



/ FEBRUARY 2024

TEXAS MESSENGER

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hearts of flesh

A Valentine like no other — that is what God sent in Ezekiel 36. Even though the chosen people of God defiled the land, turned to idols and were cruel to the weak, God intended to restore His people. Why?

God spoke through the prophet:

“For behold, I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. The cities shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt. And I will multiply on you man and beast, and they shall multiply and be fruitful. And I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. *Then you will know that I am the LORD.*”

EZEK. 36:9-11 (*emphasis added*)

God continued:

“And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.”

EZEK. 36:26-27 (*emphasis added*)

Why?

“Then the nations that are left all around you shall know that I am the LORD.”

EZEK. 36:36 (*emphasis added*)

Why does God change hearts of



stone into hearts of flesh? Why does He lavish us with His grace and love? Not so we can boast or turn inward, but so we and the world will know Him and His Son and the cross and the empty tomb and forgiveness and genuine love and eternal life. He is for us so a confused and chaotic world will see the beauty of His restoration and rescue.

I recently read about a young man whose heart was transformed when He heard God’s Word. The man said, “I suddenly felt convinced to apologize to every person I’d ever wronged in my lifetime.” So he did. He spent hours on the phone apologizing.

This is not works-righteousness or perfectionism. This is repentance, justification and sanctification. This is what God’s Word does. It turns hearts of stone into hearts of flesh.

The Lutheran Confessions note:

If you live in repentance, you walk in Baptism. For Baptism

not only illustrates such a new life, *but also produces, begins and exercises it.* For in Baptism are given grace, the Spirit, and power to suppress the old man, so that the new man may come forth and become strong [Romans 6:3-6]. **SMALL CATECHISM, PART IV, BAPTISM** *emphasis added*

What about you? Oh, that Christians and churches would be known for hearts of flesh. Not harshness, but grace. Not living at odds with people, but loving one another.

I invite you to join me in our annual district day of repentance on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 14. What a perfect day to return to the heart of flesh given by our Savior! You can find resources at txlcms.org/day-of-repentance-2024.

Questions for reflection:

Read Ezek. 36:16-36. How do these verses show God’s heart and mission, and our calling as His people?

Prayer starter: Let God know how your heart has been a heart of stone lately. Ask Him to give you His heart of flesh.



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

A BIG TEXAS THANK YOU!

For supporting the missions in the Texas District during 2023.



GIVE NOW!
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GIFTS

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



SEARCHING FOR **CHURCH PLANTERS**

And he (Jesus) said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. **Luke 10:2**”

By Rev. Dr. Jon Braunersreuther
 Director of
 Districtwide Strategy



One of our greatest areas of need is for church planters. In fact, at the time this article is being written, the Houston area has three “shovel ready” church plants among Texas District congregations in need of a planter. One of the places we hope to find those workers is at our two wonderful seminaries in St. Louis and Fort Wayne.

In this column last spring, we reported that the Texas District sponsored church planting forums at both seminaries. This fall, they asked us to come back!

And so we did. A panel of church planters at each seminary, facilitated by Rev. Dr. Steve Sohns and me on behalf of the district, shared with interested people from the seminary community about our experiences planting new congregations in Texas — now numbering more than 160 since 2004. In addition to discussing the three “Ps” of church planting — the right person, place and plan — the planters discussed their own blessings and challenges in the planting process and encouraged those who attended to consider being planters themselves or to support others in church planting.

This event was a prelude to an experience scheduled for the Houston area this spring — a church planting lab. Participants from both seminary communities will be invited to Houston for the weekend to interact with church planters on

the ground, learn what the church planting life is like, and engage in some exercises designed to assist them in considering strategies for planting a congregation.

