



Texas
District
LCMS

/ DECEMBER 2022

TEXAS MESSENGER

From the president

Godly stewardship of media

PART 2 OF 'WE HAVE THE SACRAMENT'
(a three-part series)

By Rev. Michael Newman
President,
LCMS Texas District
txlcms.org
mnewman.org



Did you know that during Advent and Christmas, we anticipate and celebrate God's use of media? The word *media* is plural for medium, "an agency or means for doing something" (Oxford Languages definition). Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, was God's means of salvation. Jesus was the Mediator sent from heaven to earth to save us (1 TIM. 2:5; HEB. 9:15).

This month's article asks how technology and media can be used by the church. The answer springs out of God's use of *media*: He uses His chosen means to mediate His gifts into our lives. The living Word transforms our hearts and creates faith; Baptism drowns our sinful nature and raises us to new life in Christ; the Lord's Supper delivers the body and blood of Jesus in, with and under the bread and wine for the forgiveness of our sins. God uses *media*, His chosen means, to draw us into relationship

with Him and to move us into relationship with one another.

The church's use of technology and media stands in stark contrast to the world's. Too often, media and technology isolate, alienate and propagate the desires of the flesh. But the church follows God's way — to gift people with the blessings of the Savior and to bring people into Christian community through the use of media and technology.

Last month's article underscored the importance of the church as true community — that which a lonely and isolated world needs. What does that community look like? Both Paul and Peter showed the value of physical presence when they encouraged people of the church to greet one another with a holy kiss. The apostles also put great importance on in-person visits (ROM. 15:24, 28; 1 COR. 16:7; 2 JOHN 12). John even noted that a face-to-face visit would make their joy complete (2 JOHN 12). When personal visits were not possible, the apostles used media (letters) to communicate and build relationships with churches. Technology was used to support and strengthen the local church and its living witness to the world.

That is how the church used emerging 20th-century technology. When

radio and television appeared on the scene, these media became remarkable ways to introduce millions to the Savior of the world and to connect people with local communities of faith. A number of years ago, the motto of Lutheran Hour Ministries was even updated from "Bringing Christ to the Nations" to "Bringing Christ to the Nations and the Nations to the Church."

In our digital age, we have the unique opportunity to continue godly stewardship of technology. The church is called to use 21st-century innovations to share the Gospel and to help bless people with Christian community. As we share the "wonders of His love" this Advent and Christmas, we boldly use media and technology to help people live fully as Christ's people and His church.

What does this mean for administering the Lord's Supper via a live internet connection? We will look at that topic next month.

Questions for reflection: Read 2 John

What does this one-chapter book of the Bible say about life as the church — God's people together? How do these verses help shape our stewardship of media and technology?

Prayer starter: Read verse 12 again. Ask God to use you to help make another person's joy complete.

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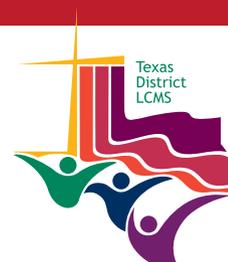
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Every dollar contributed to Texas Partners in Mission goes directly to bringing the Gospel to people who don't know Jesus Christ. Thank you for your dedication to the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ!

“Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.” ~ Mark 16:15





Coming and going

By Rev. Pete Mueller
Mission Strategist, Area C

Glancing at the above photo, you might assume I took a selfie in front of two rusting red barns. Admittedly, my roots run deep in the midwest states of Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota. But if you look a little more closely, you'll notice these twin structures are not intended for cattle, but for humans. And rather than being located somewhere out in the country, these buildings sit sturdily in the heart of the city. This is a pair of public bathrooms. They can be found just a few steps away from a congested road lined with skyscrapers on the edge of downtown Austin.

Although I'm not sure who approved the expenditure of funds for these architecturally significant outhouses, I have to admit that I'm quite taken with the visual impression they make. With their concrete bases and soaring steel side panels, they create an uplifting



Where might you
go to escape the
pedestrian comings
and goings of life?

invitation to step out of the heat for a moment to sit and rest. They are appropriately called REST rooms.

As I formulate this message in my mind and craft these words on my computer, I am finalizing preparations for a two-week sabbatical. This extended "sabbath" is intended to be a time of rest and reflection. It is a deliberate effort to step away from the customary demands of life and seek out a place of refuge. My plan is to spend 12 days walking where Jesus walked, soaking in the feel and smell of places with names that are so familiar to followers of Jesus: Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Capernaum, Cana, the Jordan River, the Sea of Galilee.

