says, "I love you this much." It is an encompassing expression that lasts for more than a few months of dating and for longer than gifts that lose their meaning as they make their way to the Goodwill. It is God's eternal promise that will never fail us. Indeed, God says "I love you this much and even more."

Happy Valentine's Day, Beloved!

Pastor Michelle



Sharing Our Gifts: Time, Talents and Treasure

We offer with joy and thanksgiving what He has first given us--ourselves, our time, and our possessions, signs of His gracious love.

Thank you to some “quiet” servants

To Keith Gay, Lynda Kinzey, Meg Peterson, Betty Wingate and Judith Wolfe for folding the January newsletter; to Fran Shepherd and Jane Swing for coordinating the reproduction and mailing of the monthly newsletter; to John Krallman for his years of service to St. Michael as our Financial Officer; to John Kell for churchyard clean up; and to Anna Rossomando for writing thank you notes for Micah’s Backpack donations.

Because of your gifts



Your generous gifts in January supported office supplies, music supplies, poinsettias, kitchen supplies, altar flowers, offering envelopes, annual *Living Lutheran* subscription renewals for members, the annual pest control contract, the bulk mail permit and postage for the monthly newsletter, annual property insurance and MCI van insurance, heat pump maintenance, Pastor Michelle’s continuing education class, Patrice Yearwood’s continuing education conference, our benevolence to the Virginia Synod, donations to MCEAP, Lutheran Campus Ministry and our mission partner, Peace and Hope, and salaries for our ministerial staff and supply pastors.

The **Justice and Mercy Fund** continues to assist our neighbors in the community and the world. In January, we helped **eleven** families: **one** with rent assistance and **ten** with electric bills.

A big thank you to all who donated snacks, fruit, and drinks, prepared food, served the meals and made monetary donations for food gift cards for the guests at To Our House in January. Each night we served between 10-15 folks. They all greatly appreciated the meals and gift cards. Also, thanks to Lynda Kinzey and Jody Smiley for coordinating these efforts.



There will be a **Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper** on February 21 at 6 p.m. at St. Michael.



**Lent begins with the Ash Wednesday Service at 7 p.m.
on February 22, 2023**

Beginning March 1, Lenten mid-week meals (6 p.m.) and services (6:45 p.m.) will be held at St. Michael.



Micah's Backpack Program Annual Report for 2022

St. Michael Lutheran Church created and continues to support Micah's Backpack Program, a free, community-based ministry. This ministry feeds children from low-resource families providing six meals per week, to include juice, milk and snacks. The program includes weekends throughout the academic year and summer vacation. During 2022, COVID-19 continued to present new challenges for Micah's Backpack. Volunteer opportunities, food packing and food delivery were reevaluated. Food deliveries continued during the summer break, to include fresh vegetables from Micah's Garden. Due to Summer Academy at a number of schools Micah's Mobile Backpack numbers went down considerably. MBP is in the process of reevaluating how to continue the summer program in 2023.

Packed 8,347 bags of food, representing 50,082 meals, and 116,858 items of food. This includes canned hams handed out for the first time. Due to the increase of in-kind donations and smart purchasing, costs per bag of food averaged \$4.71.

Last year we created an Amazon Wish List which has brought more than 5,000 items of food from four different states delivered directly to Micah's.

Yearly food costs and donation percentages:

Year	Food Cost	Donation %
2022	\$37,936	24.90%
2021	\$44,669	22.52%
2020	\$31,209	14.30%
2019	\$96,616	7.83%
2018	\$69,636	15.72%

Engaged more than 1,000 volunteers, to include fundraisers and food drives, which equates to more than 3,000 hours of volunteering. Engaged twelve sororities/fraternities, athletic groups to include the football team and five of the coaches, the women's swim team, the women's lacrosse team and the men's soccer team, all from Virginia Tech for purposes of packing, fundraising and food drives. We were also joined by the Radford University Women's Basketball team for the second year in a row.

We continued our relationships with Jersey Mike's Subs and Chicken Salad Chick, both of which donated on a regular basis. Pastor Michelle accompanied me in representing Micah's Backpack Program at multiple events such as Jersey Mike's monthly event, The 3rd Annual Food Cycle and The University Club of Virginia Tech's First Anniversary Fundraiser.

