

# TEXAS

APRIL 2024

M E S S E N G E R

The Texas District – Lutheran Church Missouri Synod

We want to share  
what God is  
doing in your church!  
Send in your news:  
[txmess@txlcms.org](mailto:txmess@txlcms.org)

## 15 HAPPENINGS AROUND TEXAS

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Soul Care for  
Ministry Workers

“ The Word spread and increased. Good News was getting around and transforming people from death to life, from sadness to joy, and from hopelessness to eternal confidence.

Rev. Michael Newman,  
President



# Broadcasting

During a recent early morning treadmill workout, I heard loud sounds coming from the treadmill next to me. The gentleman on the adjacent machine was watching the morning news on his phone. His propped-up device blared the latest commentary about world events over the din of the exercise equipment. While I wondered silently what happened to headphone etiquette, the entire population of the hotel workout room listened to his broadcast.

I think the man believed, as many of us do in our self-contained culture, that he was in his own bubble and other people really wouldn't notice his ear-splitting media. We're so accustomed to looking at our own screens, driving our own cars, conducting personal business online, and customizing our own experiences, we forget that we're not isolated from others. We're not living in a private bubble. In reality, we are always broadcasting.

Words, actions, social media posts and comments, jokes, priorities, language choices, expressions, habits: we're always broadcasting. The world is watching. What you share spreads: in your relationships, family, neighborhood, workplace, church, media platforms, and throughout the world.

This can be frightening. In our sin and selfishness, a dreadful prospect is that we broadcast what runs counter to God's Word and will. The Apostle Paul emphasized that, because we are mired in sin, an ugly broadcast results:

***"None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under***

***their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness..."***  
(Rom. 3:10-14)

But Jesus' death and resurrection changed this hopeless broadcast. As the risen Savior walked with two men on the road to Emmaus, the new broadcast was evident:

***"And [Jesus] said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"*** (Luke 24:17-18)

Acts chapter 6 notes: ***"And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem..."*** (vs. 7)

Broadcasting. The Word spread and increased. Good News was getting around and transforming people from death to life, from sadness to joy, and from hopelessness to eternal confidence. Instead of being mired in junk, people were being moved toward Jesus.

What about you and your congregation? How is your broadcast going? Easter is a season for a broadcast reset through the resurrection of Jesus, the Savior of the world. What message are people hearing from your life?

Get trained as an evangelist:  
[txlcms.org/evangelisttrainingseries](http://txlcms.org/evangelisttrainingseries)

**Rev. Michael W. Newman**  
President

## Question for reflection...

**Read 1 Peter 1:17 – 2:3.** According to these verses, how do Jesus' death and resurrection change your "broadcast" as an individual and as a congregation?

**Prayer starter:** Confess your careless or hurtful broadcasts to God. Ask for His forgiveness and for clarity about how your broadcast can be new and life-giving.





# CATALYST INNOVATION LAB

## EVERY DOLLAR

contributed to Texas Partners in Mission goes directly to support missions in the Texas District. Thank you for helping us reach our goal of \$400,000+ in 2023!

Our goal this year is:  
**\$500,000**

Please consider joining us as a mission partner and help more Texans hear the Gospel.

**GIVE NOW!**  
[txlcms.org/tpim](http://txlcms.org/tpim)



Thank you to our participants for pitching their innovative ideas for growing disciples and to our panelists:

1. Round Rock Food Fort  
King of Kings Lutheran Church, Round Rock TX
2. Front Yard Friday Extraordinary!  
ACTS Church Hays, Buda TX
3. Mobile Base Camp  
Camp Lone Star, La Grange TX
4. Grace FC  
Grace Lutheran Church, Arlington TX
5. Level Up  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Houston, TX



### 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](http://bit.ly/missionprayertx)

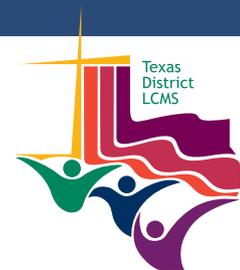


### GIFTS

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**



# Soul care and being with



## Rev. Ben Gonzales

Area B Mission Strategist  
District Discipleship Development

My father is an LCMS pastor, and even though he is retired he doesn't seem to be retired. He still faithfully serves a small group of Hispanics in New Orleans. I am humbled and encouraged when I see the faith of my father. He has been through quite a bit in ministry, which I have seen first-hand for most of my life.

My parents were serving in New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina hit the area. I was church planting in Missouri then, so I watched from afar. However, what I knew was that my parents waited until it was almost too late to evacuate. They lost one of their cars on the way out in a long line of cars trying to get out right before the storm landed. A few weeks afterward, I received a phone call from my father, and I could hear it in his voice. He had returned to New Orleans once they started letting people back in, and I could hear in his voice the devastation. He only made one request. Son, would you come and be with me? I knew this was one of those moments where nothing else mattered but for me to get on the road and to go and be with my father.