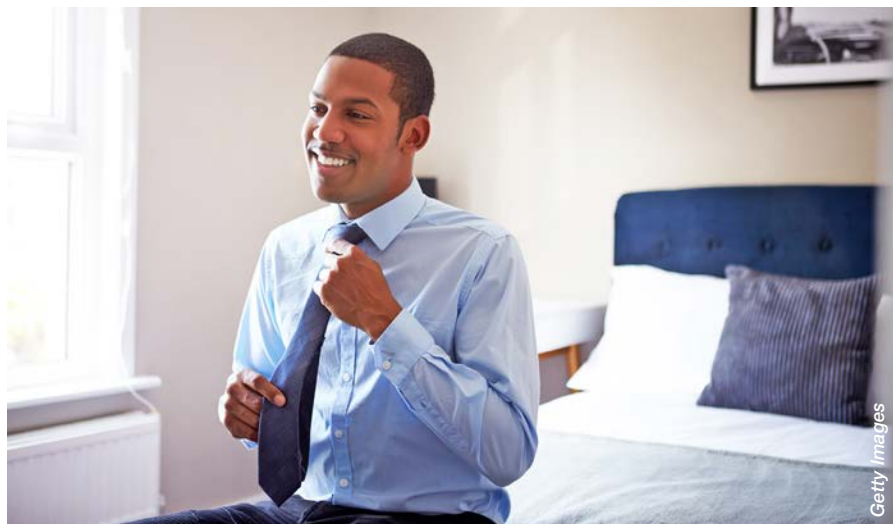
Join us in praying for effective events and for harvest workers!



Rev. Travis Hartjen (Crown of Life, Colleyville) speaks during the panel discussion at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He was joined by, from left, Revs. Seth Kunze (The Dwelling, New Caney), David Bailes (Living Savior, Montgomery) and Stephen DeMik (St. John, Cypress).



Revs. Frank Hart (New Church, Katy), Mark Pulliam (Lazarus, Spring) and Rob Bailey (Texas District missionary) formed the panel at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.



New beginnings

If your life is anything like mine, you've had one or more opportunities for a new beginning. In my case, I remember beginning all the jobs or positions I've held from my teens through today.

During elementary, junior high and high school, I worked in the meat department of a Houston grocery chain, grinding hamburger meat and cutting chickens all day, cleaning up thereafter.

I sold encyclopedias the summer between my junior and senior years at Texas A&M.

I taught fourth grade at St. Paul Lutheran School, Austin, and had a degree in animal science.

I served as summer program director at the Springfield Boys Club (Illinois) upon entering Concordia Theological Seminary in that city.

I taught sixth grade one year, and seventh grade educable mentally



Rev. Dr. Jerry Kieschnick
Chief Executive Officer

handicapped classes the next year, at public schools during my first two years at seminary.

I served a vicarage at Ascension Lutheran Church, Charlotte, N.C., during my third year of seminary.

I worked afternoons as a placement officer at an Equal Employment Opportunity office during seminary year four.

I served as parish pastor in Biloxi, Miss., and Beaumont, and developed new missions in Winnie and Georgetown, where I later became a pastor.

I learned from scratch the ropes of planned giving with Lutheran Foundation of Texas.

I served as president of the Texas District (1991–2001), and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (2001–2010).

I served as presidential ambassador for Misson Advancement at Concordia University Texas.

And now I'm back to Lutheran Foundation of Texas, now Legacy Deo, as chief executive officer.

Sounds like the old guy can't keep a job! My career has not been a wild

and crazy ride, just a bunch of new beginnings. In some of those cases, I had absolutely no idea what to do or how to do it. That's often what accompanies new beginnings. Not knowing what to do or how to do it.

What's it like to start a new job or career? What to do when hit by divorce and single parenthood? How to deal with the death of a spouse or child or other loved one? How to start over after bankruptcy or business failure? How to make friends in a new school when parents move, especially if the moves are many and frequent? How to get along with and learn to love new parents or siblings in a blended family?

New beginnings can be full of excitement and overflowing with challenge. As we begin the second month in this new year, I pray that our gracious Lord will bless you abundantly with whatever new beginnings you encounter.

A very important part of everyone's life is managing the monetary resources with which we've been blessed — Legacy Deo can help with a very special focus this year. We're calling it Radical Generosity. That's my topic for next month. Stay tuned.

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SMITHVILLE



At Grace, from left: On Dec. 3, McLayne Reinhardt was given the new birth of water and the Spirit in Holy Baptism, and McKenzie Campion confessed her faith and was confirmed; and on Dec. 10, Samantha, Gabriella, Madelyn and Wyatt Randle were given the new birth of water and the Spirit in Holy Baptism, and Samantha was also confirmed in the Lutheran faith. All are pictured with Rev. David Woelmer, Grace pastor.

