

# TEXAS

OCTOBER 2024

## M E S S E N G E R

The Texas District • Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

THE WAY,  
AND  
THE TRUTH,  
AND  
THE LIFE.

NO ONE COMES  
to the FATHER EXCEPT  
THROUGH ME.

JOHN 14:6

“Today in Texas we rejoice in African, Asian, Latino, European, and American outward forms and inner piety in our LCMS family. This is not a risk to Lutheran identity; it is the expression of true Lutheran identity.

Rev. Michael Newman,  
President

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

“God is also calling you and I to preach the Word wherever we go, bringing Jesus to our neighborhoods, workplaces, schools and even our homes.”

Deaconess Noemi Guerra

# What does it mean to be Lutheran?

**Part III (For the first two installments, please see the August and September issues.)**

Over the past two months, we've been asking what it means to be Lutheran, taking a look at Hermann Sasse's book, **Here We Stand**. His third question asks if Lutheranism is focused on the veneration of Martin Luther and a celebration of European/German ethnic heritage.

Sasse's answer was an emphatic "No." In fact, Sasse added, "It is only when the Evangelical Lutheran Church is in a manifest state of decline that such an extravagant veneration of Luther asserts itself." (34)

Sasse understood that Lutheran identity meant Gospel identity — a tenacious and bold declaration of Scripture alone, faith alone and grace alone. Even as the Lutheran church in Germany was under pressure in 1938 to veer from its Gospel focus, Sasse proclaimed, "Here we stand" — not on morality, not on traditions, not on human opinions, not on Luther and not on German ethnicity, but only on the free gift of the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake through faith.

Sasse noted that in the Reformation era, "men did not have the slightest interest in **Luther's teachings** as such; their whole interest was in **the teaching of the Gospel**. Luther's teaching was not accepted because it came from him, but because it agreed with the Gospel." (79)

And what about a Germanic/European ethos? Sasse — a German by birth — spoke humbly about the true nature of the Lutheran church: "The Lutheran Reformation was not trying to establish a German Christianity; it was not interested in a German church...it was interested in the one, the true, the only church of Christ." "Never and

nowhere does the Lutheran Church inquire after what is German, but it inquires after what is true—the saving truth of God for all." (58)

That is our Lutheran identity. Our goal is not to laud Martin Luther or to preserve western customs. The unique beauty of Lutheranism is that it transcends human debates and desires, lifting high the cross of Jesus Christ to the world.

Sasse noted, "[The Lutheran Reformation] had a very real appreciation for the fact that prominent characteristics of each nation express themselves in the life of the church all the way from outward forms to inner piety." (58)

Today in Texas we rejoice in African, Asian, Latino, European and American outward forms and inner piety in our LCMS family. This is not a risk to Lutheran identity; it is the expression of true Lutheran identity. As Sasse emphasized, "There is only one Gospel for all nations, just as there is only one Christ for all men." (59)

In this Reformation month, it is important to remember that our identity in Christ is what Lutherans stand upon. Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone, Christ alone. This is what the world needs to hear from us and see in us. This love, this self-sacrifice, this attentiveness to how the Gospel meets our generation — this is where we stand.

**Text "join" and your email address to 512-638-8458 to become a mission prayer partner.**

**Rev. Michael W. Newman**  
**President**



## Questions for reflection...

**Read Acts 10:27-43.** What did Peter learn? How does his insight help you and your congregation understand your mission?

**Prayer starter:** Ask Jesus to help you share the Gospel with a new group of people in your community.



*They arrived seeking escape from poverty, eager to learn ESL. Prince of Peace, deeply engaged in the community, recognized this need and built ESL classes with church volunteers. Over time, they discovered that there was something else that they could offer, and it was the spiritual food they needed. They never realized they needed that.*

*- Vicar Jaime Gonzales, Executive Director of Expansión Mission Network in Dallas*



# EVERY DOLLAR

contributed to  
**Texas Partners in Mission**  
 goes directly to  
 support missions in  
 the Texas District.

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)



## 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

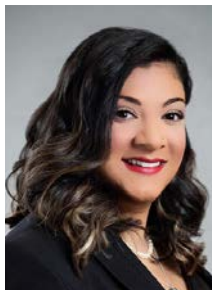
No gift to Texas Partners in Mission is too small. We need gifts to reach the thousands of people in Texas with the life-saving Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Expansión Mission Network exists because of the generous gifts to Texas Partners in Mission. God raised up a passionate, committed missionary who can reach the Hispanic community. Gifts to the Texas District mission partnership fuel that growth and Spirit-led expansion so that both young and old from all cultures and backgrounds receive the blessings of Jesus.