When I arrived, my dad did not look like my dad. It was apparent that the devastation was not just the property; it was deeper. Hurricane Katrina did not just hit land and a city, it hit people. It hit souls. I drove with my dad through 9th Ward and saw homes with water lines to the top. I saw homemade graves. I saw the paint on the homes where rescuers counted how many people were in the house and how many made it out. It hurt. I didn't just see it, I felt it. I knew right then and there that the best thing I could do for my father was just to simply be present with him.

Pictured are attendees of a gathering of DFW area Missional Leaders for Soul Care.



For those who are in ministry: pastors, evangelists, DCEs, deaconesses, missionaries, church planters, and teachers, we know the storms in ministry. And while they are not always Category 4-5 hurricanes, they are still storms. And it's not always the large storms that get us. It could be the small thunderstorms over an extended amount of time that can be devastating if we do not have the proper support. They are overwhelming when we believe that we are alone and there is no one there to just "be with" us. Everything is hard when you believe you are alone. I think of St Paul's words to the believers in Galatia: **"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."** (Gal. 6:2)

Currently in Area B of the Texas District, front line workers are seeing the need to just "be with." DFW Missional Leaders are seeing the need to "carry each other's burdens." While this is just beginning, we have experienced the joy and the encouragement of just "being with" each other every month to check in, listen, encourage, pray, and love one another through the storms of ministry. While I write this, I am encouraged that this is beginning in another area of the Texas District as well. It seems to me that the Holy Spirit is showing us the need to just "be with" each other.

Would you join me in praying for all those on the front lines that all would find a space and place where they can "be with?" Also, if you are interested in knowing more about creating spaces and places of "Soul Care" and "Being With," you can reach out to me at [bgonzales@txlcm.org](mailto:bgonzales@txlcm.org).

# Core values (Part one)



**Rev. J. Brown**

Legacy Giving Ambassador

For the next three months, Legacy Deo will highlight our three core values. Our first core value is:

### **Christ-centered Focus:**

Recognizing that God is the source of all earthly gifts, we love Him above all else, and honor Him with the stewardship of those gifts.

Over the years I've come to learn that, as a pastor, both the easiest and the hardest thing to do is to point to Jesus. As I reflect on my core values and who I have been created to be, it all keeps coming back to Christ. Unfortunately, my own arrogance and selfishness get in the way. It's a constant battle because my attitude is not easily one of humility and my first thoughts are not always about my Lord and my neighbor. It's hard to point to Jesus and shine the light of Christ when my sinfulness wants to do the opposite of Matt. 5:15-16.

Although this scripture shares that "No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a bushel basket," J. Brown is pretty good at extinguishing flames. I confess that I don't always remember to look to Jesus or point His way. I need constant reminding! Thankfully God's light shines in my darkness (John 1:5).

The Light of the World makes it easy to point to Jesus because God's brightness doesn't shine as a result of anything that has to do with J. Brown. God makes it easy because

it's always about Jesus and everything is about Jesus. When I share Christ with others, it takes the focus off of me and makes it all about the one who is all sufficient for me (and my neighbor) and victorious over sin.

God's radical generosity gives me everything that I could never achieve. His gift of light and love in my life is undeserved. That's what makes it radical. And because this Good News is for every human on the planet, it's easy to point to Jesus as the one that people need for a shiny life.

At Legacy Deo we start conversations with God's gifts. Remember, it's always about Jesus. Everything is about Jesus. Learning that in life is both easy and hard.



**2901 Caballo Ranch Road  
Bldg 4 / Unit C and D  
Cedar Park, Texas 78641**

**[legacydeo.com](http://legacydeo.com)**

**800-880-3733**



# Happenings Around Texas

**Submit your news!**

Send photos, stories, and newsletters for the Lutheran Witness to:

**txmess@txlcms.org**  
Texas Messenger  
1221 Satellite View  
Round Rock, TX 78665

Please be sure all photos sent electronically are in color and 300 dpi (high resolution). Also, send your news to us well in advance, if possible.

The Texas Messenger is now available online at **txlcms.org**.

## HOUSTON

### **Joy calls a new pastor**

With the diligent work of 20+ members of our Strategic Planning Committee for two months, followed by our nine member Call Committee working faithfully together with the Texas District for another eight months, a call for our new Spiritual Leader was recently accepted by Rev. Trey Sansom.

Upon the retiring of Rev. Mark Brunette, Pastor Sansom will take over as the pastor of Joy, Houston, effective April 1, 2024.

Pictured here on February 18, Pastor Sansom, (seated), is signing his Call Acceptance paperwork.