Although I will be traveling in Israel with 20 fellow adventurers, my prayer is that I find the space to just sit and rest for a while. I pray my ears might be tuned to listen for another Voice:

And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. **MARK 6:31**



As a disciple of Jesus, does His invitation tug at your heart today? Perhaps you don't have the luxury of traveling to the Holy Land anytime in the near future. Demands of home, work or school prevent a block of time being set aside for rest and reflection.

But what is possible? Where might you go to escape the pedestrian comings and goings of life? Is there a fellow traveler who might be invited to join you? Is there a structure that inspires you to step out of the heat of circumstances?

If only for a moment?



just like not all addictions are bad. Healthy dopamine can cause you to become addicted to healthy behaviors. Practice this discipline and soon you'll find that it feels good to donate, save and invest — just as it can feel good to exercise and eat right.

The more you take dopamine of any kind, the more your body gets used to it and the more of it you need to achieve the same high. Therefore, engaging in as many healthy dopamine behaviors as possible could very well lead to an increase in wealth by keeping you from unnecessary spending and helping you to enjoy positive money habits. With that, you can build further good dopamine by being the good steward God wants you to be as you give generously to the Lord and to those you love.

Part 2 of this article will offer some practical tips on how to curb any unhealthy spending. Check out our e-newsletter that is sent out the first Saturday of the month. If you would like to be added to our list, send an email to info@legacydeo.org with your request. It's there that you can find the article "The Psychology of Spending: Breaking the Spending Cycle."



Rev. J. Brown
Legacy Giving Ambassador

While making money certainly helps in the process of building wealth, there are also other key factors to which you need to pay close attention. Toward the top of the list is your spending.

Let's take a look at how your spending is connected to hormones — in particular, dopamine. Where cortisol is associated with stress and anxiety, dopamine is associated with feeling good and is also responsible for giving you that drive and motivation to accomplish a task or goal.

Adversities evoke cortisol when they bring stress into your life. This is unpleasant and prompts your body to seek dopamine for relief. The fastest way to get dopamine is to eat, drink or buy something. This is why so many unhealthy patterns are associated with food, alcohol or shopping.

Mike Dillard's "From Adversity to Triumph: Taking Control of Your Brain" notes that if you've been patterned to spend money to make yourself feel good, after an extended period of time this becomes your subconscious default mode. As Dillard describes it, neurons that "fire together wire together." Your brain is now hard-wired to get you to go on a shopping spree to get rid of stress and make you feel good.

Negative addictions are often caused by unhealthy dopamine and make it a struggle to lose weight or save money. This is why a high percentage of lottery winners and highly paid celebrities are bankrupt or poor after just a short time. Not all dopamine, however, is negative,





WHITEHALL

On Aug. 28, Rev. Corey Christians was ordained and installed as pastor of Salem Lutheran Church. Brothers participating are, from left, (front row) Revs. J. Brown, Randall Smith, Corey Christians, Michael Newman (Texas District president), David Schultz; (middle row) Richard Mayerhoff, Richard Lamb, Timothy Eden, Harold Fleischhauer; (back row) Lynn Stroud, William Holzer, Michael Gruhn, John Karle, Lee Kunkel and Dale Snyder.

Pastors rejoice in Houston

The LCMS Black Clergy Caucus met in Houston on Oct. 10.

The LCMS has been sharing the Gospel with African-Americans for more than 140 years. The LCMS Black Ministry Family Convocation began meeting bi-annually in 1978 in Selma, Ala.

Rev. Dr. Roosevelt Gray serves as director of LCMS Black Ministry, which provides encouragement, assistance and advocacy for LCMS districts, congregations and schools for ministry engagement to people of African-American descent and other ethnic cultures. Visit lcms.org/blackministry.



Gathered in prayer are, from left, Revs. Dr. S. T. Williams Jr., LCMS Black Clergy Caucus president; Dr. Ulmer Marshall; Michael Newman, Texas District president; Dr. Roosevelt Gray Jr., LCMS Black Ministry director; and Gregory Manning, Black Clergy Caucus chaplain.



Deaconess Perla Rodriguez and Rev. Rodrigo Fernandez gave the Hispanic Ministry Convention report.



Event hosts were, from left, Revs. Howard Lee Thomas III, SOON Ministry; and Matt Popovits, pastor, St. Mark, Houston.



85 YEARS of blessings

St. Peter Lutheran Church, located in the First Ward of downtown Houston, is celebrating its 85th anniversary this year.

Planted in 1937 by Trinity Lutheran Church, downtown Houston, this historic congregation began as a Spanish-speaking mission for the LCMS. It is the oldest of its kind in Houston and one of the oldest in Texas.

St. Peter is known for its flourishing day school, which for years served children and families in the surrounding Spanish-speaking neighborhood of the First Ward. Some of its graduates became teachers, pastors and other church workers and leaders, sharing their many gifts and adding beauty and diversity to the church and community.