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



# Wherever you go



## Deaconess Noemi Guerra

Districtwide Evangelist  
Development Ministry Leader

*“Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.”*

*(Acts 8:4 NIV)*

We see here the aftermath of Stephen’s martyrdom. Stephen, one of the early deacons in the church, faced death by stoning because of his fearless witness for Jesus. This tragedy sparked intense persecution against the church in Jerusalem, forcing many believers to scatter to the regions of Judea and Samaria while the apostles remained in Jerusalem.

What’s amazing is how these early Christians responded to the persecution. Instead of being silenced, these lay people saw it as an opportunity to spread their faith. They preached the Word wherever they went, and it was a crucial turning point in the expansion of the Christian church.

These lay Christians became missionaries in their new locations, spreading the message of Jesus wherever they went. And their example of preaching “wherever they went” is a powerful reminder for us today.

God is also calling you and I to preach the Word wherever we go, bringing Jesus to our neighborhoods, workplaces, schools and even our homes. To talk about Jesus in everyday conversations and through our actions. To be a witness for Christ wherever we go.

In response to this call, an LCMS Task Force has emphasized the need for renewed dedication to lay training and the role of evangelists within our church. The Texas District is embracing this call, working to equip baptized believers to preach the Word wherever we go.



The 2013 Resolution 4-06A Task Force Report made two key recommendations:

**Recommendation 7:** District lay training programs are to be commended with thanksgiving for the many willing lay servants who seek further theological education and desire to serve in various capacities in their congregations. The task force recommends 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 8:** In conjunction with recommendation 7, the task force recommends that congregations and districts be encouraged to identify individuals for special training in and attention to evangelism. As individuals are identified, we encourage congregations and districts to facilitate their training both through existing Synod efforts and programs and in special, intensive training through district lay programs.

In the Texas District, we have made available a district-wide lay training program called Evangelist Training for the many willing lay servants who seek further theological education and desire to serve in various capacities, preaching the Word wherever we go, with an emphasis “on the role of evangelist and the task of outreach in the increasingly diverse and challenging world of the U.S.”

We are in the process of identifying individuals for this special training. Is God calling **you** to be an evangelist, to share Jesus wherever you go?

For more information about the Texas District Evangelist Training Ministry, visit [txlcms.org/evangelisttrainingseries](http://txlcms.org/evangelisttrainingseries) or scan the QR code.



**We equip everyday Christians to share the Gospel and launch new faith communities in everyday places and spaces.**

# Use your key!



## Dayna Dinan

Administrative/Marketing  
Coordinator

I recently heard a story about a family that had a piece of property they would visit periodically on weekends. This property held many special memories for the family, and they would spend

hours fishing, playing games and sharing stories of sweet family memories there. The entire extended family would use this property as a getaway for many years.

The person sharing this story with me said: "It's kind of funny; the gate to the property was always closed, but the family all knew that the key to the gate was on a nail just on the other side of the gate." It struck me as profound. Anyone that wanted access could have had it — you just needed to know where the key was!

How many times in our lives have we encountered situations in which the solution or access was right in front of us, yet we didn't recognize it immediately? How often do we overlook simple opportunities or answers because we're focused on perceived barriers or complexities?

The story of the family's property gate reflects a broader truth about life: sometimes, what we seek is within reach, but it requires awareness, understanding and, sometimes, a shift in perspective to realize it. Just as the key to the gate was available to anyone who knew where to look, solutions to many of life's challenges might be simpler and more accessible than we initially believe. It reminds us to stay open-minded, observant and willing to explore different angles when facing obstacles or seeking opportunities in our journey.

At Legacy Deo, we understand that navigating financial and stewardship matters can sometimes

seem daunting. However, like the key to the gate in the story, we strive to be the access point for clarity and guidance. Our goal is to serve you in a manner that honors your values and glorifies God, ensuring that your interactions with us are straightforward and purposeful.

We are here to help you unlock the possibilities and opportunities that align with your financial and spiritual goals. By trusting in our expertise and commitment to integrity, we aim to simplify the process and empower you to make informed decisions that reflect your values and aspirations.