He is surrounded by members of the Call Committee: (L to R) Roy Shelton, Scott Garrett, Dan Vierling, Ben Herr (Committee Chairman), Kathi Hawn, Korrie Nichols, Evelyn Hale, and Bobby Reichle.

(Not pictured – Mike Wadzeck)

**ARLINGTON****Triple baptisms with great-grandparents' blessing**

Recently, Tommy and Delores Smith were delighted to see two of their great-grandchildren (Baker and Mackinzie Ingram) and their granddaughter's husband (Blake Ingram) all baptized on the same day at Grace. This was a delightful celebration of God's active work in the life of their family!

**HOUSTON****New Members at Our Savior**

20 new members were added to the family of faith at Our Savior, Houston on Feb. 11. They are all pictured below.

Top, L to R: David Layson, Lanny Moore, Bonnie Moore, Hunter Malson, Shirley Melcher, Susan Malson, Don Schmidt, Andy Ramsey, Michelle Ramsey

Bottom, L to R: Nathan Work, Stephanie Work, David Work (not pictured), Betty Whitten, Liv Haselbach, Emilia Spangler, Nicole Spangler, Caroline Spangler, Morgan Spangler, Corey Spangler, Tessa Ramsey



## HAPPENINGS

### ABILENE

#### Holy Baptism at Our Savior

Brux Ethan Tibbetts was baptized as a child of God on Jan. 7 at Our Savior, Abilene by Rev. LaVerne Janssen (now retired). Pictured below are parents Morgan and Brody Tibbetts, as well as big brother Ackley. Sponsors are Peyton and Jordan Schumann.



### LA GRANGE

#### A Celebration of the Baptism of Our Lord

The body of Christ at Mt. Calvary in La Grange was blessed to welcome new members Joshua & Apryle Gussmann and their children Joseph and Annabelle on the Lord's Day, Feb. 11. Joshua, Joseph and Annabelle were welcomed into the body of Christ through the Rite of Baptism. Joshua joined the body of Christ by the rite of adult confirmation. Apryle joined Mt. Calvary by transfer and affirmation of faith.

Pictured are son Joseph, Rev. Jason M. Kaspar, Joshua & Apryle Gussman, and their daughter Annabelle.



### WALBURG

#### New Members of Zion

Zion welcomed twelve new member families on March 3. Included in the photo at right are Revs. Kevin Hintze and Zach McIntosh.



**GAINESVILLE****Helping Hands Distribution Day**

Faith, Gainesville hosted their annual Helping Hands Distribution Day on Feb. 13. Helping Hands, a non-profit ministry of Faith Lutheran Church, is a community thrift store run entirely by volunteers. All proceeds are awarded to worthy community organizations at the end of every year and this year, 19 organizations were chosen to receive these funds.

The volunteers and representatives from every group chosen gathered for food, fellowship, and funds distribution. Those who received these gifts were several local non-profit businesses, several local volunteer fire departments, as well as their own Faith Lutheran youth group. The funds this past year totaled 57,000\$. Praise be to God!

Helping Hands volunteers pictured:

Back: Bob Haubold, Kari ODell, Barbara Wargo, Kathy Davis, Paula Holle, Stacey Rogers  
Front (sitting): John Morris, Galene Morris, Jerry Vernon, Michael Holle, Carol Haubold

**HOUSTON****New Members of Beautiful Savior Our Redeemer**

Two families joined the body of believers at Beautiful Savior Our Redeemer on Mar. 10.

Pictured are, from left, Dorothy, Robert, Laci, and Connie Lindberg; Bonnie and Curly Horn; Rev. Michael Strimple; and Luis, Yesenia and Thomas Melo.



## HAPPENINGS

### PLANO

#### St. Paul completes its 33rd production of Journey to Christmas

Journey to Christmas is a free event open to the community during the 2nd weekend in December. Many families attend Journey to Christmas as an annual tradition. Many identify Journey to Christmas at St. Paul as the beginning of their Christmas season and the celebration of the birth of Jesus.

A 22-year-old father of two attended Journey to Christmas again in 2023 and reminded one of St. Paul's leaders that 21 years ago he was in the final scene as the baby Jesus in the manger with Mary and Joseph.

Journey begins with a visit to an Interactive Bethlehem Village giving visitors a brief taste of many sights, sounds and smells of a Middle Eastern marketplace 2,000 years ago. Merchants of the day in Old Bethlehem demonstrate how merchandise and essentials of the day were made and sold to the public.

Upon leaving Bethlehem Village, guests enter the church sanctuary to hear traditional and contemporary Christmas songs by the St. Paul Praise Band.