St. Peter today retains this important Spanish-speaking cultural foundation, holding services in English but retaining its identity as a multicultural congregation. It is served by Rev. Raymond Van Buskirk, senior pastor, and Rev. José Argueta, bilingual missions pastor.

As congregation president Adam Medina says, “St. Peter is my people, my family. We warmly invite you to visit, to join our services held each Sunday at 9:30 am. Come experience this small church with a big heart.”

St. Peter held an open house on Sept. 24. A special anniversary service celebrating its past history and promise for the future was held the next day.



TOP: Members of St. Peter Lutheran Church and guests are pictured during the open house on Sept. 24. **BELOW:** Clergy attending the celebration are, from back left, Revs. Mike Dorn, Trinity, Houston; José Argueta, mission pastor, St. Peter, Houston; Raymond Van Buskirk, senior pastor, St. Peter, Houston; Michael Newman, Texas District president; Wendell Stavig, emeritus; and Paul Dorn, emeritus.

Celebrate Christmas at St. Paul, Aleman

Join the historical, 135-year-old St. Paul's, Aleman (Hamilton), congregation as it continues its annual German Christmas service.

The service will begin at 5 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 11. German Christmas carols and the lighting of the Christmas tree all make for a special holiday season.

St. Paul's is located at 1446 Farm to Market Road 3340 in Hamilton. A reception follows the service. Bring your friends!





HOUSTON

These 14 new members were joyfully received at Joy Lutheran Church on Oct. 14. Pictured are, from left, Scott and Tanya Garrett, Jan and Richard Jennings, George Kaven, Caleb Terrell, Mike Holt, Linda Hirsch and Cherly Tyer. Not pictured are Linnie Wagers, Liana Holt, Jesse Lane Holt, Phyllis Kaven and Irma Garza. In back are Michelle Brunette, keyboardist; Ben Herr, congregation chairman; Rev. Mark Brunette and Rich Farina, lead elder.



LA GRANGE

Mount Calvary Lutheran Preschool was recently awarded the distinct honor of Best Preschool in Fayette County 2022 by the Fayette County Record Readers' Choice Awards. Becky Weikel, assistant director and teacher, was also awarded Best Preschool Teacher. The preschool serves 52 children, ages 2-5, with 15 staff members. Staff are, from left, (front row), Sophie Solorcano, Katrina Wilson, Lori Hollek (director), Tiffany Maxwell, Leesa Kana, Brooke Migl; (back row) Lindsey Doak, Linda Templen, Loren Matocha, Becky Weikel, Megan Galindo, Val Berlinga and Amber Splawn.



The body of Christ at Mount Calvary was blessed to welcome on Oct. 23 its newest members, from left, Bruce and Melissa Lesikar and their daughter, Joselyn (son Zachary is not pictured); Denise Goehring; and Delores Quin. Pastor is Rev. Jason Kaspar.

Ladies bless thirsty runners

In thanksgiving for 80 years of Lutheran Women's Missionary League, members are encouraged to reflect God's love by blessing others with 80 of something or remembering events from the last 80 years.

The LWML of Zion, Mission Valley in Victoria, donated 80 bottles of water for the Brittany's Believers Corporation annual fundraising event in October (which is Breast Cancer Awareness Month), a 5K walk/run. The event supported the Nursing Education Scholarship Fund, which honors Brittany Langridge, a nursing student who was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 33 and fought for one year before she was called home. Friends decided a nursing scholarship would be a wonderful way to keep her memory alive.

Through generous sponsors and the annual event, Brittany's Believers has been able to grant multiple scholarships a year to local nursing students.



WALLER

Cross of Christ Lutheran Church LWML members are shown here with a banner that was displayed in celebration of LWML Sunday.



FORT WORTH

Donna Riccono, parish nurse (left), is pictured with 12 of Redeemer's Health Ministry volunteers, who were pleased to offer the annual flu immunization clinic on Oct. 5. Texas Health Resources and CVS Pharmacy collaborated in offering flu shots for children 3 and up, adults and seniors.

FRIENDSWOOD



Members of The Knotty Ladies of Hope Lutheran Church made 60 quilts along with 47 baby care kits for Lutheran World Relief to give to those in need. Pictured are, from left, Audra Rhodes, Marjorie Adams, Donna Chauvin, Gail Akins, Wendy Hunter, Gloria Havard, Debbi Felder, Barb Gahring and Sallie Rouse. Pictured above is Rev. Jonathan Petering, Hope pastor, blessing the donation on Oct. 23.