Give us a call! Let us help you unlock your legacy!



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Deo  
God's Gifts.  
Your Legacy.

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

[legacydeo.org](http://legacydeo.org)

800-880-3733



**McALLEN**

On Palm Sunday weekend, the family of faith at St. Paul celebrated the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Eleven children and adults from the church, school and Early Learning Center were baptized. They are pictured above with their families.

Everyone was encouraged to remember their Baptism and God's gifts of faith, forgiveness and the Holy Spirit. All were given a sticker that said, "Baptized, Beloved Child of God."

# 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 (think three to four months), if possible.

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



**DEVINE**

**Baptisms and new members at Divine Savior**

The saints of Divine Savior welcomed Dale and Marilyn Rogers (left, pictured with Rev. Randall Wehmeyer) into their fellowship on May 5; as well as Miguel and Hannah Dwyer and Colby Caldwell on June 23 (below).

And on Aug. 25 (below, left), they were blessed to welcome Kobe Talamantez, Joe Talamantez and Tricia Martin. Kobe was received by Confirmation, Joe by Holy Baptism and Confirmation, and Tricia by Profession of Faith.



**SUGAR LAND**

**Baptism at Fishers of Men**

The believers of Fishers of Men rejoiced to welcome Sivam and Suhanthy Mahasivam into the church of Christ through the waters of Holy Baptism on May 4. Pictured are, from left, Katie Borski (friend), Bernice Mitchell (sponsor), Ebenezar Kurapati (elder), Rev. Chuck Ridley (Fishers of Men senior pastor), and Sivam and Suhanthy.



## HAPPENINGS

### AUSTIN

#### Two baptisms on June 30!

In June, Beautiful Savior received two new saints through the waters of Holy Baptism: Sixto Kolton Acosta IV and Nolan Jack Kleiber. Kolton is pictured at right with his parents and sister, and Rev. Jonathan Bontke, Beautiful Savior pastor. Below, Nolan is pictured with his great-grandfather, Rev. MJ Meyer, emeritus, who baptized Nolan, and his parents and Pastor Bontke.



### THE GROVE

#### Holy Baptism

On Aug. 25, Christian Education Sunday at St. Paul, Beckham James Penny began his life of education and growing in the Christian faith as he was welcomed into the family of God through the water and Word of Holy Baptism. Pictured are, from left, Rev. John Heckmann (St. Paul pastor); Manuel and Amy Velasquez (sponsors); Abby and Garrett Penny (parents, with Beckham); and Rebekah and Jeremy Munz (sponsors).





**MERCEDES**

**New members at Immanuel**

Doug and Cindy Helmrick, the Conner family and the Estevanes family were all recently received as members of Immanuel, Mercedes, by Profession of Faith, Confirmation and Baptism.

Pictured is the Estevanes family with Rev. Ed Weber. From left, Edward Cantu (father of Ryan); Isela Villaseñor and Jason Villaseñor (godparents of Ryan); Ryan Cantu (baptized and first communion); Pastor Weber; Reed Estevanes, RJ Estevanes (profession of faith), Laura Estevanes (profession of faith), Raegan Estevanes (baptized); Victoria Castaneda and Andrew Castaneda (godparents of Raegan).



The Conner family was received by Profession of Faith. From left, David and Celina and their children, Jesse, Clay and Alyssa, are pictured with Pastor Weber.

Doug and Cindy Helmrick were received into membership by Profession of Faith.



## HAPPENINGS

### TOMBALL

#### Confirmation 2024

On June 30, two catechumens were confirmed in the faith! Lillian Shashack and Sam Huberty were welcomed to the Lord's table at Zion and the congregation prays that they shall continue to grow and remain steadfast in this faith. The Rite of Confirmation was conducted by Rev. Lee Hopf, senior pastor of Trinity-Klein, Spring.



### PAMPA

#### Confirmands make confession of faith at Zion

On May 19, Laura Gullett and Trinity Hoover publicly confessed their faith, with Rev. Michael Erickson leading them in their studies in the Word of God and His Sacraments. Praise to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit!

### GROVES

#### Confirmed at Peace

The confirmation class of 2024 of Peace is pictured. The congregation currently has a vacancy, so the members were thankful for Eileen Schaefer, who taught the youth from Luther's Small Catechism.