Guests are then guided through six outdoor, live-action scenes depicting the major events leading to the birth of Jesus. The production is performed by congregation members and friends of St. Paul, dressed in costumes of that era. Live camels, sheep and a donkey add to the realistic presentation of the Gospel message. Christmas cookies, hot chocolate and hot cider are served in the fellowship hall at the end of the Journey. Hundreds of travelers of all ages complete this trip to the manger in Bethlehem each year.



### PLANO



#### Students medal in TCSAAL Regional Math Competition

Eight Faith Lutheran High School students participated in the TCSAAL Regional Math Competition on Feb. 12.

Congratulations to Nathan Mahrt, Grace Martin, Zak Mekonen, and Julia V. for placing second in the competition.

Congratulations also to Michael Bork, Jacob Cumming, Samuel Mahendiran, and Samuel Taylor for taking 5th place.

The second place team is pictured.

## PLANO

### FLS Gala and Fundraiser

Thanks to the support of many generous school, church and community families, corporate sponsors, dedicated volunteers, FLS faculty and staff and many others, the Feb. 24 Faith Lutheran School fundraising gala and auction - which was conducted at Heritage Ranch Country Club in McKinney Texas - raised more than \$33,000 for FLS.

The event included a live and silent auction, music from our high school choir quartet, a Mexican buffet dinner, fellowship and more.

Funds raised benefit Faith Lutheran School scholars in all grades preschool to grade 12.



## HOUSTON



### Ladies Group Helps Assemble 100 School Kits

The Ladies Group of Gethsemane (and others) helped to assemble 100 School Kits for Orphan Grain Train on Mar. 4. Pictured from L-R in back: Logan Rimes (left) and Nila Petersen (center). Pictured from L-R in front: Joyce Heckmann, Cathy Schreiber, Barbara Chase, Lisa Sitz, Schawna Briney, Viola Bade, Donna Ratcliffe, Alice Kaspar, Barbara McInnis, Sharon Arney, and Karen Leicht (Heckmann).

## TIES THAT BIND

### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

**Congratulations to the following couples, who are celebrating marriages of 50 years or more:**

Christ the King, Waxahachie  
**Chester and Sandra Juroska**  
50 years, April 12

Gethsemane, Houston  
**Mark and Jan Koslan**  
51 years, April 24

St. Paul, The Grove  
**Elmer and Carol Arldt**  
53 years, April 23  
**Orville and Janice Michalk**  
60 years, April 25



Chester and Sandra Juroska

## SAN ANTONIO



### **Revs. Neldo Schmidt and Dr. Ely Prieto celebrate 40 years of ministry**

On Feb. 18, King of King's Pastor Neldo Schmidt (middle) celebrated 40 years in the ministry since his graduation from Concordia Seminary, Brazil, along with fellow classmate and guest pastor, Dr. Ely Prieto (right), Associate Professor Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Both pastors were joined by their families and the congregation in observing their many years of faithful service to the Lord's Church.

# Early childhood front-line missionaries



**Dr. Bill Hinz**  
Director, School Ministry

On February 29, 2024 (yes, it's a leap year!), 460 Lutheran Early Childhood Educators gathered for a time to celebrate, learn and grow in the knowledge of our Calling in sharing

Jesus with the children and their families that God is blessing us with in our Early Childhood Centers.

This year's theme was "Be the Light" from Matthew 5:14. We celebrate that because the Victory won for us by Jesus Christ on the cross, and through HIS resurrection, HE empowers us to be Lights of His love wherever He has placed us.

Our Lutheran Early Childhood Centers are places where the whole child is embraced, not just academically but most importantly, spiritually and emotionally. Providing our young children a strong foundation to build upon in an environment where they experience the unconditional love of Jesus through nurturing and caring dedicated teachers.

Our children are taught through Bible story time, prayer and everyday activities. The seeds of faith are planted at an early age, that will grow as they mature into Christlike followers.

In 1998 the Early Childhood Education Council of the Texas District initiated a process to annually recognize an Outstanding Early Childhood Educator. Each year we are blessed to recognize some truly outstanding educators. Each year, we receive nominations for the Early Childhood Educator of the Year. This year's outstanding finalists were:

**September Aguirre**, Crown of Life Lutheran Preschool, San Antonio;

**Kristi Burrell**, Memorial Lutheran Preschool, Katy;

**Tammy O'Sick**, St. Paul Lutheran Preschool, Edna;

and **Miriam Velazquez**, Gethsemane Lutheran Preschool, Houston.

We share in the joy as this year's winner of the 2024 Early Childhood Educator of the Year award was presented to **September Aguirre**.

As we look to our Early Childhood teachers to be front-line missionaries, we want to thank them for sharing the love of Jesus daily with the precious children God has placed in their care. Thank you for Congregations that invest in children. Thank you for all your prayers in support of the ministries of our Lutheran Churches, Schools, and Early Childhood Centers to children of all ages.