RIESEL



Trinity held its traditional German meal on Sept. 17. Proceeds help fund the restoration and repair of the church building. Below left, speaking is Rev. Larry Knobloch, Trinity pastor.

Trinity held a packing party on Oct. 8. The members and friends packed 354 boxes for Operation Christmas Child.



PLANO



A group of nearly 50 students and chaperones from Faith Lutheran Church and School attended the Higher Things conference “For You” at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Ind. in July.



Students, faculty, staff and special guests gathered on Sept. 16 at Faith Lutheran School to observe Constitution Day, which included a reading of the U.S. Constitution. The event featured remarks from Plano City Council member Shelby Williams, the color guard from the Sons of the American Revolution (shown above), and performances by the Faith Lutheran School youth choir and Faith Lutheran School high school choir (shown above).



LAGO VISTA

Christ Our Savior members constructed this float, including “With God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26), for the July 4 parade in Lago Vista.

CONGRATS!

These Lutheran friends of yours celebrated or will celebrate wedding anniversaries of **50 YEARS** or more.

San Angelo, Trinity
Rick and Joyce Heller
63 years, Oct. 3

Kenny and Linda Pflugsten
59 years, Oct. 20

Russ and Marti Johnson
55 years, Oct. 22

The Grove, St. Paul
Walter and Daisy Sohns
66 years, Dec. 1

La Grange, Mount Calvary
Don and Kathy Pietsch
50 years

Garland and Stell Midgett
58 years

Manheim, Ebenezer
Edgar and Donna Arldt
60 years, Dec. 23

Marvin and Mabel Koslan
65 years, Dec. 28



Lawrence and Burnies Richter, members of Trinity Downtown, Houston, celebrated 72 years of marriage on Nov. 26.



Walter and Pattie Bontke, members of Beautiful Savior, Arlington, celebrated 60 years of marriage on Sept. 1.



Giles and Evelyn Summerlin, members of St. Paul, Thorndale, celebrated 53 years of marriage on Oct. 11.



HOUSTON

On July 3, Gethsemane members placed flags in the walkway to church for Independence Day.



Precious gifts of God's Word

Youth Bible Sunday will be an annual event at Zion Lutheran Church. Students in fourth grade and above are recognized and presented with new study Bibles by their baptismal sponsors and family members. These maturing students will be blessed and encouraged by the entire congregation as they read and hear God's Word, and continue on their journey of faith and life in Christ. God's blessings to, from left, Giselle, Miguel and Layla Garcia; Luke Hollywood; Bella Cameron and Aiden Sorola.

Send us your news!

Send photos, stories and newsletters for *The Lutheran Witness* to:

- ▶ txmess@txlcms.org
- ▶ Texas Messenger, LCMS Texas District, 7900 E. Highway 290, Austin, TX 78724-2499

Texas Messenger is available online at txlcms.org/texas-messenger

Correction

In the November issue, Rev. Dr. Brian Kachelmeier was incorrectly identified as having been installed as senior pastor of Mount Calvary, San Antonio. He is serving as pastor.





Welcome, new teachers!

By Dr. Bill Hinz
Director, School Ministry

New teachers from throughout the Texas District gathered for a retreat Oct. 2-3 at Camp Lone Star to gain insights into their roles as teachers and mentors of young people. These teachers bring energy and enthusiasm to their classrooms and congregations, but the first few years in any ministry can often be challenging. The difficulty of transitioning into their new roles can often go undiscussed.

Our retreat time is guided by an experienced leadership team that consists of Vikki Pietsch, Immanuel, Giddings; Michael Hinz, Prince of Peace, Carrollton; Dr. Amy Boatman, Salem, Tomball; and yours truly.

The Beginning Teachers Retreat gives our new teachers an opportunity to share with others who are experiencing similar challenges and to learn and grow from one another. A variety of sectionals are provided, instructing the teachers on curriculum; classroom management; and communication processes, including for providing devotional activities.

In this ever-changing world it takes courage to teach. Teachers in Lutheran

schools are blessed to share the love and forgiveness of Jesus with their students, and help these students gain an understanding that on Jesus' foundation their lives can be built.

I encourage you to reach out with an encouraging word to teachers in your schools and congregations. You can make a very significant impact on them as they begin their vocations. They are sharing with students and families the most important truth — that Jesus died and rose for each one of us. By God's power, they are being used by Him as a blessing to many.