MBP had the pleasure of partnering with local radio station, Positive Radio Station, once again, allowing us to expand our social media venue. The Micah's Backpack website has been updated resulting in increased interaction on Facebook and Instagram.

REMAX 8 Realty challenged Keller Williams to a food drive event for the month of May which brought in 13,347 items of food.

The Ford 2007 E150 utility van which was purchased to transport and deliver food to Micah's was also used to assist in delivering food during our Micah's Mobile Backpack Summer Program. Due to the overwhelming cost for repairs and for tires we decided to sell the Micah's Mobile Backpack school bus.

We have received the funds from the Bob Schulman Estate and have been discussing the best possible options to use the funds in order to honor Mr. Schulman's memory. Part of these funds will be used to set up **Micah's Snack Closets** in two of our ten schools, with hopes of broadening this to include most, if not all of the schools.

The location move from the Micah's Backpack room to the church fellowship hall has continued to be successful in streamlining the packing process and the inventory process.

Even with all the challenges presented this year, Micah's Backpack program continues to make a great impact in our community concerning our students and their families. We will continue to overcome any future challenges and continue to grow with Micah's Caring Initiative with the continued support of our community.

For more information please contact John J. Stramiello at hope@micahsbackpack.org.

We will be packing and delivering the 4th Tuesday of each month. **February 28** is the next **packing date**.



**St. Michael Lutheran Church
 2308 Merrimac Road
 Blacksburg, VA 24060**

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February Sunday Servants

	February 5	February 12	February 19	February 26
10:00 AM Service				
Altar Care	Doug Smiley	Jane Swing	Inga Solberg	Sandy Birch
Greeters	Gary and Becky Steck	Forrest Sloan Dave Surface	Jenny Kellinger Jody Smiley	Wilma Pieper Butch Akers
Lay Reader	Scouts	Jody Smiley	Bert Kinzey	Jim Grealish
Communion Assistant	Jody Smiley	Butch Akers	Jay Nagle	John Stramiello
Youth Servant	Ada Peery	Gesine Newman	Tatiana Villegas-Brown	Lilia Villegas-Brown

Please Note: Greeters/Ushers: please take the attendance, write down the number and place in the offering plate. Paper and pen are in the bookshelf drawer.

Women of the ELCA

WELCA Wednesdays Lunch & Learn: We will meet on **Wednesday, February 15th at noon**. All St. Michael women are invited. We will gather at the church for fellowship, a light lunch and a Bible study. In February we will continue our study of the Ten Commandments. Our session is called “Reviving the soul”- Commandments 3 and 4. **Lunch, desert and drinks will be provided.** If you have any questions please contact Jody Smiley jdsmiley29@comcast.net or Sandy Birch, birch@vt.edu



Montgomery County Food Bank and Blacksburg Interfaith Pantry: In February we are asking for donations of Hamburger Helper or other one box meals. The food bank always appreciates receiving any non-perishable food items.

Women’s Resource Center: In February we are collecting **toilet paper**.

The collection basket for the Food Bank is located in the Fellowship Hall next to the kitchen window and for the Women’s Resource Center it is in the narthex. As always thank you for your donations.

Congregation Council Members and Officers for 2023

The votes are in. In December, the congregation elected Bert Kinzey, Cindy Lang, and Anna Rossomando to serve on the council. In January, the council elected officers for 2023: President - Keith Gay; Vice President - Jada Brown; Secretary - Cindy Lang; and Financial Officer - Forrest Sloan. Council officers are the officers of the congregation.

Welcome to our new council members. Thank you to our departing members who completed their terms: Butch Akers, Margaret Christle and Fran Shepperd and our retiring financial officer, John Krallman. With heavy hearts we mourn the loss of fellow council member and former council president, Mickey McGuigan.



John Krallman has served as St. Michael’s Financial Officer for many, many years. Thank you, John, for shepherding us through all the financial ups and downs over the years. We were blessed to have someone with your vast experience and dedication to serve in this most important role in the life of our church.

A special thank you to Forrest Sloan for serving as St. Michael’s new Financial Officer.

Living Lutheran Magazine

All members of St. Michael are welcome to enjoy the monthly ELCA magazine *Living Lutheran*. If you are not already receiving it and would like to, please email the office at office@stmlc.us If you no longer care to receive the magazine, please let the office know.