L-R: Early Childhood Educator of the Year Finalists Kristi Burrell, Tammy O'Sick, September Aguirre (2024 Early Childhood Educator of the Year), Miriam Velazquez, and Dr. Bill Hinz, Director of School Ministry

# Cry out to God



**By Pat Fick**  
CAN-DO Director

My little Chiweenie, Regalito, has springs in his legs. He is constantly jumping up and down like a pogo stick! He loves to be where the action is, so if you are headed out the door, he thinks he should be headed out the door too!

Yesterday, in the midst of his frenzied frisky frolicking, his leash got stepped on and significantly shortened, catapulting him into the sidewalk at supersonic speed. He started wailing and crying. My heart sank and my mind raced, thinking, "Oh no, he is hurting. What if he has broken something, or seriously injured himself? It's the weekend, and the vet isn't even available. He sounds like he is in a lot of pain."

His cries reached my ears and my love for him was fierce. I picked him up to try to comfort him and assess the damage. Eventually he calmed down, stopped crying, and was able to walk away from the accident with no evident injuries. Thank you Lord!

This made me ponder how God must feel when we cry out to him during life's trials. There are so many places in God's Word that reference crying out to God.

**"Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!"** Ps. 130:1

**"I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God."** Ps. 69:3

**"O LORD, God of my salvation, I cry out day and night before you."** Ps. 88:1

**"With my voice I cry out to the LORD; with my voice I plead for mercy to the LORD."** Ps. 142:1

**"I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me."** Ps. 57:2

**"When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles."** Ps. 34:17

Pastor Sadhu Sundar Singh describes prayer as follows (from the book **Forgotten Power** by David Butts, p. 30-31):

**"The essence of prayer does not consist in asking God for something but in opening our hearts to God, in speaking with Him, and living with Him in perpetual communion. Prayer is continual abandonment to God. Prayer does not mean asking God for all kinds of things we want; it is rather the desire for God Himself, the only Giver of Life. Prayer is not asking, but union with God. Prayer is not a painful effort to gain from God help in the varying needs of our lives. Prayer is the desire to possess God Himself, the Source of all life. The true spirit of prayer does not consist in asking for blessings, but in receiving Him who is the Giver of all blessings, and in living a life of fellowship with Him."**

Let's cry out to God! He LOVES us and wants to give us himself!



Regalito

# Congratulations!



**By Raelyn Pracht**  
CEF Marketing Specialist

Please join us in praising God for the wonderful opportunity to give back to ministry. These congregations received a 2023 Loan Rebate Check. The Incentive Rebate Plan is just one of the benefits of partnering in ministry with Texas District CEF! Over \$650,000 in loan rebates were sent to 90 Texas LCMS congregations!



Amarillo, Trinity  
Arlington, Beautiful Savior  
Austin, Mount Olive  
Austin, Redeemer  
Austin, Redeeming Grace  
Azle, Good Shepherd  
Baytown, Redeemer  
Beaumont, St. John  
Boerne, Messiah  
Borger, Good Shepherd  
Bryan, Bethel  
Canton, Holy Cross  
Cibolo, Word of Life  
College Station, Holy Cross  
Commerce, Trinity  
Cypress, Lifebridge  
Cypress, St. John  
Dallas, Our Redeemer  
Dallas, St. Paul  
Dallas, Zion  
DeSoto, Cross of Christ  
Flower Mound, Lamb of God  
Fort Worth, Christ  
Friendswood, Hope  
Frisco, Waters Edge  
Georgetown, Faith  
Georgetown, Zion  
Granbury, Our Savior  
Gun Barrel City, St. Peter  
Haslet, Holy Shepherd

Houston, Beautiful Savior  
Houston, Christ Memorial  
Houston, Epiphany  
Houston, Family of Faith  
Houston, Gloria Dei  
Houston, Holy Cross  
Houston, Living Water  
Houston, San Pedro  
Houston, St Mark  
Houston, St. Andrew  
Houston, Trinity  
Humble, Lamb of God  
Huntsville, Faith  
Hurst, Peace  
Katy, Crossroads  
Katy, Memorial  
Keller, Messiah  
Kerrville, Hosanna  
Kilgore, Pilgrim  
Killeen, Grace  
La Grange, LOMT  
Lake Jackson, St. Mark  
Lakeway, ACTS  
Lubbock, Hope  
Mansfield, St. John  
Marble Falls, Hope  
McAllen, St. Paul  
Midland, Grace  
Midland, Holy Cross  
New Braunfels, Cross