Feb. 17-19
State Basketball Tournament, Tomball

March 9-11
Early Childhood Educators Conference, San Marcos

June 7
Marketing, Recruitment and Retention Workshop, Tomball

Participants at the retreat are, from left, (front row) Vicki Pietsch, Immanuel, Giddings; Victoria Veltri, Lutheran South Academy, Houston; Kristi Zumpano, Concordia High School, Austin; Rebekah Phifer Epiphany, Houston; Tristan Winkelman, Concordia High School, Austin; Summer Winkelman, Redeemer, Austin; Christopher Harms, St. Paul, Thorndale; (back row) Rev. Michael Newman, Texas District president; Amy Boatman, Salem, Tomball; Kelly Tylere, Lutheran South Academy, Houston; Jessie Juergensen, Zion, Dallas; Michael Hinz, Prince of Peace, Carrollton; and Dr. Bill Hinz.

Teaching students to think like missionaries

DCE program prepares students for mission field

The Director of Christian Education (DCE) major at Concordia University Texas (CTX) differs from most of the church work programs within the Concordia University System.

“Other [campuses] do more from a parish education model,” says Dr. Jacob Youmans, professor of religious education and DCE program coordinator. “Our degree model is much more about teaching workers to think like missionaries.”

“We’ve got students that come from all over the country to learn and grow, then go out and serve all over the world,” says Dr. Grant Carey, associate professor of Religious Education and coordinator of the School of Ministry. Interns have worked on every continent except Antarctica.

Dr. Youmans identifies the two significant components of missionary work as learning a local context, and fulfilling a job description within that community. “We’re raising people to serve the auxiliary roles in the ministry,” he says, adding that students often become Christian camp counselors, youth ministers, children’s ministers, worship leaders and nonprofit workers.

Concordia’s program can be divided into five areas: communications, behavioral sciences, sociology, psychology and theology. Youmans says that the DCE-degreed professionals can fit almost everywhere in the working world. “Every employer is looking for employees who don’t steal, lie, cheat or act unethically.”



Ryan Pfendler (center), director of Christian education at Messiah Lutheran School, Weldon Spring, Mo., sings with attendees of the National Lutheran Youth Workers Conference in Houston in July 2021. Pfendler is a 2016 graduate of CTX.

“The skills that students learn — working with people, writing proposals, teaching, public speaking — all translate well into other areas of life,” Dr. Carey says. “We emphasize mission work because we also know that the church and culture are changing. We’ve got to rethink what it means to do church.”

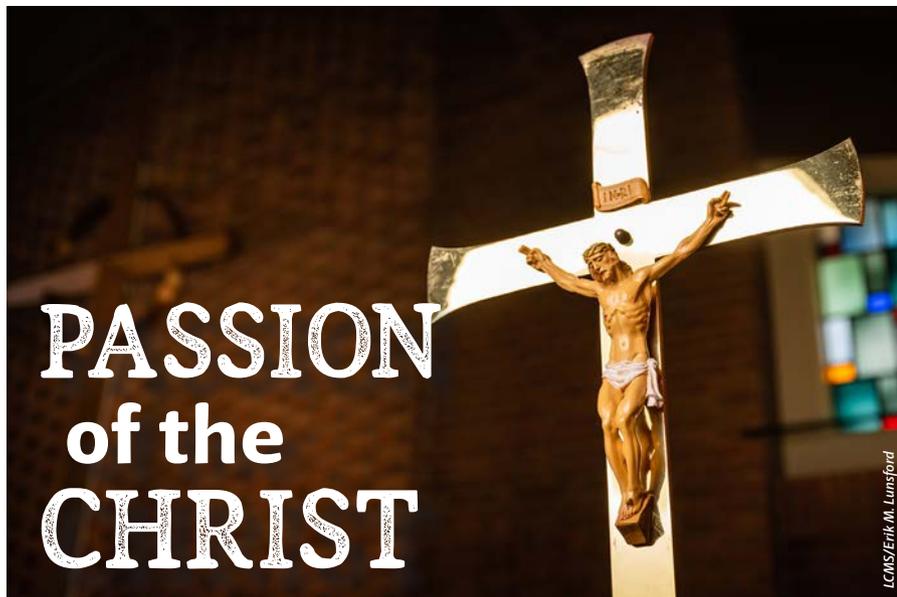
“Research suggests that [Gen Z] is going to be the most entrepreneurial generation in America,” Youmans says. “What’s exciting about that is the church needs more entrepreneurs.”

During their years at Concordia University Texas, classmates start to evaluate church work a bit differently and see the bigger picture of what a church can be. One of the biggest goals for the Concordia faculty is that they demonstrate how meaningful and intentional work can be a positive example of leadership in a community.

First-year undergraduate DCE students can generally expect somewhere between five and 15 peers alongside them in their journey. Their experience includes annual weekend retreats and out-of-classroom events like 5K fun runs and campfire socials near the CTX campus’ 200-acre nature preserve.

