

TEXAS

MAY 2025

M E S S E N G E R

The Texas District • The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



Gospel freedom

What are we to do with the Good News of Jesus' resurrection?

The believers in the book of Acts ran into this question:

But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise [the Gentiles] and to order them to keep the law of Moses." The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter. And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will" (Acts 15:5-11).

The question: Aren't certain works and actions needed to earn God's favor? The answer: No, we are saved by grace through faith. No yoke should be placed on anyone's neck — not circumcision, not any law. The grace of the Lord Jesus is freely given.

Article XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession addressed this issue:

It is necessary that the doctrine of Christian freedom be preserved in the churches. In other words, the bondage of the Law is not necessary in order to be justified, as it is written in the Epistle to the Galatians, "do not submit again to a yoke of slav-

ery" (5:1). It is necessary for the chief article of the Gospel to be preserved, namely that we obtain grace freely by faith in Christ, and not by certain observances or acts of worship devised by people ... It is proper to keep such ordinances just so long as consciences are not burdened to think that they are necessary to salvation, or to regard it as sin if they are changed without offending others (51, 52, 56).

Article X of the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, warns:

As soon as Christian freedom is weakened and human traditions are forced on the Church with coercion, as though it were wrong and a sin to omit them, the way is already prepared for idolatry. In this way, human traditions are multiplied and regarded as divine worship, not only equal to God's ordinances, but even placed above them (15).

The bondage of the Law will always try to obscure the Gospel. But anything that gets in the way of salvation through the grace of the Lord Jesus erodes the chief article of the Gospel, burdens consciences, and nullifies the resurrection of Jesus.

Let us walk in the pathway of the Apostles and Confessors of the church. The resurrection of Jesus propels us into Gospel freedom for a bold mission. For people today and a world in need, let's go!

Rev. Michael W. Newman
President

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION...

Reread the Scripture and Confessions above. What might be trying to obscure the Gospel today—inside and outside the church?

Prayer starter: Thank Jesus for Gospel freedom. Ask Him to help you share it today.





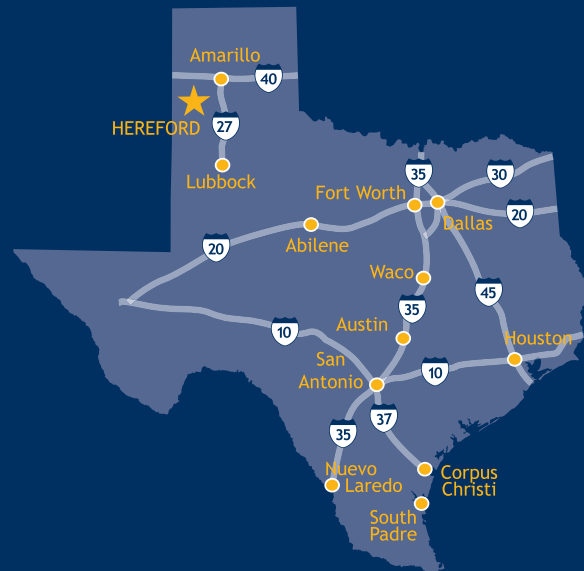
It was my privilege to work in the missions office of the Texas District from 1985 to 1993. I learned firsthand that our mission gifts were desperately needed to reach people in Texas for Jesus as I talked to those in mission ministries throughout Texas! Since that time, God has opened so many more doors in Texas to reach people of so many different ethnicities - the reach of the Texas mission has truly become global. With those new opportunities come so many urgent needs! When Texas Partners In Mission was established, and I learned that 100% of my gifts would go directly to support mission opportunities in Texas, I was moved to dedicate a portion of God's blessings in my life to Texas Partners In Mission. The additional partnership with the Texas District Church Extension Fund, which doubles my gift to TPIM, even as it gives me a good return on my savings, is an added blessing. And now that I am serving on the Board of Mission Administration, I am in awe of what God is enabling us to accomplish through the gifts given to Texas Partners in Mission! To God be the glory! - BETH LAUTERBACH, Member of the Board of Mission Administration



SPREADING THE GOSPEL ACROSS TEXAS

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

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



Vacation Bible School in Hereford, Texas.

