



/ DECEMBER 2023

TEXAS MESSENGER

From the president

‘Grace and truth’

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,
and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only
Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

JOHN 1:14



Grace and truth — how could the
two ever meet?

How could generosity, love, and life
our sin and sadness greet?

Shining in the darkness, but
rejected and not received,

The light of life appeared,
unrecognized and unbelieved.

But with determined grace God
sent the Creator Word,

Entering the cosmos, with steadfast
love His heart was stirred.

Taking the form of a servant
to make us all children of God,
Grace and truth descended to a
path that was yet untrod.

Truth without grace would accuse
us and heap upon us shame;

It would lay bare our souls,
revealing all our sin and blame;

Grace without truth would be
uncaring, making justice and
righteousness cheap;

Overlooking the cost of sin would
keep us mired in transgressions
deep.

But the glory of God appeared, sent
from heaven above,

The one and only Son was sent to
us in love;

Full of grace and truth, in a manger
He appeared,

Proclaimed by angels on Christmas
morn, to all the true God came near.

Then carrying our sin and walking
perfectly in our place,

Defeating the devil’s temptations,
yes, in Jesus came both truth and
grace,

Meeting fully at the cross, the
truth of our rebellion on His head,
Then uttering, by grace, “It is fin-
ished!”, God’s Son was left for dead.

But on the third day, the Word of
God strode victoriously from the
grave,

Grace and truth together, our
humble lives to save;

Now poured and given to us
through water, bread, and wine,

The living Word fills our hearts,
and we, His glory shine.

This Advent and Christmas we
rejoice,

Awed by grace and truth made one;
For the Word made flesh we lift our
voice,

Giving humble thanks for Jesus,
our Savior, God’s beloved Son.

Questions for reflection:

Read 1 Cor. 15:51-58

How do you see the truth of the Law
and the grace of the Gospel in these
verses?

How do you and your congregation
need to repent and give thanks in
light of these verses?

Prayer starter: Give thanks for one
way Jesus’ presence and salvation
have changed you.



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



"We gather up students from all different experiences and congregations...but we have a responsibility to the church for the mission of the church...we equip the body of Christ for the growth and expansion of the Gospel. We ask where the Gospel will take you."

~ Rev. John Karle,
University Lutheran Chapel, College Station



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Our goal this year is:
\$400,000

Please consider joining us as a
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PRAY

It is our number one priority. Our goal is to have 10% of the Texas District, LCMS members praying regularly for the mission.
bit.ly/missionprayertx



GIFTS

No gift to Texas Partners in Mission is too small. We need gifts to reach the thousands of people in Texas with the life-saving Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ.

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



Equipping the PRIESTHOOD of the BAPTIZED



I was about 14 years old. It was a normal Saturday afternoon. I was getting ready. My family and I were heading to church, where we would meet a group of people, young and old, ready to go evangelize the neighborhood surrounding the church. This was many, many years ago in Panama City, where my dad was a pastor.

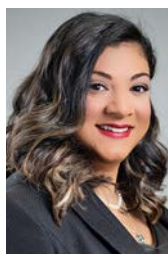
I remember talking with people of different ages and even praying with and for them on their front porch. I was 14! But my mom and dad had taught me that was the normal thing to do as Christians.

It's been a long time since I was 14 and witnessing got a little more complicated for me. I noticed that the culture of my new home, Texas, was different when I first moved from Panama at 18. The only people knocking on doors were from other "religions" and salespeople. So my dad adapted his witnessing efforts to our new community in its own context. He started an English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) program at the church. I was one of the volunteers and I loved it! It took me some time to get the hang of it, but I found sharing Jesus with unchurched people in their own context fascinating. Scary at first, but fascinating!

I then married a pastor and guess what? Witnessing (or evangelizing) was (is) a passion for him, too. So for a little over 20 years, it has been the most joyous blessing to witness to the communities we have served through health fairs, ESL classes, food pantries, Christmas events, back-to-school blessings and more.

Evangelizing can be intimidating. Ten years ago, the LCMS formed a Task Force which recommended:

...that a major emphasis in lay training programs be placed on the role of evangelist and the task of outreach in the increasingly diverse and challenging world of the U.S. (*Recommendation 7, Retention and Affirmation of District Lay Training Programs*)



**Deaconess
Noemi
Guerra**
Districtwide
Evangelist
Development
Leader

The focus of this training ought not be on laypeople doing pastoral work. Rather, a more important focus should be in helping all the baptized to evangelize — witnessing to Christ and sharing the Christian faith within their vocation.