Each student enrolled in the program must also go on a “foreign mission trip,” either overseas, in a nontraditional parish, or with an inner-city nonprofit. Upon graduation, Concordia encourages the newly minted alums to consider pursuing a post-college, one-year-minimum additional program that grants them a DCE specialist certification.

Fundamentally, the co-directors say the decision to pursue a DCE degree comes down to two critical factors for students: “Do you love Jesus, and do you love people? Is this your calling?”



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

By Pat Fick
CAN-DO Director



As you read the headline of this article, did you think of the movie directed by Mel Gibson? Did you think of Luke 15, in which we learn that God’s passion is seeking the lost?

“I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” **LUKE 15:10**

I recently was humbled and inspired by the life of Bryson Turner, a 15-year-old from Destin, Fla., who is passionate about making a difference in the world. When he was 3 years old, Bryson started praying for Haiti after the earthquake in 2010. At age 7, and again at age 8, he participated in two mission trips to Haiti with Mission of Hope.

“Seeing Haiti, the poverty and everything about it, there’s just no way to not do anything about what you see,” Bryson says.

He returned home and started raising funds for mobile food packs for children in Haiti. He saw a need, and found a way that he could help.

The first year he raised \$6,000 and packed 22,000 meals. A year later volunteers packed 40,000 meals. They packed 250,000 meals in year three, and this past year they raised \$90,000 and packed 300,000 meals. Wow! That’s passion! That’s a passion to care for people and make Christ known!

One of my passions is mission trips, so I thought I would share three reasons why you should consider going on a mission trip (or praying and supporting someone who is going).

1. We need to get our eyes off ourselves.

I don’t know about you, but I tend to think about myself way too much. I get focused on my wants, my goals, my desires. I need to go on mission trips frequently to get my eyes off of me. I desperately need to lose myself in serving others.

Through love, serve one another. **GAL. 5:13**

2. We are God’s image bearers and get to be the hands and feet of Jesus!

For even the Son of Man came

not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. **MARK 10:45**

3. Jesus commands us to make disciples of all. Everyone needs Jesus!

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

MATT. 28:19-20

Every person you pass is someone Jesus loved enough to die for. Jesus showed His passion for each of us by enduring the cross to pay for our sins. “The Passion of the Christ” movie shows us the price He paid to save us. In response to that great love we get to share the Good News of Jesus with every tongue, tribe and nation!

And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news. **ROM. 10:15**

Donations for CAN-DO Missions are welcome!

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**WISHING YOU AND YOUR FAMILY A JOYOUS
AND WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS.
MAY YOU BE BLESSED WITH HOPE
AND LOVE THROUGHOUT 2023!**

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Photos: Getty Images

Memory makers

In 2021, Amanda and Andrew decorated a Christmas tree for the first time in their lives. The siblings were 11- and 9-years-old.

Nancy and Raul, having no biological children of their own, felt the call to care for children. Today, the husband and wife are Amanda and Andrew’s foster parents.

“When they arrived, we had to let them know, ‘here you don’t have to worry about not waking up in a warm bed. You are safe here,’” Nancy says. “We want to make sure they succeed and have a good upbringing because that’s what they need.”

Raul and Nancy put a lot of thought and time into giving their two foster children positive experiences, such as going to sporting events, carnivals and the beach. They take a lot of trips back to Nancy and Raul’s hometown and share family traditions on holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas.



“It’s a good feeling to enjoy time together and teach them things,” Raul says. Nancy adds, “The kids had never seen that family unity before.”

As with all our foster parents, Upbring supported Nancy and Raul by offering them training so they could succeed on their fulfilling, but often challenging, fostering journey.

This Christmas, Amanda and Andrew can once again experience the joy of Christmas-tree decorating and the feeling of being safe and cared for. Of all the Christmas

gifts the siblings may receive, the love from Nancy and Raul may be the greatest gift of all.

At Upbring, we instill hope in the children we serve. Visit upbring.org/get-involved for information on how you can become an Upbring partner and positively impact those who need it most.

This story is true, but pseudonyms and stock photos have been used to protect identities.



[Upbring.org](https://upbring.org)

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SUMMER CAMP REGISTRATION

Opening Day is Dec. 13

The calendars and program sessions are set and ready for Summer Camp 2023 at Camp Lone Star! We are excited and know that God will use Camp Lone Star to transform lives through adventurous, Christ-centered experiences.

Here at Camp Lone Star, we believe in the power of camp. Anytime you get out of your normal routine or rhythm, you become more open to hearing the Word of God. The noise of our everyday life gets in the way of seeing what God has planned for our lives. Camp gives you the opportunity to look at your life through different lenses.