GIVE NOW!
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

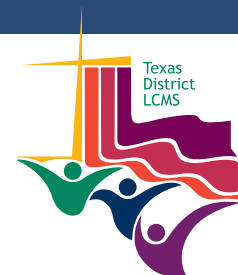


GIFTS

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



Innovative blessings!



Rev. Dr. Jon Braunersreuther
Area D Mission Strategist,
Director of Districtwide Strategy

Five ministries received financial awards for their innovative ideas to multiply disciples or congregations at the Texas District's second annual Catalyst Innovation Lab, held at the Texas District Mission Support Center in Round Rock in March.

Mission Support Center in Round Rock in March.

The grantees (and their projects) were:

- Texas Tech Student Ministry (Rev. Jeff Jenkins), for "Auto-ology," in which students are discipled while fixing up an old car; and for "Cooking with Cooper," a student-led ministry that uses a cooking class as an opportunity for outreach.
- St. John, Athens (Rev. Dr. Seth Davidson), for a project that enhances and expands the online and radio outreach ministry housed in their facilities.
- St. Paul, Austin (Rev. Bryan Wolfmueller), for a project in which the hearing parents of deaf children are taught how to sign Bible stories for them.

- Acts, Hays (Jeff Mensing), for "Refinery Fitness," a conditioning program focused on men's physical and spiritual health
- Gloria Dei, Houston (Jason Phelps), for "Disciples Made," a process whereby up to five congregations may be taught a simple process for multiplying disciples.

The projects were evaluated by five panelists: Rev. Ted Benson (Resurrection, Spring), Chris Rogers (St. Paul, Fort Worth), Charessa Koontz (Bethany, Austin and Texas District Board of Directors), and Texas District Board for Mission Administration members Stephanie Knea (Gloria Dei, Houston) and Gladys Franco (St. Paul, Harlingen).

Revs. Ben Gonzales, Pete Mueller and yours truly of the district staff facilitated the event.

The lab aims to allow ministries to try creative means to reach out with the Gospel, multiplying congregations and disciples. Watch for future reports about their experiences.



A legacy well lived



Danya Dinan

Legacy Deo Administrative/
Marketing Coordinator

Several years ago, I had the privilege of serving as a church secretary. One of my most meaningful tasks was to document the significant spiritual milestones in the lives of our church family —

births, baptisms, confirmations, marriages and, yes, even deaths. All of these milestones were recorded in a large, red book that I affectionately nicknamed “The Great Big Book of Everything.” It wasn’t just a book to me. It was a tangible record of the lives and journeys of so many people, each page holding stories of faith, love and perseverance.

I vividly remember one particular moment. A gentleman whom I had never met passed away. Due to his health, I hadn’t had the chance to meet him face-to-face. But even though I didn’t know him personally, I felt his presence in the church. I felt his absence when I heard about his passing. As I sat at my desk, I carefully recorded the date of his death in the red book, feeling the weight of that final entry for this dear man.

What struck me most as I wrote those dates — his birth, his baptism, his confirmation, his marriage, his death — was the profound realization of the beautiful legacy he had left behind. Though I never knew this man personally, I knew his legacy well. I had spent countless hours with his precious wife and faithful children. I had heard story after story of his steadfast faith, not only in God, but in his family and friends. His love and dedication had been a guiding light for those around him and, even after his passing, that light continued to shine in the lives of those who had known him.

His legacy wasn’t built on earthly possessions or accomplishments, but on the unshakable foundation of love, faith and service to others. His legacy was not just the events of his life, but the impact he had on the people he loved, the community he served and the God he faithfully followed.



At Legacy Deo, we believe that each one of us has the opportunity to live our legacy, just like the man whose story I came to know so well. Legacy doesn’t begin when you die — it begins with who you are right now, today. It’s the way you love, the way you serve and the way you show up for the people in your life. It’s the choices you make each day, the faith you live out and the impact you have on the world around you.

Your legacy is not something you leave behind, it’s something you are living right now. It’s in the quiet acts of kindness, the way you support your family and friends, the moments you choose to serve and the faith you carry in your heart. Legacy is not defined by the end of life, but by the way you live each day with purpose and intention.