Rev. Randy Ledbetter (right) is serving as a pulpit supply pastor and was overjoyed for these youngsters.



**HILLSBORO****Confirmation at Immanuel**

On June 23, Christ, Hillsboro, joyfully welcomed three youth into communicant membership through their public confession of faith in the Rite of Confirmation.

Pictured are, from left, Rev. Michael Nemece, Jovi Cox, Paisley Puryear and Kate Pederson.

**BOERNE****Farewell to Intentional Interim Rev. Lofgren and Installation of Rev. Vanderbush**

On June 16, Messiah wished Intentional Interim Pastor Rev. Dr. Richard Lofgren farewell and Godspeed as he handed over the care of the congregation to Rev. Neil Vanderbush. As their interim pastor, Rev. Lofgren offered Messiah the stability the congregation needed, and now the members are ready to move forward. Praise be to God!

Pictured are, from left (front row) Revs. Roger Hotopp, Grace, Seguin; Neil Vanderbush; Mark Barz, Crown of Life, San Antonio; (back row) Steve Wagner, emeritus; Carlos Boerger, emeritus; Dr. Richard Lofgren, emeritus; Rick Pfaff, emeritus; and Philip Doublestein, Texas District missionary pastor, The Church at Brooks, San Antonio.

Also present for the service but not pictured is Rev. Dr. Brian Kachelmeier, Crown of Life, San Antonio.



## HAPPENINGS

### CLEVELAND

#### New members

On May 12, the members of Good Shepherd received Johnny and Sheryl Abke into their congregation by affirmation of faith. Pictured are, from left, Rev. Victor Frank; Sheryl and Johnny Abke with their granddaughter, Sydney Renee Abke; and Dr. Lou Jander.



### DUMAS

#### Confirmands make confession of faith

Confirmed at St. John on July 7 were Katelyn Matchett and Garrett Fortson. They are pictured with Rev. Troy Scroggins, St. John pastor.

### PLANO

#### New senior pastor

Rev. Mark Taylor was installed as senior pastor of Faith on Aug. 3. Pastor Taylor has served as Faith associate pastor for the last 12 years.

Pictured are, from left (front row) Revs. Kurt Ulmer, Michael Newman, Ryan Ogradowicz, Mark Taylor, Dr. Phil Schielke, Patrick Erickson, Dr. Solomon Yadessa; (back row) Scott Sundbye, Dr. Jayson Galler, Adam Douthwaite, John De Young, Richard Kurth, Mark De Young and Tab Ottmers.