After a week at camp, we guarantee your child will return home transformed by the Gospel. Our year-round and summer staff are trained to help create intentional and memorable experiences.

By entrusting us with your children, you are giving them the opportunity to experience activities like archery, canoeing, challenge course (team-building), arts and crafts, and more, which are all intentionally designed to point them to the Gospel and grow them spiritually. As a result of these intentional experiences, your child will return to you transformed. They will return with more confidence in who God made them to be, better leadership skills to help them in everyday life, and a greater love for Jesus that they can share with the world.

Dec. 13 marks the opening registration day for Camp Lone Star 2023 Summer Camp sessions. Join us this summer as we look



to Scripture and uncover what it means to “Abide in Christ.” Here at Camp Lone Star, our prayer is that your campers have fun, make memories, develop friendships and grow in their faith and relationship with God.

Most of all, summer camp offers an intentional Christian community — set apart, safe and alive with God’s Word; focused on Jesus Christ and built around Scripture. But don’t take our word for it, check out what a parent said about their child’s experience at Camp Lone Star:

My daughter attends a Lutheran church and school, and she still learned so much. Mostly the little details of stories she’s heard a hundred times. That’s the great part. She absorbed more and more of God’s Word and saw it in action through the counselors and junior staff.

Visit camplonestar.org to view the 2023 Summer Camp schedule and to register. We hope your camper joins us this summer — they won’t want to miss it!



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LOOKING AHEAD

Jan. 20-22

Junior Staff
Workshop

Feb. 3-5

Womens
Renewal Retreat

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Advent/Christmas RESOURCES

help make
the season

Sunday, Nov. 27, is the beginning of Advent. This season of preparation and anticipation leads up to Christmas and continues to Epiphany on Jan. 6.

Christians celebrate Advent in two ways. One is to prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who came into this world to save us from our sins.

We also anticipate with hope the day when Jesus will return and bring an end to this world, and because of our faith in Him, it will mean the beginning of a new life with Christ for eternity. So Advent is a time for us to repent and prepare for His return.

Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM) offers a wide variety of studies and videos to help you prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth.

A Son is Given

This daily devotion series from LHM will look at the promise of God to send His Messiah as fulfilled in Jesus. The Heavenly Father made good on His ancient pledge.

In Jesus we have the love of God come to earth in the form of a child, who is for us the Savior of the world.

These lessons are perfect to share in your congregation, and with your family and friends. These free devotions are also available in Spanish. Visit lhm.org/dailydevotions, where you can also sign up to have the devotions delivered to your inbox, and have access the podcast.



Getty Images

What is Christmas?

Can Christmas be merry for a family struggling through unemployment, alienation and terminal illness?

For families working through hurt feelings, strained relationships — even the oncoming death of a loved one — Christmas can be a trying time. In this LHM Project Connect booklet, the reader is reminded that God's gift of love in Jesus Christ can heal every wound and repair every broken relationship. Visit lhm.org/projectconnect/booklets.asp and type the title in the search bar.

Real St. Nick: Leader, Legend, or Lie

Narrated by Rev. Ken Klaus, former speaker of "The Lutheran Hour," this study surveys St. Nick and the age-old traditions surrounding him. Dating back to the third century, St. Nick is attributed with the doing of many

benevolent and charitable acts of kindness and generosity. This Bible study on DVD also contains a discussion guide. The DVD includes subtitles in Spanish, and a Spanish discussion guide is also available. Visit lhm.org and type "Real St. Nick" in the search bar at the top of the page.

A variety of resources is available in Spanish. Visit shoplhm.org/spanish.



LCMS/Erik M. Lunsford

Christmas hand-me-downs

By Rev. Dustin Beck Jr.
LWML Pastoral Counselor



I know what you're probably thinking ... You read the headline and thought, "Hand-me-downs for Christmas? He's out of his mind." If one of my kids opened a present on Christmas morning that belonged to one of their siblings just days earlier, I think they would say the exact same thing!

No, the hand-me-downs that I'm talking about are those things that are handed down to us for which we give thanks. I cherish the memories (and the recipe) for those Christmas cookies that we made every year with my Gran. I will always remember traveling in the 15-passenger van with the church choir as we sang carols at the homes of our shut-ins. Some of the ornaments that are on our tree every year were handed down to us by people who have been called home to Jesus.

But here's the thing: the act of "handing down" is exactly what God created His Church to do. The whispered promise that began the very day that Adam and Eve fell into sin has been passed down from parents to children, from grandparents to cookie taste-testing kids, from those who know ... to those who don't. And their voices join together in a chorus of the faithful — a cloud of witnesses whose sweet song is better than any gift under the tree (new or gently used). It's this song of praise that carries the very name of Jesus into our ears and into our hearts. The Holy Spirit plants that Word and hands down the gift of faith — a heart that trusts in Jesus for salvation and a mouth that confesses His saving name.