As you reflect on your own life, I encourage you to consider the legacy you are building. Are you living with purpose? Are you showing love and faith to those around you? Are you making a difference in the lives of others? Your legacy is being written every day; and with each step of faith, you are leaving a mark on the world that will endure long after you’re gone.

Let us live with the same kind of faith, love and commitment that defined this man’s life. Let us live in such a way that, when the story of our lives is told, it will be said that we lived our legacy — not just in the things we did, but in the love and faith we shared.

This is the legacy that lasts. This is the legacy that truly matters. And it’s the legacy that, through God’s grace, we can all live today.



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.

HOUSTON

Helping hands for schoolchildren

Ladies of Gethsemane Lutheran Church assembled 100 school kits and, along with seven bags of clothing, donated them to Orphan Grain Train (OGT) for distribution to those in need. Picture are, from left, Joyce Heckmann, Susan Wasson, Viola Bade, Sharon Arney, Barbara McInnis, Alice Kasparov, Donna Radcliffe and Cathy Schreiber.



SEGUIN

Two saints welcomed

Mandy Sapp and Dennis Dougherty are new members of Grace. They are pictured with Rev. Roger Hotopp.

GEORGETOWN**Family grows at Zion**

Nine families joined Zion on March 2. They are pictured with Zion pastors (top row, from left), Revs. Kevin Hintze (associate), Zach McIntosh (senior) and Kyle Borcharding (worship).

**FREDERICKSBURG****Happy 80!**

The members of Resurrection Lutheran Church surprised their secretary, Alice Dahlman, with a cake to celebrate her 80th birthday. Alice has served as secretary for over 15 years.

HAPPENINGS

THE GROVE

Welcome!

Received into communicant membership at St. Paul on the first Sunday in Lent, March 9, were Doug, Kyle and Kae, who, among others, participated in the 15-week adult confirmation class as a refresher course. They joined the family of faith through adult confirmation, while others joined by transfer or affirmation of faith.

It was indeed a joyous day, as it is every time the family welcomes more saints to join us in the fellowship and work that our Father in heaven has given us to do.



Pictured are, from left, Kristen Clady and her mother, Stacy Clady, and grandmother, Lois Mills (Stacy's mother); Rev. John Heckmann; Kyle Schenk and his father, Doug Schenk; and Kae Hitt. Not pictured are Richard and Jill Lorenz.

DEVINE

Happy 80!

Toni Preston confessed her Christian faith and became a member of Divine Savior on March 16. She is pictured with Rev. Randall Wehmeyer.



DENISON

Congratulations!

Guy Seter (left) was installed as director of Christian education at Grace. He is pictured with Rev. David Edge.



AUSTIN

Sharing musical gifts

On Feb. 23, the congregation of Our Savior offered thanks to Brian and Maria Satterwhite during worship and fellowship. Brian serves as Our Savior music director, and he and Maria have been sharing their musical talents with Our Savior since 2002.

Brian directs the bell choir and special choirs for Easter and Christmas, plays piano, organ and other instruments to accompany singing, and composes hymns. Maria directs and sings with the Praisemakers Choir, which leads the congregation in song. She also sings and directs vocalists in solos, duets and triplets.

The Satterwhites (at right) are pictured with Rev. Eric Borchers, Our Savior pastor.



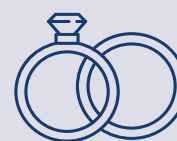
NACOGDOCHES

Blessings at Redeemer

On Feb. 23, Redeemer welcomed three new members, from left, Byron Timmons and Jonathan Thomas through adult confirmation, and Emily Moore through the rite of Holy Baptism. They are pictured with Rev. John Cain.



Happy anniversary!



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

Gethsemane, Houston
Jim and Janet Goodman
52 years, May 5

St. Paul, The Grove
Richard and Judy Riess
58 years, May 13

Our Savior, Abilene
Mark and Jan Koslan
52 years, April 24

One weekend, 46 teams, 118 games



Dr. Bill Hinz
Director, School Ministry

The 2025 Lutheran Middle School Basketball Tournament was held Feb. 14-16 with 46 teams gathered in the Tomball-Spring area for a weekend of 118 games. We celebrate with the Prince of Peace, Carrollton, boys team and the Trinity-Klein, Spring, girls team for winning state championships. And congratulations are also in order for the Salem, Tomball, boys team and Concordia, San Antonio, girls team for finishing runner-up.