Though we charge pastors in the rite of ordination to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5), the best evangelists are often laypeople who are gifted and hopefully trained to tell the Good News of Jesus wherever their vocations take them. Evangelists or witnesses within all walks of life are essential for reaching the lost and for the church to grow. Lay evangelists are able to go to far more places to bring the Word of Jesus to far more people.

We need lay evangelists who can teach others the Word of God; baptized people of God who speak the Good News of Jesus at every opportunity God gives them in their vocation. Equipping the baptized people of God to fulfill their vocation as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that we may proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9) is an essential need that district lay training programs can help to address.

Witnessing can be intimidating. It may take us some time to get the hang of it, but sharing Jesus with unchurched people in their own context is fascinating! Scary at first, but fascinating!

Would you join our newly developed evangelist training ministry and become a certified evangelist (witness) of the Texas District?

For more information, please visit txlcms.org/lay-evangelist-training.



When you volunteer, you step forward to do this type of good with no expectation of earthly gain. We serve not because we have to, but because of the love, care and concern we have for our neighbor.

Consider what you might be able to do to make an impact in your community by becoming a volunteer. Do you know of an elderly person nearby that could use your aid? Maybe you're more suited to be a mentor for young people at the Boys and Girls Club. Can you contribute by giving a hand to other non-profits that exist to help those in need? During this time of year, the Salvation Army is most certainly looking for eager bell ringers. And churches are almost always looking for more volunteers. If you don't know where to start, talk to your pastor today.

Part 2 of this article can be found in the Legacy Deo December e-newsletter at LegacyDeo.org.

VOLUNTEERING

Giving selflessly to serve others

When the Secretary of War put out a call for volunteers to fight in the War of 1812, there was an overwhelming response in Tennessee as thousands played a prominent role. Then in 1846, over 30,000 in Tennessee stepped up to serve in the Mexican-American War. The "Volunteer State" was solidified as the nickname for Tennessee.



Rev. J. Brown
Legacy Giving Ambassador

Disciples of Jesus have gone by multiple names over the years. In Acts 9, they were called "the Way," but now we are known as "Christians" (Acts 11). I wonder, though, if it also would have been fitting for followers of Jesus to be called "Volunteers." I am certainly not suggesting that we actually make this change, and I'm perfectly content with the name that Scripture gives to Christ's disciples. What I am saying is that volunteering and selfless service to others is such a

big part of who we are and what we do that being called "Volunteers" would be an accurate description.

More so, the volunteer label rightly describes who Jesus is and what He came to do. While the Bible doesn't use this exact word, Jesus did come to give selflessly and to serve others. He wasn't forced and there was no personal gain in it for Him when He went to Calvary and sacrificed Himself to pay the price for our sins.

What about us? Is it important for Christians to give selflessly and serve others? Yes. Col. 3:23-24 says:

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive an inheritance as your reward.


It feels good to give and know that we do it not for reward or gain on earth, but that the spiritual blessings in working for God are better than any payment we can receive. And doesn't it feel so good to give freely? In Acts 20:35, Paul notes that Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

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LA GRANGE



Mount Calvary's preschool honored Rev. Jason Kaspar in celebration of Pastor Appreciation Month. Lori Hollek, preschool director, and students presented Pastor Kaspar with a banner of handprints and cards made by the children, and a cake that was shared after lunch. The members and staff of Mount Calvary are thankful for Pastor Kaspar's faithful and steadfast service to the church and preschool.



Mount Calvary welcomed Bradley Leroy Synnott through Holy Baptism. Pastor Kaspar is pictured with, from left, Shirley Behrens (holding Bradley) and Bradly T. Synnott.



The saints at Mount Calvary welcomed new members Dusty and Codi Kadlecsek and their daughters, Stevi and Landri (by profession of faith) and Dani (by rite of Holy Baptism). Along with Pastor Kaspar, they are pictured with Donna and Daniel Kadlecsek, Godparents and grandparents.

CORPUS CHRISTI

Rev. Dr. Russell C. Hildebrandt was installed as pastor of Trinity on Oct. 8. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Eloy Gonzalez, Rev. David Bergquist, Dr. Russell C. Hildebrandt, Alston Kirk and Kevin Jennings.





GARLAND

In August, the body of Christ at Concordia Lutheran Church was happy to celebrate Rev. Kenneth Krippner's 35th year in ministry and his 25th year at Concordia. Pastor Krippner was born in the Chicago suburbs and graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1988. He married his wife, Pam, and served at Zion, Fairmont, Okla., and Faith, Dexter, Mo., before settling in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. In his spare time, Pastor Krippner enjoys mechanics and scuba diving, and he and Pam are both deeply proud of their son, Andy (an infantryman who was killed by an IED in Afghanistan). Thank you, Pastor Krippner, for your 35 years of compassion and dedication!