Thank You Notes

Thank you for your generous support of the ministry of the Virginia Synod in 2023. With your help, the Virginia Synod is nurturing faith in youth and adults, supporting congregations, and launching new ministries!

From the Virginia Synod, ELCA, Salem VA

Dear Pastor Michelle and the Members of St. Michael,

Thank you for your continuing partnership in Peace and Hope and for your support of this developing ministry.

As we have all discovered over the last several years, ministry is growing, changing, and evolving to meet the needs of God's people. Having a ministry like Peace and Hope allows congregations to work together to support the ministry which is happening onsite and to touch those looking for a place to worship in the digital space.

Thank you for helping Peace and Hope share the good news about Jesus in the digital space. I am excited to see how Peace and Hope will develop in the coming year.

Peace and hope,

Pastor John Wertz, Jr., Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop, Virginia Synod, ELCA, Salem VA

Souper Bowl Sunday, February 12



The Annual Souper Bowl of Caring will take place on Sunday, February 12. St. Michael will join thousands of churches across the country by raising money to help fight hunger. Plan to bring canned goods and a dollar or two that day to put in the Soup Pot at church. You can also contribute by mail or online via the church website. Food for Micah's Backpack and Micah's Soup for Seniors can be dropped off at the church. Suggested

items: canned vegetables, fruit cups, Easy Mac, tomato soup, vegetable soup, chicken noodle soup and ravioli. The money and canned goods will help relieve hunger in our community.

Welcome New Members



George Santopietro came to Blacksburg in 1982 to pursue graduate studies at Virginia Tech. He went on to teach economics at Radford University and to serve university administration as a department chair, an associate dean and an associate provost. He retired in 2021. He and his wife Graciela have a son Justin, who has recently moved to Nashville, and a daughter Sophia who lives in Richmond. He received a fellowship from the Organization of American States to teach in

Tucuman, Argentina, Graciela's hometown, and a Fulbright award to teach in Buenos Aires and travel around Argentina. George likes to swim, bike and run and has participated in numerous running events as well as sprint and Olympic distance triathlons. He also enjoys gardening. He now works part-time as a lifeguard at the Christiansburg Aquatic Center.

Terrie Sternberg recently retired from Trinity Lutheran Church in Pulaski where she served as pastor for 27 years. Her first career was in marketing communications for the industrial gases division of Union Carbide from 1974 to 1991. She continues to live in Pulaski with her dog, Theophilus, and cat, Ziggye. Hobbies include stained glass art, doing New York Times' word puzzles, and hiking with Theo. She is involved with various non-profits committed to enhancing the lives of folks in Pulaski and the New River Valley. Pastor Terrie looks forward to getting to know the good people of St. Michael and serving with us.



Welcome to the Family!

Altar Flowers



Sign-up sheets for 2023 are posted on the bulletin board in the hallway. Thank you for serving in this special way. Each week, Sandie Worley and Anna Rossomando purchase flowers from Kroger and create our two bouquets for Sunday worship. The cost of the flowers is increasing to \$40 if members of the congregation would like to sponsor the bouquets in memory of a loved one or to celebrate an anniversary or birthday. The donors are welcome to take one or both of the bouquets home after the service. Each week, the "flower ladies" will deliver any remaining bouquets to our Soup for Seniors friends at

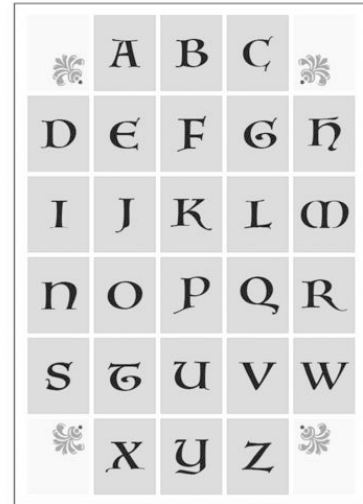
Warm Hearth or to any St. Michael members who might be hospitalized, in nursing homes or at home recovering from surgery or illness.

2022 Advent Calendar

The Advent Calendar is intended to provide a daily countdown to Christmas Day for the members of our church and other viewers as a means to reflect on this special season of the church. Each year we select a theme and divide that message into parts that are illustrated by members of St. Michael.