Newark, Victory in Christ  
Northlake, St. Peter  
Odessa, Redeemer  
Orange, Grace  
Pasadena, Zion  
Pflugerville, Point of Grace  
Plainview, St. Paul  
Plano, Faith  
Plano, Messiah  
Rockwall, Our Savior  
San Antonio, Crown of Life  
San Antonio, Mount Olive  
San Antonio, Mount Calvary  
San Antonio, Shepherd of the Hills  
San Antonio, St. Paul  
Smithville, Grace  
Spring, Trinity  
Stephenville, Faith  
Sugar Land, Faith  
Sugar Land, Fishers of Men  
Sweeny, St. Luke  
Taylor, Trinity  
Gatesville, St. Paul  
The Woodlands, Living Word  
Thorndale, St. Paul  
Tomball, Salem  
Tomball, Zion  
Vernon, Zion  
Waco, Peace  
Weatherford, Trinity

## A Wedding Gift of a Different Kind

Not all wedding gifts are a KitchenAid mixer, fine china or a luxury sheet set. Nicole and Ashton Griffith of Houston asked guests of their March 30 wedding to donate to their preferred charities, including Upbring.

Nicole, 33, and Ashton, 35, have been together since 2017 and have all the home furnishings they need. The idea for a charity wedding registry stemmed from a wedding the couple attended. On the registry was an opportunity to donate to a Houston hospital that served children.

"I thought that was special," shared Nicole. "That inspired us to look for philanthropies that were meaningful in the context of the wedding. Because our parents have been so generous in their wedding gifts to us, we wanted to capture something special to them."

The newlyweds each chose a nonprofit to contribute to in honor of their parents. Ashton selected Upbring because his parents have fostered 21 children, including six with Upbring Foster In Texas (FIT) beginning in 2018. Donations to Upbring will go to support our FIT program in San Antonio, since Ashton's parents live in Boerne, just west of the Alamo City.



Ashton and Nicole Griffith asked guests of their March 30 wedding to support Upbring Foster In Texas (FIT) by donating via the couple's charity wedding registry.

For her charity, Nicole chose BlinkNow, which works to improve the wellbeing of orphans and other at-risk children in Nepal, one of the world's poorest countries. Nicole, her mom, and her sisters are regular donors.

Upbring designed a special donation page for the Griffiths, in honor of their support. Wedding guests could go to the couple's wedding website and click on the "Registry" tab to learn more and give to both charities. Beneath "Upbring" read, "This agency is extra special to us as Braden's parents, Sandy and David, are registered fosters through the Upbring agency."

Nicole and Ashton exchanged vows in New Orleans, where they got engaged.

Upbring is grateful to people like Nicole and Ashton who help bring awareness about our mission and provide lifechanging support to the children and families across Texas. For more information on becoming an Upbring partner, visit [Upbring.org/Get-Involved](https://Upbring.org/Get-Involved).

*\*Nicole and Ashton's story is true, but we used pseudonyms to protect their privacy.*

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

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[i UpbringOrg](https://www.instagram.com/UpbringOrg)

# Camperships: Give the gift of camp!

One of the most meaningful ways that you can support the ministry of Camp Lone Star is by donating to our Campership Fund. Each year, over \$10,000 in scholarships are given to help individuals come to Camp who wouldn't be able to otherwise afford it. Therefore, when you designate your contribution towards our Campership Fund, you are directly impacting families and children by giving them the gift of Camp – ultimately giving them the opportunity to hear about and receive the greatest gift of all, **“eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** (Rom. 6:23)

We have awarded over \$8,000 in Camperships already this year, impacting more than 30 families. And with your help, we will be able to give even more kids the chance to spend a week at camp this summer!

***“I am a single mom and I make enough for my bills, but not much else. I went to Camp Lone Star every summer as a kid and I would love for my kids to have the same fun, faith, and friendship building experiences.”*** - 2024 Campership Recipient

If you would like to give the gift of camp to a child this summer, visit [camplonestar.org/support-us](https://camplonestar.org/support-us) and designate your donation to our Campership Fund.

Additionally, if your family or a family you know might need some additional help as we approach Summer 2024, please fill out the Campership Application form on our website at <https://camplonestar.org/camperships-and-discounts>. On that page, you will also find information about other available discounts.

Our prayer is that we can help bring any and every child to camp and not let finances be a burden to your family. Thank you in advance to those of you who have donated to our Campership Fund. It is because of you that we can help more children go to Camp and be transformed through adventurous Christ-centered experiences — together we are impacting more lives for generations to come!



# Our Easter triumph

**“Christ our Lord has risen – he is risen indeed! Hallelujah!”**

That is the special message Christians can give to people all over the world after our Easter celebrations. Our savior has risen from the grave and conquered death – believers can also celebrate this glorious message and look forward to eternal life with Him in heaven.