**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!**

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

Gethsemane, Houston  
**Kenneth and Alice Kasper**  
 50 years, Aug. 11

**Milton and Viola Bade**  
 58 years, Aug. 14

**George and Clarice Aschenbeck**  
 57 years, Aug. 20

**Chuck and Beverly Greeney**  
 61 years, Aug. 25

**Ernie and Isabell Pali**  
 57 years, Sept. 15

**Lonnie and Kathy Angst**  
 61 years, Sept. 15

**Roy and Sharon Albe**  
 66 years, Sept. 21

**Bill and Sue Binford**  
 72 years, Oct. 12

**Jim and Maria Keeling**  
 52 years, Oct. 16

St. Paul, Serbin

**Marvin and Charlyn Matthijetz**  
 60 years, Sept. 26

**Dennis and Bernice Zoch**  
 51 years, Sept. 2

**Gilbert and Dorothy Krause**  
 64 years, Oct. 15

**Kenneth and Ruby Weiser**  
 62 years, Oct. 20

Christ Our Savior, Lago Vista

**Edgar and Harriet Engelbrecht**  
 65 years, Aug. 8

**Mike and Mary Dobrasko**  
 52 years, Aug. 12

**Mike and Marlene Royer**  
 57 years, Aug. 12

**Bob and Edna Henry**  
 69 years, Aug. 13

**Leonard and Nancy Miller**  
 64 years, Sept. 4

St. Timothy, Houston  
**Tom and Nancy Swisher**  
 50 years, July 20

Mount Calvary, La Grange

**Paul and Geraldine Teinert**  
 57 years, October

**Robert and Genelda Pavlik**  
 58 years, October

Concordia, San Antonio

**Ron and Margrit McMann**  
 60 years, Aug. 21

Redeemer, Alpine

**Fred and Ardis Luthe**  
 60 years, Aug. 21

St. Paul, The Grove

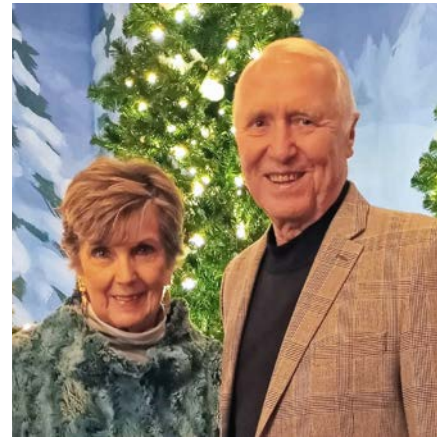
**Lloyd and Brenda Arldt**  
 54 years, Sept. 5

**Keith and Mavis Shafer**  
 52 years, Sept. 10

**Sy and Sherry Hartgrove**  
 52 years, Sept. 15

St. Paul, Fort Worth

**Ed and Janet Kasper**  
 60 years, Sept. 19



Ed and Janet Kasper



Tom and Nancy Swisher



Ron and Margrit McMann



Fred and Ardis Luthe

# Back to school - walking together

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

Our Lutheran school staffs gather every August to rededicate and celebrate the high calling they have as Lutheran educators — shaping the lives of their students and ministering to their families, sharing the message of God's great love for them in Christ Jesus.

The celebrations began on Aug. 2 with the Metroplex Lutheran school staffs gathering in Christ at Zion Lutheran School, Dallas.

The celebrations continued on Aug. 6 at Trinity-Klein Lutheran School, Spring for the Houston-area Lutheran schools. The group worshiped together with some truly amazing singing.

On Aug. 7, the Austin/San Antonio/Central Texas Lutheran school staffs gathered at Concordia High School, Austin, to celebrate a new school year. As is tradition, the new administrators, along with their prayer partners assembled for a time of dedication and prayer.

During each worship service, I offered those assembled words of encouragement and inspiration. What we as educators do is holy work (Luke 18:1-8).

Our teachers are eager to serve as they nurture and encourage their students in their faith walk, building upon the rock of salvation, which is a precious gift from God.

What a blessing it is to grow the teaching teams of our schools, where the love and forgiveness of Jesus is shared with our students every day. To God be the glory.



Staffs of the Austin/San Antonio/Central Texas Lutheran schools gather and pray before the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Oct. 6-7**  
**Beginning Teachers**  
**Retreat**

Camp Lone Star,  
La Grange

**Oct. 14-15**  
**Church Workers**  
**Conference**

Redeemer, Austin

**Nov. 4-5**  
**Early Childhood**  
**Directors Retreat**  
San Antonio

**Feb. 20-22, 2025**  
**Early Childhood**  
**Educators Conference**  
Trinity-Klein, Spring

# Great is Your faithfulness



By Pat Fick  
CAN-DO Director

I'm writing this as Steve and I drive to Nebraska for my cousin's funeral, and then to South Dakota for Steve's aunt's funeral. I'm really struck by the faithfulness of God and the peace that comes from knowing Jesus as our Savior and Lord. Because Jesus paid the price for our sin with His death and resurrection, we can live in the assurance that those who believe in Him will spend eternity forever together!

I was at Teen Camp in Alaska when I received the news that my cousin's life was cut short by a serious blood infection. We were covering the Beatitudes that week. Matt. 5:4 says, **"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."** The next day one of my teens found out her papa had passed away, so we were able to pray for one another and receive the comfort that God alone can give.

Have you ever had a song you can't get out of your head? That's where I am currently living. Sometimes you aren't particularly fond of the song that is playing on repeat in your brain, but today I'm feeling especially grateful for the message God is giving me through this song. It is based on Lam. 3:21-26:

***But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning, great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.***

I highly recommend you search for **"The Steadfast Love of the Lord"** worship video and enjoy the song yourself!

As I reflect on this past summer of mission trips, I am in awe of God's faithfulness! So many people touched by the love of Jesus! So many answered prayers! So many relationships formed or strengthened, including a student who said the relationship that they felt the most growth in was with the Lord!