LUBBOCK



Rev. Charles Nemec (left) is pictured with newly confirmed member Allen McRory at Redeemer on Oct. 1.

HOUSTON

Pictured is Lisa Sitz, mission director at Gethsemane, which works in partnership with Wainwright Elementary School and Alejandra Wood of Houston Independent School District to gather enough blankets for all the students for Christmas. The blankets in the photos were purchased and donated by Gethsemane members. A number of the Wainwright students come from underprivileged families.

Other projects Gethsemane has worked on for Wainwright include providing treat baskets for the teachers' break room providing teachers with treats during the long student testing periods.



PLANO

In December, a select group of Faith Lutheran High School students visited a local senior living facility with quite a Christmas gift. The students had collected more than 660 books during their Lions4Life (Lutherans For Life) book drive, and donated them for the senior facility library. The group also visited with the staff and residents and sang Christmas carols.



WICHITA FALLS

The ladies of Our gathered in November for the LWML Red River Zone Fall Rally. Attendees enjoyed an uplifting Bible study followed by building care kits for cancer patients.



Share your news with us!

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

- txmess@txlcms.org
- Texas Messenger, LCMS Texas District, 1221 Satellite View Round Rock, TX 78665

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

Please ensure photos sent electronically are high resolution. Send the largest size from your phone.



CONROE

Pictured some of St. Mark Prime Timers from, who gathered in December to tour "Bethlehem City," a drive-through living nativity. They then enjoyed fellowship with Christmas caroling at the home of a member. It was a joyful evening as they rejoiced in celebrating our Savior's birth.



STEPHENVILLE



Rev. Jeffrey A. Lee was installed as pastor of Faith Lutheran Church. Pictured are, from left, Revs. Tim Perkins, St. John, Mansfield; Jon Thomas, St. John, Mansfield; Larry Krueger, emeritus; Jeffrey Lee; J. Brown, Legacy Deo; and Don Kirklen, emeritus.



BIG SPRING

Alive in Christ and the Rachel group of LWML hosted a pot luck and gift exchange on Dec. 17. Eighteen attended by and 11 gifts were exchanged. Also, a blood drive was held on Dec. 2.



CONGRATS!



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

Our Savior, Abilene

Mike and Mary Donaldson
52 years, Jan. 22

Johnny and Sharon Sherbert
54 years, Feb. 14

Gethsemane, Houston

Scott and Kendra Williams
51 years, Jan. 6

Herbert and Junelle Nittsche
70 years, Feb. 27



Robert and Carol Walker were married at Calvary Lutheran Church, Flint, Mich., on Dec. 27, 1952. In 1956, they moved to Midland, where they were members of Grace. Work transfers took them to Dallas and Shreveport, La., before moving to Conroe, where they have been faithful members of St. Mark since 1972.

2025 Gathering headed to New Orleans



Planning is underway for the next LCMS Youth Gathering, to be held July 19–23, 2025, in New Orleans. The theme will be “ENDURE” and is based around Heb. 12:1–3.

The Gathering office has been very busy preparing for the 2025 event. There is already a significant amount of information available on the Gathering website for adult leaders, volunteers, participants and their families. To see the latest news and information visit lcmsgathering.com



ENDURE
JULY 19–23, 2025; NEW ORLEANS, LA

or facebook.com/lcmsgathering.

The LCMS Youth Gathering provides thousands of youth and adults the opportunity to come together as a community of God’s people to learn more

about Jesus Christ, the Christian faith and their Lutheran identity. During

the five days of the Gathering, youth spend

time together in God’s Word, worship, service, and fellowship with others from across the Synod. This event is organized by LCMS Youth Ministry.

NATIONAL24 is July 21-24

The National Lutheran Youth Workers Conference (NATIONAL24) will be held July 21–24 in New Orleans.

NATIONAL24 is a standalone youth ministry practitioner conference, but also provides an opportunity to prepare for the 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering. The four-day conference is a great opportunity for:

- ▶ Adult leaders planning to take a group to New Orleans in 2025 and wanting to familiarize themselves with area hotels, facilities, and restaurants.
- ▶ First-time adult leaders desiring to connect with other new and seasoned adult leaders.
- ▶ Adult leaders looking for training and net-

works which support your service as a youth ministry practitioner.