In 2022, the following artists submitted artwork: Butch Akers, Barbara Corbett, Becky Steck, Sarah McDearis, Sandie Worley and Gary Worley.

The 2022 calendar also included a musical component that greatly added to the enjoyment of each day's message and artwork. We are very thankful to Patrice and Reed Yearwood for these musical contributions.



Special thanks also to Pastor Michelle for helping to select and define the words we illustrated for this year's calendar.

None of this effort would be accessible without the efforts of our webpage developer, Philip Isenhour. His willingness to add the musical feature along with all the other nuances of making the images work so well were vital to the success of the calendar, even though his efforts were unseen since he worked in the background.

These talented people spent a lot of hours in order to provide the 2022 calendar. Please join me in sharing your appreciation for the work they provided so we could all enjoy the wonderful result!

Survey

Now is the time to get back to being the most vibrant congregation we can be. Please invest just 5 minutes to help us get started. The past 2 years were rough on congregations everywhere, including us. Please complete the Charting the Congregation's Future questionnaire and give it to Suzanne or Keith Gay by February 14, Valentine's Day. If you prefer to use email, please send your replies to keith.w.gay@gmail.com. We'll continue to make copies available of the two questions at church each Sunday.

Winter Weather Reminder

Winter weather sometimes requires a change in the worship schedule. When that happens, it will be announced through the following outlets:

Post on Facebook

Email to Congregation

Voicemail Message on Church Phone

Change to the Church On-Line Calendar

Post on Local TV Networks: Channel 7 and Channel 10

February 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 9:00am Sunday School for Adults and Children 10:00am Worship Service with Communion 11:15am Choir Practice	30 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 7:00pm Cub Scout Meeting	31 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 3:00pm Patrice's Music Lessons 6:00pm Kipps Farm HOA Annual Meeting in the Fellowship Hall	1 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 3:00pm Patrice's Music Lessons 6:00pm Packing for Micah's Backpack 7:00pm Choir Practice	2 7:00am Men's Bible Study and Breakfast 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 7:00pm Scout Troop Meeting	3	4
5 Scout Sunday 9:00am Sunday School for Adults and Children 10:00am Worship Service with Communion	6 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 7:00pm Cub Scout Pack Committee Meeting in Large Classroom	7 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 3:00pm Patrice's Music Lessons 7:00pm Cub Scout Pack Committee Meeting in Large Classroom	8 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 3:00pm Patrice's Music Lessons 6:00pm Packing for Micah's Backpack	9 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 7:00pm Scout Troop Meeting	10	11 8:00am Scouts Merit Badge Event in Fellowship Hall 1:00pm Funeral for Felix and Sally Pierce
12 Souper Bowl of Caring 9:00am Sunday School for Adults and Children 10:00am Worship Service with Communion 11:15am Choir Practice 11:15am Church Council Meeting	13 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 7:00pm Cub Scout Meeting	14 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 3:00pm Patrice's Music Lessons	15 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 12:00pm WELCA Lunch and Learn 3:00pm Patrice's Music Lessons 6:00pm Packing for Micah's Backpack	16 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 7:00pm Scout Troop Meeting	17	18
19 Transfiguration of Our Lord 9:00am Sunday School for Adults and Children 10:00am Worship Service with Communion 11:15am Coffee Hour Fellowship 4:00pm Confirmation Class 4:00pm Families of Faith	20 President's Day 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 7:00pm Cub Scout Meeting	21 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 3:00pm Patrice's Music Lessons 6:00pm Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper 7:00pm Price Family Historical Society	22 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 7:00pm Ash Wednesday Service at St. Michael	23 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 6:00pm Packing for Micah's Backpack 7:00pm Scout Troop Meeting	24	25
26 First Sunday of Lent 9:00am Sunday School for Adults and Children 10:00am Worship Service with Communion 11:15am Choir Practice	27 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 7:00pm Cub Scout Meeting	28 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 10:00am Packing and Delivering for Soup for Seniors 3:00pm Patrice's Music Lessons	1 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 3:00pm Patrice's Music Lessons 6:00pm Lenten Meal and Holden Evening Prayer Service	2 7:00am Men's Bible Study and Breakfast 8:45am Mother's Morning Out 6:00pm Packing for Micah's Backpack 7:00pm Scout Troop Meeting	3	4