Thank you to committee members Larry Saalfeld, Salem, Tomball; Tim Eickstead, Shepherd of the Hills, San Antonio; Chad Henke, Prince of Peace,

Carrollton; Steve Jahnke, Upbring, Austin; Nathan Frerking, Trinity-Klein, Spring; and Josh Menke, Salem, Tomball; along with Concordia Lutheran High School, Tomball; Salem Lutheran School, Tomball; and Trinity-Klein Lutheran School, Spring, for hosting the tournament.

Congratulations to all the athletes who participated in this tournament. We thank God for the way you used your God-given talents to serve Him and your schools.

We celebrate all 46 teams for their spirit of participation, competition and time of fellowship with one another.



The first-place girls team from Trinity-Klein, Spring, includes, from left, (front row) (cheerleaders) Row Oliva Cole, Mackenzie Bennett, Caitlin Aldaba, Addison Weaver, Addison Phillips, Avery Mondick, Hadley Brannon, Ella Gribnau, Ella Weaver; (middle row) Reed Pattavina (mascot), Kylie Schroeder, Haley Alman, Mia Odinga, Tatum Owrey, Emily Pattison, Macy Lalonde; (back row) Coach Kaitlin Hopf, Lauren Neidigk, Maddelyn Lanoux, Trinity Colburn, Halle Vanfield, Coach Mike Baimbridge and Head Coach Jim Kellerman.



The first-place boys team from Prince of Peace, Carrollton, includes, from left, Joe Joe Sapaula, Josiah Wang, Morgan Martin, Caleb Risolio, CJ Crews, Eric Humphrey, Grant Glinsky, Wyatt Stark, Coach Casey Pleasant and Coach Chad Henke.



The second-place boys team from Salem, Tomball, includes, from left (kneeling) Hudson Brown, Joel Martin, Cameron Clark, Caiden Charanza; (standing) Coach Micah Martin, Coach Josiah Niekerk, Layton Chase, Jasper Ransom, Carter Holder, Jacob Tijerina, Kaden Roclawski and Coach Josh Menke. Missing from the photo is Fletcher Dale.



The second-place girls team from Concordia Lutheran School, San Antonio, includes, from left, Coach Jack Proctor, Mackenzie Kanz, Coach Mike Hernandez, Sydney Bedgood, Stella Wiatrek, Adelyn Fauver, Mary Sahag, Zoe Hawkins and Breelyn Martinez.

Fill 'er up!



By Pat Fick
CAN-DO Director

How much time do we spend thinking about what we want? Probably quite a bit! We may not consciously talk about what we want, but it certainly informs our daily decisions and predicts how we spend our time and money. Sometimes before I purchase something, I ask myself, "Do I really need this? What purpose will it serve? Will I continue to use it after the newness wears off?"

When we think about needs, we can look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which starts with basic physical needs at the base and then adds safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization to complete the pyramid.

In his book "With: Reimagining the Way you Relate to God," Skye Jethani emphasized the importance of genuine connection with God. We don't live our life for God or under God, but *with* God. He desires to walk with us every day and be a part of all we do and say. I need time with God — time in his Word and prayer, time to be still and know that He is in control.

I also need people. I need to connect with others to be seen, to build community and to be a part of something bigger than myself.

Mission trips are an amazing way to experience these two needs, the need to be with God and the need to be with people.

We recently participated in a spring break trip to Mercedes with high school students of King



of Kings Lutheran Church, Round Rock. We had the opportunity to build a storage shed, repair the parking lot, clean and reorganize the library, spend time with children, and help with softball and T-ball practices. Here are the things we learned that we want to put into practice in our daily lives.