- ▶ Youth (high school) leaders in congregations looking for an opportunity to sharpen their skills and meet other LCMS young leaders through YouthLead training.
- ▶ Young adults (ages 18–25) looking to serve their congregation and the opportunity to serve the community of New Orleans through a young-adult servant event.

Adult participants will receive a complimentary registration to the 2025 LCMS Youth Gathering in New Orleans.

Registration for NATIONAL24 will remain open until the event fills or on July. Visit lcmsgathering.com/national24 for more information.



Strengthening our early childhood leaders

By Dr. Bill Hinz
Director, School
Ministry



Our early childhood directors lead a significant ministry in sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to young children and their families.

The annual directors' retreat that was held Nov. 6-7 in San Antonio provided the opportunity for all to be refreshed and to continue their learning. This retreat provides them with resources to better serve the children and staff, and helps to enhance their early childhood programs.

The theme this year was "Living with Purpose" from Romans 8:28: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

These frontline missionaries share Bible stories, prayers and songs with the parents and families members. It is amazing to see

how the Holy Spirit blesses the proclamation of the Gospel to these children, and eventually through these children.

We were blessed to begin our retreat time with Rev. Michael Newman, Texas District president, leading us in devotions, along with Adam Countryman providing our worship music. Pastor Newman reminded us of the vital calling each of us have in sharing the love and forgiveness of Jesus, and helping our children and their families build their lives on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

Attendees were provided with the opportunity to hear from great presenters on topics such as discipline and staff development, along with updates on licensing and legal issues. There was also a session for all our new directors, who were joined by their mentors.

We encourage our directors to attend this important spiritual and professional growth opportunity. Directors are also invited to bring along an additional staff member.

One of the best investments an early childhood center can make is investing in professional growth opportunities for its leaders at all levels.

We thank God for this group of dedicated leaders. To Him be the glory.



Feb. 16-18
State Basketball Tournament, Tomball

Feb. 29-March 2
Early Childhood Educators Conference,
Lake Conroe, Montgomery

June 5:
MRR Workshop (Marketing, Recruitment
and Retention), Salem, Tomball

July 15-17
Administrators Conference, San Antonio

Oct. 14-15
All Church Workers Conference,
Redeemer, Austin



WITH HIS WOUNDS **WE ARE HEALED**



Pat Fick
CAN-DO
Director

Do you have any visible scars on your body? I have one on my forehead that was the result of running into a moving swing. My brother was enjoying the ride and I thought it looked fun, but at three years old I didn't realize that a body in motion remains in motion until it slams into something (or someone) that gets in the way!

I also have a scar from when my body thought it didn't need my appendix any longer. Since it had burst a week before the doctor figured out why I had a constant pain in my side. I'm really glad it's out of there!

Then there is the scar on my wrist, which came as the result of falling off my bike when it was standing still. I put my arm out to break my fall. Oops ... I broke my wrist instead and needed surgery to put things back together correctly.

My little dog Espi was recently bitten by a big dog that got loose while we were walking by. She now has a bunch of stitches as the result of the trauma she endured.

Some scars are not visible at all. They are the result of harsh words endured at the hands of someone who was supposed to love and encourage us. Abuse can take on many forms, but it always leaves scars, even painful, sometimes debilitating scars.

What do we do with our scars? Bring them to Jesus!

I Am They (a Christian band) has a song called "Scars." Here are a few of the lyrics:

Darkest water and deepest pain
I wouldn't trade it for anything
'Cause my brokenness brought me to you
And these wounds are a story you'll use
So I'm thankful for the scars
'Cause without them I wouldn't know your heart
And I know they'll always tell of who you are
So forever I am thankful for the scars

God can use our scars to mold and shape us into more compassionate servants, and that is a good thing!

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

JAMES 1:2-4

Jesus himself was no stranger to scars. Our forgiveness and salvation were won by His scars. Thank you Jesus!

He was despised and rejected[a] by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

ISAIAH 53:3-5

We are healed by Jesus' scars, and that is great motivation to help others know of His healing power!

Invest **TODAY** in an IRA

Did you know that Texas District Church Extension Fund (Texas District CEF) offers a great way to help investors reach their savings goals for retirement?



Raelyn Pracht
CEF Marketing
Specialist

Through IRAs, also known as Individual Retirement Arrangements, individuals can save for retirement with tax-free or tax-deferred growth in their savings.