At the tomb on the day of resurrection the angel said to the women: **“Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee, there you will see him.”** (Matt. 28:6-8)

Jesus said: **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live”** (John 11:25). He follows by saying: **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father ex-**

**cept through me.”** (John 14:6).

These are the promises Jesus made to us and the lessons we review annually at the Easter celebrations. Belief in our Christ Jesus is the only way we can hope for salvation and full release from death and the power of the devil. The Easter Triumph we celebrate is the life eternal with Him in heaven.

As Christians, we should celebrate this event every day and be bold in telling others. Do you?

Lutheran Hour Ministries, its staff and the vast number of volunteers worldwide work daily to relay these messages to all that would hear. They set the example for us by following the Great Commission from God himself.

Some recent statistics from LHM:

LHM reaches 195M+ people with the Gospel globally each week.

From the activity, there are over 1.6M annual responses to LHM outreach efforts.

LHM has equipped 360,000+ individuals to share their faith more effectively.

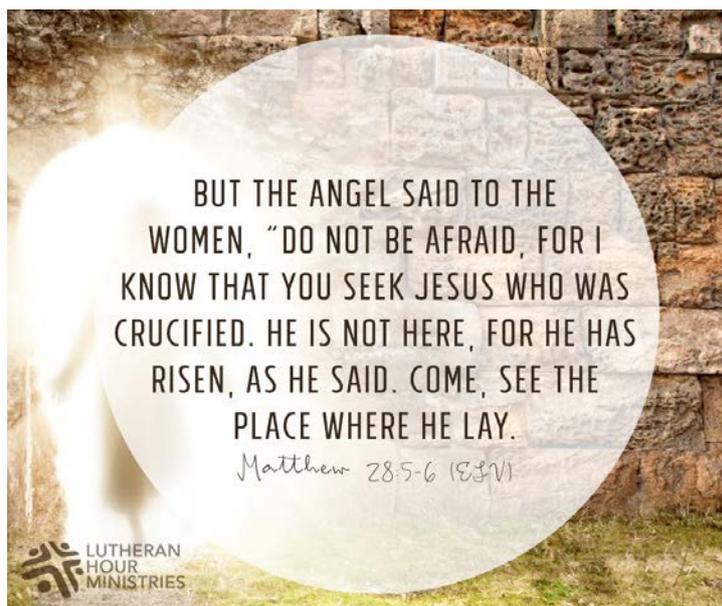
LHM has referred over a quarter of a million people to churches and Christian communities.

Worldwide, there are 60+ countries reached by the LHM ministry. Some of the work is reaching those who otherwise cannot get published materials or Bibles prohibited by local law.

There are 1,800+ radio stations worldwide currently airing the flagship of LHM – The Lutheran Hour.

The work that LHM is blessed to do is only possible because of God's grace and the tens of thousands of passionate lay members and volunteers who partner with the ministry every day.

Please continue to remember these diligent people in your prayers.



# Showing our love to others

The 2024 LWML Texas District Convention Host Committee selected four wonderful organizations to receive our Gifts from the Heart at the convention in June.

Rainbow Rooms are 24/7 resource centers usually located within local Child Protective Services (CPS) offices. For their safety, many times children are quickly removed from their homes and often leave with only the clothes on their back. In the Rainbow Room, CPS caseworkers can get supplies for children who are victims of abuse or neglect — clothing, hygiene items, school supplies, diapers, and much more. Every item in a Rainbow Room is donated or purchased with monetary donations. Rainbow Rooms provide a ray of hope in a child's life. The Rainbow Rooms that are located throughout our four hosting zones will receive your donations of full-size body wash, shampoo, and toothpaste.

Upbring has residential treatment

programs for girls and home-like shelters for unaccompanied children to meet their physical and emotional needs in their toughest times. Your donations of standard twin sheet sets (fitted, flat, and pillowcase) and matching towel sets (bath, hand, and face cloth) will be given to Bokenkamp Children's Center in Corpus Christi and New Life Children's Center in Canyon Lake. Please, no twin XL size sheets and no white color items.

New Life Refuge Ministries in Corpus Christi provides a REFUGE of hope and healing for child survivors of sex trafficking. Children come hastily with no provisions, and the Refuge helps to provide personal items. The Refuge offers specialized, long-term, therapeutic care where girls can heal and process through their trauma. They provide a home-like setting with normal daily activities including taking the girls to church. Gift cards to Walmart and Amazon are being

collected for them, as their storage space is limited, which allows this organization to purchase items as they are needed.

The Pregnancy Center of the Coastal Bend offers free and confidential services to women and men facing an unplanned pregnancy. This pro-life non-profit offers free pregnancy testing, ultrasounds, counseling, and a parenting program. They have seen a 35% increase in their parenting program since the overturning of Roe v. Wade. Their parenting classes follow a Learn to Earn model. Your donation of gift cards from Walmart, Target, and HEB will help them purchase diapers, wipes, and other needs for parents in this program who have chosen life for their babies.