- Slow down and be present. Be obedient to whatever God calls us to do each day.
- Look to God for strength to shine for Jesus! In the same way, let our light shine before others so that they may see our good works and give glory to our Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16).
- Always be kind to the people around us and serve them unconditionally.
- Be more efficient in managing our time and include things that bless others.
- Pray for people!
- Be understanding of other's situations and help them as best we can.
- Slow down and be more patient. Don't give up or beat ourselves up. Choose who we want to have our our life (positive influences).
- See each day as a purposeful opportunity to listen, love and bless others. "And let us not grow weary

of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9).

Lord, help us to be *with* God and *with* people every day. That's what we really need. Amen.

A new home for Acts Leander



Raelyn Pracht

Texas CEF Marketing Specialist

On Feb. 2, Texas Church Extension Fund (Texas CEF) celebrated alongside ACTS Church Lakeway and ACTS Church Hays at the dedication of a new building for ACTS Church Leander.

Rev. Josh Miller had this to say about the new building:

Our entire family at ACTS Church Leander are beyond excited about our partnership with the Texas Church Extension Fund in purchasing our new location: a church building constructed in 2015, with over 6,500 square feet, 10 acres, and in the heart of Leander.

For over 10 years, our congregation has been living out our values of “Adventure, Community, Transformation, and Sending,” creating a unique blend of deep Lutheran theology and an accessible, active and flourishing community of Jesus followers. We have a tremendous track record of impact and goodwill in our city, working closely with everyone from our local police department to a Title I elementary school. Our ministry staff has complementary talents, and we are primed to grow even larger and deeper as disciples of Jesus.

This property allows us to upgrade almost every area of ministry: better parking, more classroom space for our kids and youth, fantastic visibility to Leander, room to expand and develop as we grow, and a more welcoming space to partner with local agencies (schools, non-profits) for the good of Leander. Oh, and we purchased it for almost \$1 million under what it appraised. It’s also less than one mile from our former worship space, meaning we haven’t lost members due to moving our location.

It’s hard to overstate the ministry potential of this space. Block parties on the front lawn; partnerships with the library across the street; hosting our partner school, Bagdad Elementary, for continued education offsite and teacher appreciation events; and more space to help the current and next generation learn about a Savior and Lord who died for us so

that we may live for Him! We expect, and in fact are already seeing, to grow rapidly in this new space.

The extra acreage also ensures we have near limitless ability to expand and grow as God wills it for decades to come. While Jesus did not die for any brick-and-mortar building, facilities and property are powerful tools to share His Gospel, and this opportunity will grant us more resources for His mission.

The ministry of Texas CEF, which keeps rates well below market average, was crucial to our efforts, and we’re excited to share with our congregation how investing with Texas CEF not only helps our congregation, but helps the ministry of future congregations thrive as well. Thank you for supporting such a unique and powerful ministry.

This could not have happened without faithful investors! Contact us today to learn more about becoming an investor.

texascef.org • invest@texascef.org • 888-951-1233



Support turns fostering into forever

Maria and Antonio Patino tell their children, J'Anthony and Camila, "I love you" every chance they get. "Everybody needs to feel love and hear it," Maria says.

Years ago, cancer treatments left Maria unable to have biological children, which was "really heartbreaking." As natural caregivers, she and Antonio turned to fostering through Upbring Foster In Texas (FIT), knowing "a lot of children out there need a mom and dad," Maria says. They fostered seven children before adopting siblings J'Anthony, 4, and Camila, 2, in August 2024.

J'Anthony loves "Paw Patrol" and "Godzilla," as well as pointing out construction equipment like the excavator his dad operates. Camila enjoys singing, dancing and playing with Barbie dolls. She also loves coloring and practicing her ABCs.

The journey to adoption wasn't easy. Camila, an infant when she entered foster care, knew no other home. But J'Anthony struggled with anger and was nonverbal. "He acted out a lot against me," Maria admits. With time, patience, therapy and support from his Head Start preschool teachers, he learned to better manage his emotions.

Upbring FIT provided crucial support, including community activities with other foster families. "Everyone at Upbring was amazing," Maria says. "They always had an answer for every single question. I really felt cared for and like family."

The Patinos honor the children they previously fostered with a photo wall in their home in Victoria. "They'll always be in our hearts because they were our children for a time being," Maria says, adding that they may foster again in the future.