BIG SPRING



On Oct. 8, Alive in Christ celebrated Pastor Appreciation Month by honoring Rev. Bobby Roever. He is pictured with his wife, Judy.

AUSTIN

Audrey Louise Nelson was baptized by Rev. Jonathan Bontke at Beautiful Savior on Oct. 1. Audrey wore the baptismal dress that was worn by her mother and grandmother for their baptisms. Audrey is pictured with her parents, Michael and Dana Nelson.



FAIRVIEW



DJ Hernandez was recently confirmed at Immanuel. He is pictured with Rev. Tab Ottmers.

PLANO

ABOVE: Faith Lutheran School teacher Christy Rivers was the winner of the inaugural Y4Life Teaching 4 Life Award. Rivers was formally recognized for her outstanding work upholding the sanctity of life in the classroom, church and community during the 2023 Lutherans For Life (LFL) National Conference in Erlanger, Ky., in October. She is pictured with Michelle Bauman (left), Y4Life director, and Rev. Michael Salemink, LFL executive director.

BELOW: Faith Lutheran Church and School hosted published author Katie Schuermann Sept. 20-21. She visited with faculty, enjoyed story time with the school's youngest scholars, worked with the high school choir, talked to middle and high school students about writing and the importance of good stories, and spoke at an afternoon ladies' tea.



WALBURG

Twenty-seven families were welcomed into membership at Zion Lutheran Church on Oct. 15. They are pictured with, top of stairs at right, Revs. Zach McIntosh (senior pastor) and Kevin Hintze (associate pastor).



FRANKLIN



Shepherd of the Prairie welcomed three new members on Aug. 13. They are, from left, Janice Knight, Jason Kersten and Jie Kersten. At right is Vicar David Blajeski.



PLANO

PraiseFest23, held by the Collin County-area network of LCMS congregations, was held at St. Paul on Sept. 30. The free, outdoor music festival highlighted a variety of contemporary Christian music played by praise bands from St. Paul; Messiah, Plano; Our Savior, McKinney; Prince of Peace, Carrollton; and Concordia, Garland.

An estimated 300 guests attended the event. There was a 50-foot bounce house and a large, covered playground for children. Food and drinks were complimentary and a freewill offering was accepted. Those attending could also choose to bring their own food and beverages for an old-fashioned family picnic.

The objective of PraiseFest23 was to create an enjoyable event for Collin County area residents through the LCMS congregations. Members of each church had the opportunity to invite their friends, neighbors and co-workers to the first of this annual event.

LAMPASAS



On Oct. 29, Tristan Thiele was baptized at Faith. From left, grandparents Larry and Marsha Thiele, Tristan, Rev. Tim Oschner, parents Rebecca and Jamie Thiele, and daughter Ella.



On Sept. 24, Faith welcomed new members Mark and Renee McMillan, Andrew and Elaine Westeen, and Valerie and John Honeycutt.

THE GROVE



On Sept. 24, the St. Paul congregation rejoiced as two were baptized into Christ and another joined through recognition of Baptism from another church body. From left, new member Melanie Thompson, Rev. John Heckmann, Sy Hartgrove (sponsor), newly baptized Jean Diehl and son Jacob. At Jacob's right is his father and Jean's husband, Robert.

BIG SPRING

Alive in Christ Lutheran Church held vacation Bible school (VBS) on Aug. 12. Pictured are 10 of the 12 youths who attended. From left, (front row) Lane, Landon, Grey, Parker, Matthew; (back row) Emilie, Collins, Kamryn, Harker and Anna. Not pictured are Alana and Veda.



HOUSTON

The Gethsemane Ladies Ruth Circle completed 100 school kits for Orphan Grain Train on Aug. 8. Pictured are, from left, Joyce Heckmann, Karen (Heckmann) Leicht, Viola Bade, Barbara McInnis, Sharon Arney, Alice Kaspar, Lisa Sitz, Donna Ratcliffe, Susan Wasson and Cathy Schreiber. Missing are Edda Ertunca and Dorothy Krohn.



SAN MARCOS

The Quilters of Grace have been busy as bees making quilts for Lutheran World Relief. This brightly colored quilt is just one of the many designated to be sent to Maui, Hawaii, and the historic city of Lahaina after the devastating fires.



FOOD for the HUNGRY



The congregation of Christ our Savior, San Antonio, has decided to help those with food insecurity. On May 1, the congregation opened a food pantry in cooperation with the San Antonio Food Bank.

When Christ our Savior considered starting a food pantry, the goal was to serve 36 households per week. It took only three weeks to discover that goal was too small. In June, the goal was raised to 60 households, and the church hopes to raise the goal even further.