Texas District CEF wants to be your savings place for IRAs!

IRAs are one of the many options individuals have to save money and be part of Texas District CEF's mission to be the preferred financial partner with ministries focused on multiplying followers of Jesus Christ.

We are proud to offer the following IRA products and services:

Traditional IRAs

Traditional IRAs help you to save for your retirement by allowing the earnings to grow tax deferred. Contributions may also be tax-deductible if you meet certain conditions. Distributions from the IRA are generally taxable at the time of withdrawal.



Photos: Getty Images

Roth IRAs

The Roth IRA advantage to saving for retirement is tax-free distributions if certain conditions are met. You must have earned income to open a Roth IRA. Contributions are not tax-deductible.

ESA (Coverdell Educational IRAs)

A Coverdell Education IRA can be used to make annual non-deductible contributions on behalf of a child under the age of 18.



The earnings will remain tax-deferred while in the ESA. When the child uses the ESA to pay for qualified education expenses, the contributions and earnings are distributed tax free.

SEP (Simplified Employee Pension Plan)

A SEP Plan allows employers to contribute to traditional (SEP-IRAs) set up for employees. A business of any size, even self-employed, can establish a SEP.

Simple Plans

Savings Incentive Match Plan for Employees (SIMPLE) allows employees and employers to contribute to traditional IRAs set up for employees. It is ideally suited as a start-up retirement savings plan for small employers not currently sponsoring a retirement plan.

As always, Texas District CEF encourages you to consult with your tax advisor before April 15.

For more information, visit texascef.org/iras. You can also call one of our Investors Services Representatives at 888-951-1233.

Committed to Healing and Hope:

Upbring New Life Celebrates 30 Years

A 30-year anniversary celebration at Upbring New Life Children's Center (New Life) last fall was a landmark event in the life of Upbring. Our staff and senior leaders attended the event which included lunch, a special cake, a plaque presentation by Chief Program Officer Krystale Bezio, and a tour of the children's center.

New Life is our home-like residential program for preteen and teenage girls who have experienced severe abuse or neglect. Through in-depth individual and group clinical therapy, these courageous girls rebuild their self-esteem and begin a journey to wholeness. On the premises are Trinity Charter Schools, dorms, a gymnasium, hair salon, chapel, a barn with live animals, and the furnished Humana House where visiting families can stay.

A highlight of the day's events was an address from Krystale, one of our senior leaders, to Upbring staffers, followed by a plaque presentation to Michael Holder, Executive Director of New Life.

"New Life is a place where potential meets opportunity, where the seeds of ambition are sewn and where the power of self-belief



Upbring staffers gather at New Life Children's Center on Oct. 26, 2023, to celebrate the program's 30th anniversary. The residential treatment center for girls 11-17 received its first placement on Oct. 14, 1993.

is nurtured," shared Krystale. "It has been a safe harbor for the most vulnerable among us, providing a nurturing environment where hope, growth and transformation flourish."

Michael celebrated his three-year anniversary as Executive Director of New Life the same week as the event. He said the work of New Life staff is "genuine and heartfelt. We help the children get to where they need to be and leave behind the trauma they had when coming in.

"Our excellent work has shown itself in the kids who have successfully graduated from our program, gone off to college, secured jobs, been reunited with their families, and have turned into some incredible success stories," continued Michael.

Your generosity has created a haven for girls at New Life, offering a safe space for healing from abuse and neglect. Discover more about the transformative power of your support at Upbring.org/New-Life and catch Krystale's heartfelt speech on Instagram at Upbring.org/Instagram.



Stay updated with the latest Upbring news and stories by following us today.

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An unforgettable summer

Spending a summer working at camp not only gives you the incredible opportunity to grow and be transformed, but you can also be a part of someone's transformation story. Regardless of the role in which you serve, your work helps to make a kingdom impact! **Kaitlin Davis**, who served on Camp Lone Star's 2023 summer staff, wrote the following on her experience.

From my first summer as a camper at age nine through my last at 18, I looked forward to the one week during summer when I could be surrounded by Jesus-loving people while learning more about Him and His love for me through Bible studies, skits and activities. By the end of each week, my heart would be on fire for God and I would have new friends who shared in a week unlike any other.