Baby Timothy being baptized in our van on the way to the hospital in rural Kenya. A stolen passport being returned after the team spent some very special time together praying for God's help and intervention. God providing strength to carry on in the midst of physical or emotional exhaustion. Wow! God is good all the time! All the time God is good! And that is His nature, and I am a witness.

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning, new every morning, great is your faithfulness O Lord, great is your faithfulness! Thank you Lord for your steadfast, faithful love! Thanks for letting me experience Zeph. 3:17 as you sing over me.

***The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.***



# Kingdom purpose



**By Raelyn Pracht**  
CEF Marketing Specialist

Texas CEF stands firm on a commitment to supporting district ministries focused on multiplying followers of Jesus. Our ministry blends a solid business strategy with a relentless focus on advancing God's work.

We are immensely grateful for the steadfast support of our investors and borrowers, whose unwavering commitment has fueled our mission. Through these invaluable partnerships, we've had the privilege of enriching congregations across the Texas District, empowering them with vital resources to fuel their ministry endeavors.

Let us rejoice in gratitude, acknowledging that all glory belongs to God as we continue to serve His purpose with passion and purpose!

In the past fiscal year, we approved 15 loans worth \$13.3 million and returned \$665,969 in loan rebates back to congregations.

We could not do this without **you!**

It is through **you** — our wonderful investors, who trust that our ministry continues to thrive in extending God's kingdom.

We remain focused on one of our greatest assets: **people**. From the youngest to the most seasoned investor, we are grateful for the lasting impact their resources will have for present and future generations in the hope of multiplying followers of Jesus. We give God the praise and the glory for this abundant blessing as He continues to bless us with faithful partners in ministry.

**CELEBRATE CEF**

## Investments for Every Age & Every Stage

We have investments for every age and every stage:

- ▶ Flex Savings
- ▶ Fixed Rate Note
- ▶ Floating Rate Note
- ▶ IRA
- ▶ Rainy Day Fund
- ▶ Jumbo Investment

Visit [texascef.org](https://texascef.org) or scan the QR code to download your investment application and support the work underway in our Texas District!







# Christmas in July

## Brings Joy and Healing to New Life Children's Center

This past July, the spirit of St. Nicholas, popularly known as Santa Claus, brought Christmas cheer to girls at Upbring New Life Children's Center (New Life) through our annual Christmas in July event. History tells us that St. Nicholas was the patron saint of children, protecting them from abuse and exploitation. His presence each summer is a heartwarming reminder of hope for the children we serve at this residential treatment center.

Keeping with tradition, our Upbring staff ensured the girls had everything they needed to create artworks and participate in activities like races.

In the New Life Chapel, the girls made colorful flip-flop sandals, while over in the Café, girls had a blast making Grinch slime. In the Games Room, girls sat in a circle wearing oven mitts, trying to unwrap a large ball of plastic wrap filled with hidden prizes including fidget toys, stickers, Croc charms and Chapstick.

One of the most exciting activities was the Christmas sleigh race. Pairs of girls raced "sleighs" made from cutout paper taped to red balloons, which were attached to straws threaded on a long string. To start their engines, the girls blew up their balloons and then let them go, with the sleighs that went the farthest the fastest winning the race.

A Frosty the Snowman Relay added to the healthy competition. Finally, the girls



*Over the past two years, girls at Upbring New Life Children's Center have made 70 to 80 hand-painted Christmas ornaments for Upbring donors.*

enjoyed a snowball fight with sno-cone-style shaved ice formed into lightweight balls—providing a perfect end to a magical day.

New Life provides a safe, home-like setting for girls 11-17 who experienced abuse and trauma earlier in life. At our children's center, they have a chance to start over; to heal and grow, often through special activities.

"I look forward to Christmas in July at New Life every year," shared Katie Evans, Upbring's Manager of Church and Communication Relations. "It is an honor to serve these beautiful girls who are working so hard to overcome past experiences and change the trajectory of their future."

Events like Christmas in July remind us of how simply being there for the children in our care can have a significant impact on their wellbeing. To learn more about New Life, visit [Upbring.org/New-Life](https://upbring.org/new-life).

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

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

# Retreat season in full swing – and summer 2025 registration opening soon!

As autumn unfolds, Camp Lone Star is in the midst of an incredible retreat season. We are blessed to host a variety of retreat groups and directed events that bring together congregations and individuals from across Texas. Both of our campuses have been filled with joyful fellowship, team-building, worship, and countless adventurous Christ-centered experiences. We are honored to provide a space where communities gather, faith in Jesus deepens, and lives are transformed.