Clients line up at Christ Our Savior to receive from the food pantry.

Christ our Savior is a tiny congregation with an average attendance of 42. By itself, it would be almost impossible to open a food pantry. King of Kings, San Antonio, where Rev. Neldo Schmidt serves as pastor, stepped up to be a “big sister” congregation to help Christ our Savior. King of Kings has been feeding its community for 25 years.

Sharon Sadlon has now served for 18 years as director of the King of Kings pantry, which now regularly serves 136 households per week with the help of 25 regular volunteers. Sadlon has now also stepped up to serve as Christ our Savior’s pantry director. She brought with her a handful of weekly volunteers, along with volunteers from other sister churches. Those volunteers even brought some of their friends to also help!

Every Monday morning, pallets full of food arrive from the San Antonio Food Bank. The food is then rearranged into individual portions for clients, who begin to line up a little after 11 a.m. The doors open at noon and in about an hour, all the food is distributed. Many of the clients walk to the food pantry and carry their food home in wheeled suitcases and shopping carts. Some arrive in wheelchairs, others in cars. The volunteers pray for all their clients each week before opening the doors.

Jesus said, “I was hungry, and you fed me.” The folks who work at the food pantry at Christ our Savior think about those words each Monday as they serve the hungry.

BRADY

Mount Calvary celebrated its 100th anniversary on Sept. 24. All living ministers who served the congregation were present. Pictured are, from left, (front row) Rev. Lynn Lubke, current Mount Calvary pastor; Teryn Moerbe, crucifer; Reed Lubke, acolyte; Deacon Archie Harlow, director of Church Ministries emeritus; Rev. Curt Schneider, emeritus; (back row) Rev. Ben Francisco, Faith, York, Neb.; Rev. Michael Newman, Texas District president; and Rev. Tim Rosenthal, chaplain, Shaw Air Force Base, Sumter, S.C.



Blessings in Boerne



Messiah re-dedicates refurbished building

Messiah, Boerne, held a re-dedication on Oct. 8 to celebrate the completion of a two-year refurbishment project. Messiah was blessed by a very generous benefactor and many additional supporters to update the 28-year-old building. Upgrades were made to the vestibule, narthex, restrooms, Welcome Center, audio-visual booth, kitchen and sanctuary.

Generous donations were made for 11 stained glass windows to complement the redesigned wood beams, panels, doors and trim. The beautiful stained glass windows were designed by a prominent glass artist with an "I Am" theme in 10 windows and a beautiful altar window of the resurrected Christ.

Two of Messiah's previous pastors were invited to conduct the service — Rev. Steve Fick, who currently serves as pastor of Redeeming Grace, Austin, and Rev. Dr. Mark Dankis, emeritus. Dankis, who was Messiah's first pastor when the congregation was established in 1991, preached the sermon, titled "All Things New." Messiah is currently served by Rev. Dr. Richard Lofgren.

A moving message about the refurbishment project was presented by Bill Thomas of the Refurbishment Committee. Members and guests enjoyed a reception following the re-dedication.



▲ xxxxx xxxxxx leads xxxxxxxxxxxx in song.

◀ Rev. Ken Hennings (left), Texas District president emeritus, chats with Bill Thomas.

▼ Rev. Dr. Mark Dankis preaches the sermon.





These Lutheran friends of yours are celebrating wedding anniversaries of **50 YEARS** or more.

Redeemer, Nacogdoches

Brian and Cheryl Mehl
50 years, May 26

Chris and Elsie Davis
50 years, July 14

Joe and Candy Johnson
54 years, July 19

Steve and Carla Menzines
55 years, Aug. 3

Jim and Marily Cain
67 years, Aug. 18

Bob and Beth Finnerud
50 years, Sept. 22

Trinity, San Angelo

Rick and Joyce Heller
63 years, Oct. 3

Kenny and Linda Pfingsten
59 years, Oct. 20

Russ and Marti Johnson
55 years, Oct. 22

St. Matthew, Westfield
Michael and Jeanne Held
54 years, Nov. 1

Mount Calvary, La Grange
Don and Betsy Chovanec
52 years

Weldon and Carol Von
Minden
63 years

Don and Kathy Pietsch
51 years

Garland and Stell Midgett
59 years

St. Paul, The Grove

Walter and Daisy Sohns
67 years, Dec. 1



Dr. Dennis and Sandra Schmidt, members of Beautiful Savior, Paris, celebrated their 50th anniversary on Sept. 16.



Bud and Doris Hammond, members of Redeemer, Odessa, celebrated their 71st anniversary on Sept. 27.