For now, they are embracing life as a new family of four. They are proudly raising J'Anthony and Camila to be bilingual (Spanish and English) and recently enjoyed their first Christmas as a forever family. They also took their first big vacation to Colorado, complete with train rides, sightseeing and making snow angels — something they can't do in Texas.



Antonio and Maria Patino with their adopted siblings, Camila, 2, and J'Anthony, 4.



"I'm so excited to show my kids there's more out there than just our little town," says Maria, now a stay-at-home mom.

At first, J'Anthony seemed puzzled when his parents said, "I love you." But now, he and Camila eagerly say it back.

Maria beams, "When they're so little and they tell you 'I love you' ... that gets my heart, every single time."

Upbring Foster In Texas works diligently to advance child well-being and provide nurturing homes for children like J'Anthony and Camila.



**To learn more, visit
Upbring.org/Foster**

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

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ARE YOU AN EVERYDAY EVANGELIST



The heart behind Texas District Evangelist training is designed to turn you into an everyday missionary:

In this 8-session training:

- + You will learn how to identify the "wells" in your community where Jesus can meet people.
- + You will gain confidence to share your faith and engage in meaningful spiritual conversations.
- + You will be equipped to launch ministries that meet people who are far from Jesus and connect them to Him.

Texas District Evangelist Training Ministry



Learn to share Jesus and build spiritual wells where you live, work, learn, and play.

This training is for everyday Christians who want to be part of Jesus' mission to meet people in their daily lives. Just like Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well, you can help create places where Jesus offers His living water to those who are far from Him. Learn how to build spiritual wells that connect people to Jesus and equip them to do the same.

THE EVANGELIST Training Series



For more information, or to sign up for this training, visit: txlcms.org/evangelisttrainingseries

Zone presidents learn all things LWML



Twenty-four zone presidents met with leaders of the Texas District for orientation at Camp Lone Star in February. All in attendance spent time learning from each other and becoming familiar with all things LWML. Bible study, interactive devotions, connecting activities, food and fellowship were just some of the things that kept all engaged and soaking up a little fun and wisdom.

Zone presidents received insights on the importance

of mites and membership, reports and resources, and of encouraging communication and connecting with our groups.

Keep in contact with your zone president and rely on her for support and encouragement. Pray for her and your district leaders as they pray for you. And remember that together, "Trusting God, Lutheran Women in Mission of the Texas District Proclaim Christ – Support Missions – Equip Women – Serve Others."

Offering women hope

The Houston Coalition for Life, an LWML Texas District Mission Grant recipient, was founded in 2002 with the mission of ending abortion in Houston peacefully and prayerfully. Their work is accomplished primarily through the ministries of Stand + Pray and Sidewalk Counseling, as well as Blue Blossom Pregnancy Centers, comprised of four mobile pregnancy units and the main office.

All Blue Blossom Pregnancy Centers provide free services, including pregnancy tests, ultrasounds and Christian counseling. Since the Big Blue Bus was launched in 2011, there have been 39,663 visits to their centers and 93% of the women with positive pregnancy tests have chosen life for their baby.

The Mission Grant of \$8,000 covers devotionals and other Christian literature for moms served through the Maternal Assistance Program. The program also offers the Curriculum of Life, which are free classes for expectant and new mothers. The classes provide new moms with the tools they need to care for and nurture their preborn babies. For each class a mom attends, she receives free diapers and the opportunity to receive other essential baby items such as wipes, clothes, blankets, bottles, car seats, Pack n Plays and strollers.

Since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, visits to these centers have increased by 50% as women continue to find themselves in crisis pregnancies. One client who received a package with LWML-funded devotionals said, "Thank you for everything you have done. I feel like I lost who I was for a while, but you reminded me that God is with me, and He loves me and my baby."

Make plans to attend retreat

The 2025 LWML Texas District Retreat will feature Christina Hergenrader, author and speaker, who will present on the topic "Faith over Fear."

The retreat will be held on Saturday, Oct. 11, at St. Paul, Waco, with optional fellowship opportunities on Oct. 10.

Watch for more information to come.