Looking ahead, we are excited to share that **registration for Summer 2025 will open on**

**Nov. 12.** Our La Grange campus will feature several two-night and five-night overnight camp programs, day camp, and family camp weekend adventures! Plus, we are thrilled to introduce a brand new summer day-camp program at our Pines Campus in Tomball. With nearly 300,000 people in the nearby area, this new program gives us the opportunity to welcome and connect with numerous families in the community next summer and for years to come. We invite all families and youth leaders to secure a spot for a summer, full of adventure and growth!

At Camp Lone Star, we are committed to planting seeds of faith, cultivating Christian leaders and growing the kingdom of God. Campers will enjoy a variety of outdoor adventures such as canoe-



ing, challenge course, archery and tomahawks, and hiking — giving them the opportunity to build meaningful friendships in a safe, fun environment. Each day at camp will also include staff-led devotions, singing and dancing, and Bible studies — intentionally designed to help campers experience the love of Jesus and grow in their faith.

Be part of the adventure at Camp Lone Star. Visit [camplonestar.org](https://www.camplonestar.org) or scan the QR code to learn more about our upcoming events and to join us for an incredible summer!



For more information, contact us at [info@camplonestar.org](mailto:info@camplonestar.org) or 979-968-1657.



2016 Camp Lone Star Road  
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979-968-1657

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[camplonestar.org](https://www.camplonestar.org)

# Martin Luther – our legacy

As we venture into the fall season and experience the changing weather and colors, we are reminded of the activities that occur during the month. In October, we recognize Columbus Day, United Nations Day and Halloween. One special day to also include is Reformation Day on Oct. 31.

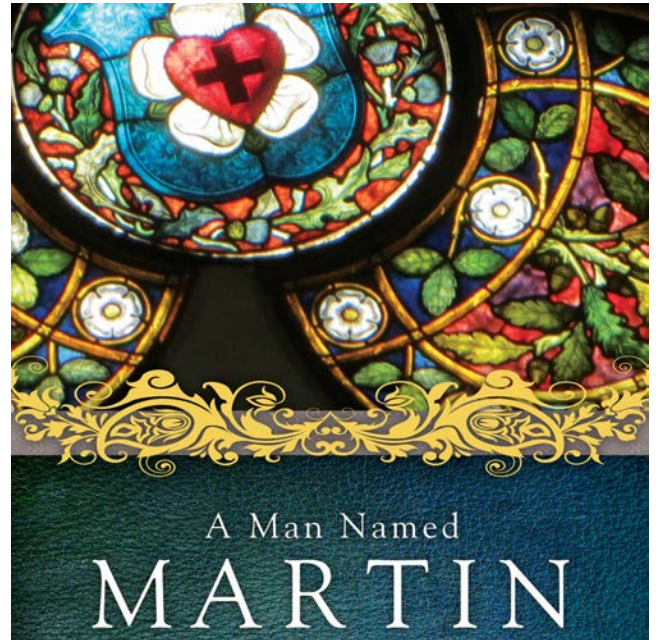
Reformation Day is often forgotten. LCMS congregations may hold special services on Oct. 31 and/or on the preceding or following Sunday.

To refresh our understanding, Martin Luther is the “great reformer” who re-focused the church on a Christ-centered fellowship of believers who hold true to traditions of grace alone, faith alone and Scripture alone. To this day, we hail the words “Here I Stand” as spoken by Luther over 500 years ago. Martin Luther is the legacy of the Lutheran church.

Lutheranism had its beginnings in 1517, when Luther publicly called for the correction of errors in the church. Luther was a pastor, professor, author, composer of hymns — and a reformer. His ideas still stimulate new thinking in the church. He is respected — but not worshiped. Today there are over 8 million Lutherans in the United States.

The Protestant Reformation began in Wittenberg, Germany, when Luther published a document he titled “Disputation on the Power of Indulgences,” or as they are commonly known now, the 95 Theses. The document was a series of ideas about Christianity in which he invited people to debate. The focus was a disagreement over whether Christians attain salvation in heaven through faith in God alone, or through a combination of faith and good works. He believed that individuals are saved only by faith in Jesus Christ and the grace of God.