James and Janet Bilberry, members of Grace, Killeen, celebrated 50 years of marriage on July 4.



David and Connie Horn, members of Grace, Killeen, celebrated 52 years of marriage on April 17.

Celebrating a century of service

The congregation of Messiah, Houston, gives all thanks to God as they will celebrate its 100th anniversary at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 10. Rev. Michael Newman, district president, will preach during the celebration service, which will be followed by dinner.



NACOGDOCHES

The Redeemer Piecemakers recently made these 46 lap quilts and donated them to a local nursing home.

Share your news with us!

Send photos and stories for *The Lutheran Witness* insert to txmess@txlcms.org or Texas Messenger, LCMS Texas District; 1221 Satellite View; Round Rock, TX 78665



Support for new teachers



Retreat attendees are, from left (front row) Kristi Zumpano, Concordia High School, Austin; Jennifer Stevens, Lutheran South Academy, Houston; Samantha Boatman, Salem, Tomball; Faith Jonas, Shepherd of the Hills, San Antonio; Krystin Hill, Immanuel, Giddings; Julie Bohland, Epiphany, Houston; Vicki Pietsch, Immanuel, Giddings; (back row) Dr. Bill Hinz; Dr. Amy Boatman, Head of School, Salem, Tomball; Michael Hinz, Prince of Peace, Carrollton; Brooke Hockemeyer, Concordia Lutheran High School, Tomball; Eric Harless, Lutheran South Academy, Houston; and Richard Crouch, Lutheran North Academy, Houston.

By Dr. Bill Hinz Director, School Ministry

First- and second-year teachers from across the Texas District gathered for the annual Beginning Teachers Retreat at Camp Lone Star Oct. 1-2. Veteran teachers new to Lutheran schools or those returning to teaching also attended.

These new teachers bring a special energy and enthusiasm to their classrooms and congregations, but the first few years in any ministry can often be challenging.

The retreat gives our new teachers an opportunity to share with others who are experiencing similar challenges and to learn from one another and grow. Sectionals on a variety of topics are offered, including curriculum; classroom management strategies; communication processes; and spiritual tools for devotional and group activities.

Our retreat time is guided by an experienced Leadership Team that consists of Vicki Pietsch (Immanuel, Giddings), Michael Hinz (Prince of Peace, Carrollton), Dr. Amy Boatman (Salem, Tomball) and yours truly. The Leadership Team helps our new teachers to gain additional insights into their roles as teachers and mentors of young people.

It is vital for all our new teachers to have an opportunity to gather with others who are beginning in their ministry to be able to support one another; and to consult with more experienced co-workers in a relaxed retreat atmosphere. This opportunity provides not only a personal boost, but also is a blessing spiritually and professionally.

Today it takes courage and determination to teach. Our students are being influenced by a society in a variety of negative ways. We thank

God for our Lutheran schools, where our teachers are able to share the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ with their students every day, helping them to gain an understanding of the foundation that Jesus is, and how their lives can be built on Him.

Our Lutheran teachers help our students discover and develop their God-given talents, both in the classroom setting and beyond. Our teachers share one trait — a strong sense of personal identity infused in their ministry and work, strengthened by their faith and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

I encourage you to reach out with an uplifting word to the teachers in your schools and congregations. You can make a very significant impact on them as they begin and continue their ministry and service to the Lord. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

FREED from sin



Getty Images

Oxford Languages defines infestation as “the presence of an unusually large number of insects or animals in a place, typically so as to cause damage or disease.”

We have been fighting an infestation of Indian meal moths at my house. Ugh! It started with seeing adult moths in the pantry. Their bi-colored wings truly stand out on our white pantry walls, shelves and ceilings.

We consulted Google to see what we should do next. It was necessary to remove everything from the pantry and wash it clean. We did it once with apple cider vinegar and once with bleach. That seemed to help a little, but every time we opened the door to the pantry, we kept finding more moths. So we washed it out again with white vinegar.

I am obsessed with eliminating this inconvenient infestation. I am constantly opening the pantry door to see if there are more moths. (All



By Pat Fick
CAN-DO
Director

the pantry food items have found a new home on the counter, which is also awkward!) And my green swatter is working overtime!

Indian meal moths are relentless. However, we went through every food item in the pantry and finally found the culprit. The source of the infestation was a bag of dry dog food in a plastic container. Let me just say that meal moth larvae is really gross! The only way to control Indian meal moths is to locate infested materials and clean them out. Bye bye, dog chow! Our next step will be employing a bug exterminator to see if they can prevent another pesky pest takeover.

Spiritually speaking, our lives have an infestation of sin, and Satan relentlessly leads each of us astray, each and every day. Am I aware of his schemes? Do I want to get rid of sin as much as I want to get rid of irksome Indian meal moths?