As I grew older, I sought to share my love for camp with my friends from school, bringing a new one each year because I believed that something that good needed to be shared with as many people as possible.

Eventually I graduated high school and my time as a camper came to an end. I had full intentions of returning to camp as a counselor that following summer, but life took a different direction. It wasn't until four years later and I had just graduated college when I finally dedicated my summer to teaching kids about Jesus at Camp Lone Star.

I was unsure of what I wanted to do after school, and after a tough couple of years, I needed to be surrounded by Jesus in a way that only camp could give: through dancing in the hay barn with the kids in the morning, creating and performing silly skits, leading Bible studies in a gazebo, reading bedtime stories



Kaitlin is pictured with campers she led last summer.

in the cabin, worshipping under the stars, getting dirty in the rumble ball pit, and sharing this experience with like-minded individuals.

Applying to work this past summer as a camp counselor, I felt wholly unprepared to teach kids about Jesus and lead them through the many activities camp offers each day. However, God taught me through the staff, and as I grew in experience I learned how to love on my kids and point them to Jesus in everything that we did. My confidence in creating and leading Bible studies grew and still continues to grow after the summer as I serve as an Elevate Intern at camp. My faith has also grown so much. There were lots of good times full of laughter and joy, but also hard times with plenty of tears. Both pruned and shaped my faith, pushing me to trust God no

matter what. It was truly a summer I will never forget and will forever treasure.

Camp Lone Star's summer staff is a vital part of our larger team that extends God's ministry to thousands of campers each summer. All summer long, they get to live out our mission of transforming lives through adventurous Christ-centered experiences, while building lasting friendships, creating enduring memories, and helping to strengthen the faith of campers, leaders, and fellow staff.

Interested in an experience like Kaitlin's? Know someone who would love a summer at camp? Visit camplonestar.org/summer-staff to learn more about the positions and to submit an application. Not sure if Camp Lone Star is the right fit? There are other camps across the country with more opportunities to serve! Visit nloma.org to learn more.



♦ CAMP ♦

LONE STAR

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info@camplonestar.org

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‘The greatest of these is love’

We think of love and affection in February — the month of Valentine’s Day. Christians are reminded of the limitless love God has for us, His children. We all should express love for each other and thankfulness for the love God gives us.

Scripture also underscores this message.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” **JOHN 15:12**

“And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.” **LUKE 6:31**

Let all that you do be done in love. **1 COR. 16:14**

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. **PROV. 17:17**

One of the most popular passages in the Bible is 1 Cor. 13:4-8, 13:

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

In our lives, however, we experience times of trouble. We see greed, regret, anger, stress and discontent among family members, friends and colleagues at work. These times allow the devil to cause us to sin, and we forget the love we are supposed to give each other. The example of God’s love that He sets for us is forgotten.

Lutheran Hour Ministries wants to help bring hope to you and your community during these difficult times with Project Connect booklets, available online and in print. These booklets provide comfort and contentment for those seeking help.

The booklets are available in English and Spanish at lhm.org/project-connect. Booklets are also available to be put on display at your church for congregations members to take.

Some examples are:

- *Journey Through Anxiety*
- *Journey Through the Rat Race*
- *Stressed, but Connected*
- *There is More to Anger*
- *Why do Bad Things Happen?*

Family issues are often the cause of stresses in our lives. Some helpful titles are:

- *For Better – For Worse*
- *Forgiveness is a Choice*
- *Everyone is a Gift*
- *Uncover the Lover Within*

Other sources of healing and comfort are available through the weekly broadcast of “The Lutheran Hour.” The sermons each week are given by Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler on over 1,600 radio stations in 60 countries around the world. The sermons are also available as a podcast.

Visit lutheranhour.org.



Mission Grant Spotlight



Pack it up and ship it out!

The past year has been such a blessing for the Houston branch of Orphan Grain Train (OGT). Thirty-three receiving days were held to collect donations, and seven packing days were held, in which the donations were sorted and packed by over 100 volunteers. OGT Houston currently operates out of two shipping containers that house over 1,300 boxes filled with clothing, blankets, shoes and hygiene kits ready to be transported to those in need around the world.