But the hand-me-downs of Christmas don't stop with us. Your voice is joined into the chorus of saints and archangels. Your heart is filled to the brim with the love of Christ — and that love overflows



into the lives of your family and friends, your neighbors and even your enemies.

Paul closes 2 Corinthians 5 with:

We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

How will you "hand down" the great news of Jesus during these Advent, Christmas and Epiphany days? It's a "hand-me-down" that everyone can use!

Rev. Beck serves as pastor of Holy Cross, Warda.

IT'S TIME TO APPLY!

Do you know of a female member of your Texas District congregation studying to become an LCMS full-time professional church worker at an LCMS college or university? If so, it's time to encourage her to apply for a Texas District LWML scholarship for the 2023-24 school year!

For eligibility requirements and to apply, visit lwmltxdist.org. Go to "Committees," choose "Scholarships" from the drop-down menu, and download the 2023 scholarship application packet.

For more information, contact Melissa Houchin, Scholarship Committee chairman, at scholarship@lwmltxdist.org. Completed application packets must be sent or emailed to Melissa time-stamped or postmarked by March 31.



On Oct. 9, Alive in Christ celebrated LWML Sunday. Pictured are, from left, Vicar Bobby and Judy Roever, Jaunell Roever, Dolline Budke, Grace Shugrue and Rev. Carroll Kohl. Missing are Donna Dorey and Shylee Reid.

**STAY
CONNECTED**

Send LWML news and photos to the District News editor at districtnews@lwmltxdist.org

- lwmltxdist.org
- facebook.com/LWMLTexas

Mission Grant spotlight

Hope for a new beginning

LINC Austin Outreach

is a very active mobile outreach and navigation agency in the Austin/Travis County area. In the last two years, LINC has partnered with city and county agencies to house more than 150 individuals. LINC's model of relationship, care and compassion — in the name of Jesus — has proven so effective that agencies all over Austin have requested LINC's help in training their staff in homeless outreach.

LINC Austin Outreach has a unique and thoughtful way of serving the individuals experiencing homelessness. LINC focuses on each individual, considering the client's pain and the road they have walked, and does their best to provide hope and love and point them to Jesus. The first and foremost goal is to build a relationship with those they serve, to offer empathy and care.

The LWML Texas District mission grant of \$10,000 will provide funding to continue mobile street outreach. LINC Austin Outreach offers hope for a new beginning by helping clients overcome major obstacles to housing and employment by attaining identification, and walking with



Welcome home! LINC stood by this client's side as he now has an apartment to call home.

clients as they prepare for housing. Upon housing, LINC provides basic housewarming items and stocks the pantry. This mission grant will allow LINC to do the work Jesus has called them to do.

LINC Austin Outreach advocates for their clients in a deep and meaningful way, creating an impact not just in their ministry, but also for other outreach services dedi-

cated to helping those experiencing homelessness. They have created partnerships and networks with local businesses, other outreach centers, churches, policy makers, nonprofits, hospitals and the Austin Police Department (APD), specifically the mental health unit. They have partnered with APD in hosting pop-up clinics that provide whole-patient care, which includes meeting basic needs, case work and medical assistance as needed.

Homelessness is a complicated topic. Despite the challenges, LINC Austin Outreach and its dedicated leaders wake up every morning with a tender and compassionate heart toward those who are unsheltered in Austin. Their mission is to build a strong community in the Austin area by developing authentic relationships and providing holistic care for those who are hurting and need the healing love and hope of Jesus Christ.

In a recent thank-you note for their first mission payment, Haleh Kersten, LINC executive director, shared that the mission grant had already helped LINC to house a young woman who has been homeless for more than 10 years. The mission grant allowed LINC to purchase household items and provide rental assistance for Angel. LWML mites have given Angel hope for the future and a place to call home.

As we prepare this Advent season to celebrate the awe-filled birth of our Savior, may the light of hope we are assured of through Him bring you peace and joy now and into the new year. On behalf of the LWML Texas District Executive Committee, may this time be blessed in fellowship with the Lord, family and friends. Keep feeding those mite boxes, mite purses or the mite cups as we, His beloved children, strive to boldly live out the mission to which we have pledged.

2022-24 Mite Goal: \$390,000

Mites received through Sept. 30: \$79,178 (\$310,823 still needed)

Mission Grants paid through Sept. 30: \$31,750

Send your mite offerings along with a remittance form to: LWML Texas District Attn: Kathy Walther, Financial Secretary, P.O. Box 124, Giddings, TX 78942