1 Peter 5:8 reminds me to:

Be sober-minded; be watchful.
Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

We can't overcome sin on our own

power. We need an exterminator! Revelation 1:5b tells me that Jesus is that exterminator. We look:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.

We cling to his cross:

and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

ROMANS 3:24

PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for washing me clean by shedding your blood to pay for my sin. Help me to confess my sins daily and live out 1 Peter 5:9:

Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.

I'm forgiven because you were forsaken. Help me to forsake my sins and shine the light of Christ every day, in every way! Amen.



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May you be blessed with hope and love
throughout 2024!

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The Biggest Blessing:

The Ferguson's Foster-to-Adopt Story

Kimberly and Dan Ferguson are strong believers in adoption, and they have the family to prove it. In addition to their foster-to-adopted siblings, Korbin, 4, and Kendall, 6, Dan adopted Kimberly's 18-year-old biological son, Trey; and Kimberly adopted Dan's 15-year-old biological daughter, Kenzie.

"I want to give children a good life and the opportunity to succeed," shared Kimberly. "I'm trying to show them love in a situation where it may have been hard because of what they went through in life."

Kimberly and Dan's foster-to-adopt journey began in 2021, when while working as a supervising pediatric nurse at a clinic, Kimberly met another nurse who was fostering 1-year-old Korbin. His biological mother had lost her parental rights. The Fergusons did respite care for the nurse on weekends. "We just formed a bond with him, and that's how it happened," explained Kimberly.

In 2022, CPS contacted the Fergusons to say Korbin's older sister, Kendall, was being removed from a foster home because of physical abuse. Kendall's biological

mother had neglected her. And so, the siblings were reunited and became part of the Ferguson home.

"We've had hard days," explains Kimberly. "It's tough, especially with four kids." Kimberly credits Sarah Dumont, Area Director of Upbring's Foster In Texas (FIT) office in Tyler as being a great resource and "truly a great person!"

To those considering fostering-to-adopting, Kimberly says, "I would encourage them to do it. It's going to be the biggest blessing they've ever received. Not everything you do is going to be easy going on the journey, but at the end you're going to look back and it's going to be amazing!"

Upbring is grateful to families like the Fergusons who are positively impacting the lives of children in need. For more information on becoming an Upbring partner, visit Upbring.org/Get-Involved.



A Ferguson family Christmas. In back, from left, Kimberly, Dan, Kenzie and Trey. In front, Kendall and Korbin.



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‘Come and see’

At Camp Lone Star, we believe that life transformation happens through time spent at camp. The transformation that God provides can often come through big adventures or entering into new life chapters, but more significantly, Paul tells us in Romans 12:2 that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. Setting aside time in the midst of God’s creation, to fix our eyes upon Him and reflect on what He is doing in our lives, gives us the opportunity to renew our minds and dive deeper into our faith in Jesus. It’s a place where anyone can experience the love and grace of God in a meaningful way.

As we look toward a new year and all that God has prepared for each of us, we want to invite you into a new season. Throughout the next year, and especially during the summer, campers and guests will be invited to take another step in their journey with God.

All throughout Scripture, we read stories of people being invited into a deeper walk with Christ, into a new chapter of their story, or a new way of seeing Jesus. From the

calling of the first disciples to the women at the tomb where Jesus was buried and resurrected, we hear invitations extended to come and see all that God has done.

In John 4:29, after an encounter with Jesus, the Samaritan woman at the well invites others in town to “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” In 2024, we will focus on the theme “Invited” ... what God has invited us into and how we can invite others in as well.

We want to invite you to come and see all that God can do in and through you this year. From directed events to hosted retreats to summer camp, we are confident that God has something He wants to invite you into. Perhaps it’s an invitation to know God in a greater way or to step out in faith to make His name known in your own community. Maybe it’s an invitation to surrender a heavy burden unto the Lord, or to fully experience forgiveness in Christ. Whatever invitation God has for you, we know that it can be transformational.

So join us at camp in 2024 and

experience new life in Christ. Take up the invitation to come and see all that God has in store for you. Our summer camp registration is open now for youth ages 5-18. We have opportunities for campers looking to experience overnight camp for a week, or even just a weekend. Maybe you want to add some extra adventure to your week or stay up all night long — we have programs designed for that. There is room for individual campers and entire youth groups to join us too!

Regardless of how you join us this summer, whether for a day or a week, we know it will be filled with adventurous activities centered around Christ that will surely bring transformation to your life.

Visit camplonestar.org to learn more about our summer opportunities and how you can be a part of it.