He thought the Catholic church’s practices, including the focus on works (such as pilgrimages, the sale of indulgences to obtain forgiveness, and prayers addressed to saints) were immoral. Unlike Catholics, Lutherans do not believe it is proper or scriptural to offer prayers to saints or to view Mary as in any sense a mediator between God and human beings. Lutherans believe that the mother of Jesus was a common person blessed by God to give birth to the Savior, Jesus Christ, who is truly the Son of God.



Luther’s questioning led to his excommunication and the start of the Protestant Reformation. Additionally, the invention of the printing press around 1448 had a significant impact on the spread of information, and the technology enabled the text of the 95 Theses to quickly travel across Europe, which played a vital role in the success of the Reformation. The printing press also was used to print Bibles in German, giving the people their first exposure to Scripture.

Luther also believed that forgiveness for sins came entirely from God. In contrast, Roman Catholic teachings held that forgiveness came from God and as a result of our works. The Gospel is revered as the true teachings of Christ, is offered to everyone, and will save those who believe in its promises.

**OUR PRAYER:** *Dear Lord, for the reformers of the past, we give thanks. Grant that we, in our own age, may stand fast to Scripture and the Savior, whose life was given so we might have forgiveness and eternal life.*

**In Jesus’s name, Amen.**

Excerpts of this article are from sermons by Revs. Dr. Ken Klaus, Dr. Greg Seltz and Dr. Michael Zeigler.

# Lutheran Women in Mission

## Supporting Seminarians

As approved during the 2022 LWML Texas District Convention, **Seminarian Scholarships for Texas Students** is designated as an automatic recipient of Mission Grant funds each biennium. The delegates at the district convention in June approved a Mission Grant of \$60,000 for the 2024–2026 biennium.

In a letter, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (CSL), student Andrew Borseth expressed his gratitude: "Thank you for sponsoring me! I am thankful every day that people are gracious enough to give some of their money to fund the education of someone they have never met!"

Andrew graduated from Texas A&M with a degree in history and was commissioned into the U.S. Army as a chaplain candidate. Following a summer of Greek studies, Andrew dove into the first year of classes at CSL. He just began his second year.



**Noah Menke is pictured with his wife, Monique, and their son, Elias.**

Noah Menke graduated from Concordia University, Irvine, Calif., with a degree in international studies with an emphasis in missiology, and minors in anthropology and music. Noah continued his studies at CSL, and after completing his vicarage he opted to attend an additional year of school at Concordia Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Noah is working through his final year and is a candidate for a Master of Divinity in the spring of 2025. Noah and his wife, Monique, have a son, Elias, and are expecting their second child.

Thanks to the support of the LWML Texas District, our seminary students have benefited from these scholarships for many years. They are grateful to be a designated recipient of funds for this and future biennia.

**Patti Samsel**  
**Vice President of Gospel Outreach**

## Stay Connected

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[lwmltxdist.org](http://lwmltxdist.org) • [facebook.com/LWMLTexas](https://facebook.com/LWMLTexas)

### eConnection Newsletter:

Sign up information is located on the home page of our website. Scroll down the page to "Stay in touch and sign up now!"

### 2024-2026 Mite Goal: \$403,000

Mites received through July 31: \$51,724  
(\$351,276 still needed)

Mission Grants paid through July 31: \$23,657  
(\$248,657 balance to be paid)

**Send your mite offerings** along with a remittance form to:  
LWML Texas District

Attn: Alissa Elley, Financial Secretary  
PO Box 183 • Seguin, TX 78156

## IT'S INGATHERING TIME!

Visit [lwmltxdist.org/mission-service](http://lwmltxdist.org/mission-service) for everything you need to know about preparing for the Lutheran World Relief (LWR) ingathering, including printing labels and reports.

Let's stuff the trucks with quilts, health kits and school kits! Remember to think like a bug and make sure no critters can get in. Pack your items in sturdy boxes with no exposed holes, and tape all open edges (top, bottom and sides).

The ingathering collection schedule is:

Houston	Marion (San Antonio area)	Plano (Dallas area)
Epiphany Lutheran Church	St. John Lutheran Church	Messiah Lutheran Church
14423 West Road Houston	600 S. Center Street Marion	1801 West Plano Parkway, Plano
Saturday, Nov. 2 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.	Wednesday, Nov. 6 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.	Saturday, Nov. 9 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.