Sincerely,

Judy Kunkel  
2024 Convention Host Committee  
Chairman

## Anchors Away!

This summer the LWML Texas District Convention in Corpus Christi is the place to be for teen girls (ages 12–17). The Teen Committee headed up by Kristine Wendorf has a fun-filled and servant-minded experience planned just for them! Bring your teen to Corpus Christi with you June 13–15, 2024. Teens will get to know one another with fun, crafts, and games along with being in God's Word with Bible studies and devotions. The teens will participate in on-site service projects where they will work side by side with women of all ages as we serve together. The girls will get to meet the Young Woman Representatives and will discover more about LWML with activities geared toward their age group and interests.

The Teen Committee has lots of fun planned! Remember to bring your swimsuit because you will have two opportunities to cool off! Thursday you will get your feet wet at a splash park and Friday you will spend 2 hours of fun at the hotel pool (indoor/outdoor pool and ping pong table)! The teen program will begin at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, June 13. Teens pay a special convention registration rate of \$100 (or \$120 if submitted after May 7, 2024) which includes a T-shirt, snacks, Friday and Saturday breakfast, Thursday lunch, and Friday dinner. Teens should purchase Friday's boxed lunch option when registering and bring money for any purchase they plan to make at the LWML store. An adult mentor/leader must attend the convention for every 1–4 girls registered. Join us for an awesome time of learning, serving, and fellowship!

# Happy Birthday, Mission Inreach Endowment!

This biennium marks the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Mission Inreach Endowment. It was established at the 1998 LWML Texas District Convention in Corpus Christi in partnership with Lutheran Foundation of Texas (now Legacy Deo). Annual distributions are used for spiritual enrichment, member development and leadership training opportunities for members of the LWML Texas District as decided by the Executive Committee.

Since its inception, funds received from the Mission Inreach Endowment have provided leadership materials and training opportunities for our district and zone leaders. This has helped them lead and serve our members better.

There is a fabulous Bible study written by former President, Eloise Kuhlmann, on this very topic. It is located at [lwmltxdist.org/endowments-resources](http://lwmltxdist.org/endowments-resources), our website's Endowment Resource page. You are encouraged to use it personally and with your groups. While you are there, be sure and take a look at the other resources available to you.

Hear what one donor had to say:

*"I thought making a planned gift to LWML Texas District would be really difficult but I was wrong. I talked with Legacy Deo's Ambassador, Debbie Curry, who provided me with lots of ways to think about giving a planned gift. After prayerful consideration, I chose to make the Mission Inreach Endowment the beneficiary of an account I opened with Texas District Church Extension Fund using the automatic giving option to fund this account. I have personally benefitted from the training opportunities this endowment helped fund. I wanted to be sure there would continue to be opportunities for other servant leaders to be empowered to lead as God calls. My only regret is that I did not do it sooner!"*

What a fantastic way to celebrate this momentous occasion by creating a planned gift to this endowment! If you would like to join in making a planned gift to this or our other endowments, details may be found at [lwmltxdist.org/endowments](http://lwmltxdist.org/endowments).

## TABLE TALK

The Host Committee for the 2024 LWML Texas District Convention is busy preparing for the purple invasion planned for June 13–15 in Corpus Christi Texas! If you have attended before, I am sure the feeling of the LWML camaraderie and love just surrounded you. If you've never experienced that feeling of warmth, or it's been a while, I encourage you to make plans to attend. All the information you need is on the website, [lwmltxdist.org/lwml-texas-district-conventions](http://lwmltxdist.org/lwml-texas-district-conventions). There you will find information on our speakers, events, and hotel lodging. You can even register right there on the website. Easy peasy!

I am looking so forward to being able to share this experience with our members and guests as we hear and learn about what it means to Hold Fast – Christ is Our Anchor.

See you there!



**Frances Molitor**  
LWML Texas  
District President

## "I am the HEART of the LWML"

Oranell Dunk became interested in LWML when she would drive her mother-in-law to the meetings and was drawn to the Bible studies and learning more about God's Word. For over 25 years, she has been an active member of the Holy Cross Ladies Aid in Warda.

A regular attendee at conventions, rallies, and workshops, Oranell has served her society and zone in many different capacities and offices. Specifically, she is instrumental in keeping the bank accounts and signature cards updated. She is currently Vice President of Christian Care for the Post Oak Zone. You can trust her to take charge of projects and get them accomplished. She enjoys spending her free time in various Bible studies.

Oranell loves the fellowship of women in LWML, she loves Bible studies, and she loves to serve the Lord while being part of a cheerful group. According to Post Oak Zone President Amanda Hankemeier, "Oranell is a dedicated, friendly, Christian woman. She loves helping others and believes that without God, we can do nothing."