♦ CAMP ♦

LONE STAR

2016 Camp Lone Star Road
La Grange, TX 78945

PINES CAMPUS
22610 Tuwa Road • Tomball, TX 77375

CONTACT US

**Lutheran Outdoors
Ministry of Texas**

P.O. Box 457; La Grange, TX 78945
info@camplonestar.org
979-968-1657 • camplonestar.org

Advent devotions now available

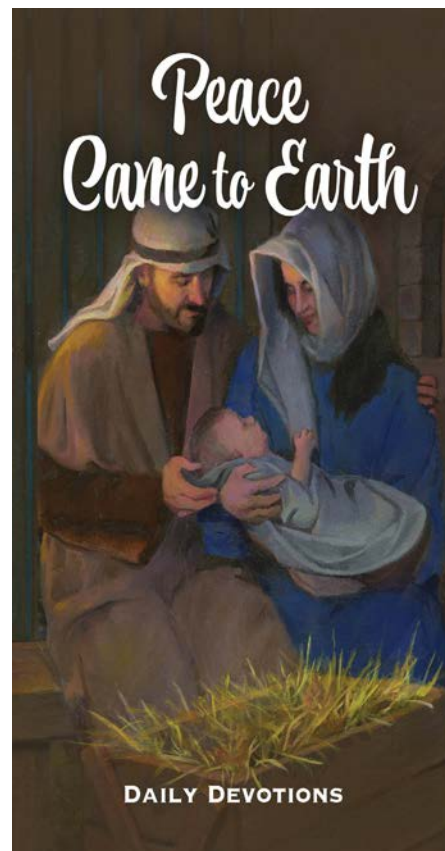


LHM and Concordia Publishing House (CPH) have created new Advent materials. LHM is offering original Advent devotions in English and Spanish. *What Child is This?* is available in English. *El profundo amor del Padre* ("The Deep Love of the Father") will be available in Spanish.

Both versions will be available online for reading and listening

beginning Sunday, Dec. 3, at lhm.org/advent and paraelcamino.com/adviento.com. There is no cost for these resources and they can be downloaded or printed for larger groups.

CPH is offering an Advent daily devotion book called *Peace Came to Earth*. These daily devotions will provide a message of peace for your day and include a Bible verse,



message and prayer. The devotions run from Dec. 1 through Jan. 6. The book costs \$2.99 and can be ordered at thelc.ms/cph-peace-came-to-earth-devotions.

Meeting highlights outreach

The fall meeting of the Texas District LLL/LHM was held Sept. 30 at the Belton campus of Immanuel Lutheran Ministries and called to order by TC Lipe, LLL district president.

The meeting focused on missions and outreach. As reported by Lipe, who is a Harris County chaplain, a children's mission project is underway, coordinated by a chaplain in the Houston Police Department. Bibles and LHM *Project Connect* booklets are given to children overseas.

Barry Samsel reported on the school-supplies mission

work being done between Redeemer, Austin, and Wooten Elementary School on the adjacent property.

Rev. Larry Krueger reported on Hispanic outreach activities he is seeing in Area B, as several Spanish mission congregations are being started in the Dallas area. A special call was made by Lipe to recruit additional LHM Ambassadors in the Texas District.

Rev. Grayson Albers, senior pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Ministries, Belton, gave a report on his church activities and mentioned a special emphasis on the inclusion of many veterans in Central Texas. Presenting on support for and mission to veterans was Rev. Dr. Steven Hokana, assistant director of LCMS Ministry to the Armed Forces.



LWML Texas District 43rd Biennial Convention

- June 13–15, 2024
- Omni Hotel Corpus Christi



"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works."

GOAL

Hold fast in Christ, our source of hope, living out our faith without wavering.

OBJECTIVE

Attendees will:

- ▶ Be strengthened in faith through worship and fellowship.
- ▶ Honor God by showing love to one another.
- ▶ Witness boldly, anchored in Christ.

As we journey through Advent and look forward once again to the celebration of our Savior's birth in Bethlehem at Christmas, Galatians 4:4-5 reminds us of the perfect timing of this event:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

The time has also come to begin submitting applications for the Texas District LWML Scholarship for the 2024-2025 school year. The scholarships are awarded through the Texas District LWML Scholarship Endowment Fund.

The scholarship is available to

female members of Texas District congregations who are studying to become LCMS full-time professional church workers. Applicants must also be enrolled at an LCMS university. If you know someone who fits this description, it's time to encourage her to apply!

For eligibility requirements and to apply, visit lwmltxdist.org. Go to "About Us" and select "Scholarships" from the drop-down menu. 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 post-marked by March 31.