The mission of OGT is also carried out by delivering goods to multiple local charities. A number of those charities include Legacy Ranch (emergency foster shelter for children), Gonzales; Pasadena Community Ministries and Medical Bridges, Pasadena; Immanuel Lutheran

Church, Mercedes; Valley Baptist Retreat, Mission; LINC (street ministry), Austin; and Trinity Lutheran Church (homeless ministry), Houston. These efforts are possible because of the love and support from the LWML Texas District.

In 2022, OGT Houston was awarded a \$25,000 LWML Texas District mission grant which has funded the purchase of supplies, including boxes, tape and labels used during the receiving and packing events.

In addition, the mission grant has also funded freight to deliver the collected donations to the charities. The shipping containers and a storage unit were also made possible through the grant.

Your mite donations have made a big impact on OGT Houston. In

addition to the blessings of the mission grant, OGT Houston is also thankful for the outpouring of support from LWML groups throughout the Texas District. The generous donations of hand-crafted blankets, quilts and numerous clothing items have been a blessing to many people around the state. As a volunteer-led organization, OGT depends on the support of the community and they are extremely grateful for the blessings bestowed on them by the LWML Texas District.

Exciting things are coming in 2024! OGT Houston will begin construction of a Servant Center warehouse in Pasadena, which will allow for expanded efforts. Thank you to the LWML for your continued support and prayers!



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.



Here we are in February 2024!

January was indeed full of tasks and preparation for the LWML Presidents Assembly; the District Executive Committee and Board of Directors meetings for February; the Assembly of Leaders (AOL) presentations; and of course, the 43rd Biennial Convention of the LWML Texas District.



Frances Molitor
LWML Texas
District President

There are exciting times on the way! First, mark June 13-15 on your calendar and plan on attending the convention in Corpus Christi. Bring as many with you as possible. All are welcome. Registration and convention information has gone out in a special edition of *The Lone Star Connection* and is also available at lwmltxdist.org. Please contact your group or zone president if you need a paper copy of the convention information.



Mite offerings

must reach the financial secretary, Kathy Walther, by March 22 to be included in the current biennium totals.

Any mites received after that date will be used for the 2024–2026 biennium.

Mite offerings can be sent to:

LWML Texas District
Kathy Walther,
Financial Secretary
P.O. Box 124
Giddings, TX 78942

Scholarships available

Have you heard? The LWML Texas District Scholarship Endowment Fund Committee will award scholarships for the 2024–2025 school year for women studying to become full-time church workers. Eligibility requirements and the application can be found at lwmltxdist.org. From the menu bar, click “Committees,” choose “Scholarships” from the drop-down menu, and download the application packet.

For more information, contact Melissa Houchin, Scholarship Committee chairman, at scholarship@lwmltxdist.org. Completed packets must be sent to Melissa by March 31.

Now that you know, share this wonderful opportunity with a female member in your Texas District congregation who is studying to become a full-time LCMS professional church worker at and LCMS college or university.

But don’t stop your sharing there! Romans 10:14 reminds us:

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

As we enter into this season of Lent, keep sharing the joy of the birth of Jesus, and His perfect life; His death on the cross to pay for the sins of the world; His resurrection that first Easter morning declaring victory over sin, death and the devil; His ascension into heaven to prepare a place for us; and His promised return.

Let everyone hear the Good News!



Donna Hughes, a member of Bethlehem, Palestine, is a volunteer of volunteers. She has served on many LWML boards and committees and has held many offices.

She is currently serving as secretary of the church council, is on the Evangelism Committee, and holds the offices of archivist/historian for the East Texas Zone and secretary of the Willing Workers of Bethlehem. A Sunday school teacher for many years, Donna volunteers each week at the Montalba Library, delivers Meals on Wheels, helps restock food items to four Blessing Boxes around town, and serves

at the Stock Pot of Palestine, a soup kitchen for the needy.

Donna thinks LWML members are “the neatest bunch of ladies who with joy serve together.” The fellowship, reaching out with smiles, and words of encouragement are very special to her.

Donna was invited to join LWML in the early 1970s by loving and faithful ladies of Bethlehem. Helen Hulcy, Inez Dupont, Ruby Gruetzner, Gertrude Gerken and Adell Lawson were her early mentors.

According to Sharon Mills, East Texas Zone president, Donna “truly serves the Lord with gladness and joy. I am blessed to call her my friend.”

The LWML Texas District is blessed to call her the Heart of the LWML.