The LWML Texas District is fortunate to count many amazing women as members, and this month we are proud to recognize Peggy Elder. Peggy has been an active member of the St. Paul, Harlingen, Ladies Aid for 15 years. She is currently serving as LWML group president, LWML zone treasurer, and church secretary.

Peggy loves serving her Lord through mission work and loves being a member the LWML because of the mission opportunities. Dawn Tighe, Rio Grande Valley Zone president, appreciates Peggy and all the work she does for her group and the zone. She writes: "Peggy has a mission heart and is truly a sister to emulate. I can always depend on her to give me guidance and patience, and to use her creative abilities to help make my position easier. I not only appreciate Peggy, but am honored to have her as a sister in Christ."

Thank you Peggy for your service to our Lord and the LWML. You are the Heart of the LWML.

GRACIOUS GIVING

By Rev. John Heckmann
Senior Pastoral Counselor

In this season of preparing for and celebrating once again the birth of our Savior, let us consider this life-changing event through the eyes of a giver. Without a doubt, the sentiments of this time of year revolve around giving. Mailboxes are full of appeals for Christmas offerings. Store entrances are decked out with the signs and symbols of various organizations asking for our gifts. Social media appeals and phone calls increase significantly asking for a year-end contribution.

Most of us respond to one or more of those appeals, but why? Maybe because we feel like Scrooge walking in and out of the store without placing a gift in the container. Maybe some are thinking about income taxes and what charitable contributions can do for them. Maybe some just enjoy this season and give gifts to everyone they rub shoulders with.

I am going to guess that the main reason we give in this “holiday season” and throughout the year is in response to what has already been



given to us, promised centuries ago as God said to our sinful first parents:

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. **GEN. 3:15 NIV**

This is the Good News that motivates and empowers our giving. We respond to the gift from the greatest giver of all, our Heavenly Father, who gave us Jesus. We respond to the incredible gift Jesus gave to each of us — His life in our place to pay for our sins and the sins of the whole world once and for all, and to give us new life both now as His redeemed children and for all eternity in heaven with Him.

What is our response to this incredible news? As we think not

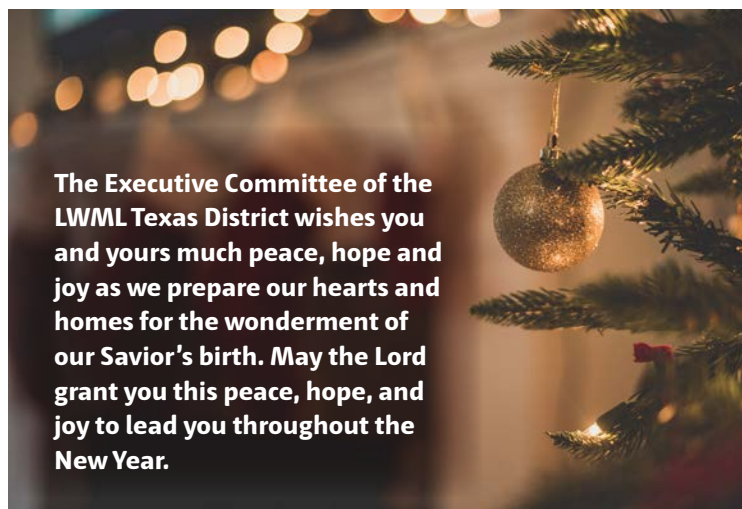
only of the events of Christmas, but also of another “holiday season” we will celebrate in a few months, I think of the words of St. Paul in Romans 8:32:

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Everything we have — everything — is a gracious gift from God. He gives graciously and would have me give graciously too. Graceful giving draws no attention to itself, but directs attention to God and seeks to glorify Him.

In these glorious and grace-filled days of Christmas, I would encourage you to look at your response to the incredible news of a perfect Savior — born in Bethlehem, crucified, risen, ascended and returning — as you serve your Father in heaven. We graciously serve those He places in our lives through the work of the LWML and through our mites as we proclaim the Christ of Christmas by supporting missions, both here and around the world, and by meeting physical and spiritual needs through the Good News of Christ.

For more information about donating or to donate online, please visit lwmltxdist.org/about-mites.



The Executive Committee of the LWML Texas District wishes you and yours much peace, hope and joy as we prepare our hearts and homes for the wonderment of our Savior's birth. May the Lord grant you this peace, hope, and joy to lead you throughout the New Year.

GREAT IS HIS Faithfulness!



Totals as of September 30, 2023

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| 2022–2024 Mite Goal | \$390,000 |
| Mites Received | \$266,759 |
| Total Mites Still Needed | \$123,241 |
| Mission Grants Paid | \$162,596 |

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

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