

# TEXAS

MAY 2026

M E S S E N G E R

The Texas District • The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



# Looking back, and forward!



**Rev. Dr. Jon Braunersreuther**  
District President

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now is springs up; do you not perceive it?"  
Isaiah 43:18-19a (NIV)

Which was an ironic thing for the prophet to say to God's people in exile in Babylon, because he had just reminded them of the past! Verses 16–17 recount God's deliverance of His people another time when they were in exile many years before — that time in the land of Egypt.

So, does God want us to look back, or forward?

In this space since my election as Texas District president last summer, I have been writing about the **common cause** of reaching those far from God's love for them, a cause that we share and that arises out of the **common convictions** — also shared — about the truths of God's Word and the way of salvation. We engage in our cause and we maintain our convictions best when we encourage each other and evangelically hold one another accountable in **common community**. Check out 1 Timothy 4:16, 2 Corinthians 5:14ff., Acts 15:1-31, and 1 Corinthians 12:4-31.

One of the great privileges that I am afforded as district president is the opportunity to celebrate with congregations at milestone anniversaries. Recently I was able to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Holy Cross, Arlington, where Rev. Luke Madsen is pastor. It was fascinating to hear the words of Rev. Stanley Jones, founding pastor of Holy Cross who is 90-plus years old. Pastor Jones, who traveled from his home in Arkansas for the occasion, recounted the hard work; the temporary meeting places; working together with the Texas District to finance their first facility; and, most of all, the excitement of starting something new.

The 100th anniversary of Immanuel, Temple, where Rev. Grayson Albers is senior pastor, was another opportunity to join in celebration. More than 100

years ago, pastors with missionary fervor from Copperas Cove and The Grove began ministering to those in the Temple area. The congregation, with its first pastor, Rev. Arthur Beyer, was chartered in 1926 and worshiped in the Falke home before the construction of their first sanctuary in 1928.

What blessings of the past! What blessings have there been in your life; your congregation?

Does God want us to look back — or forward? Yes! (Both!)

As these two wonderful congregations did, God wants us to look back, remembering His goodness and faithfulness to us — the wonderful blessings of the past. And then we're called upon to see those past blessings as springboards to look forward in faith to the wonderful journey that lies ahead and the ways God will continue to bless us. The reasons for our cause have not gone away. Our convictions remain the same. We're blessed with a vital community — fellow brothers and sisters in the faith — to journey the road ahead. Can you feel the excitement?

Or, in the words of the prophet, "Do you not perceive it?"





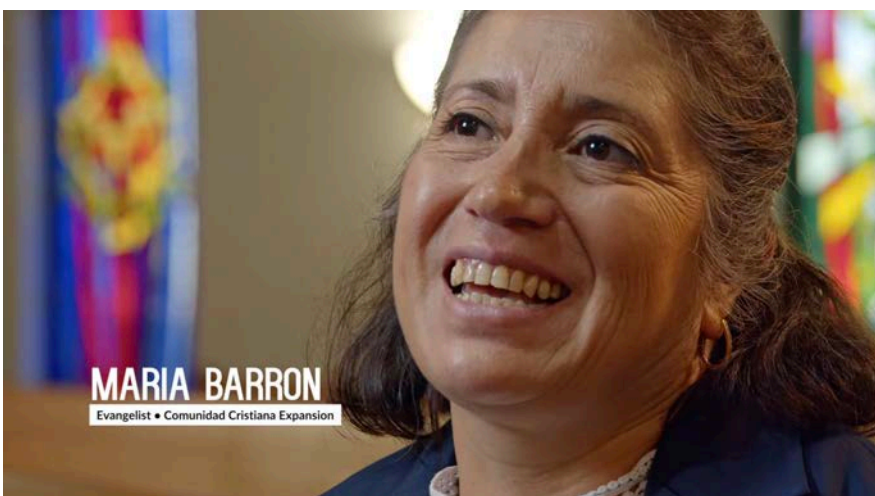
“Having a steadfast goal and purpose of serving Christ well has really helped me grow in my relationship with Him”

— Connor Starnes  
Texas A&M Student



“I think that He just taught me that at the end of the day, the only approval that matters is His. He’s already proved that I’m proven by Him”

— Rev. Ben Gonzales,  
Mission Strategist Area B



“I know God brought you here. And I know God is never going to leave you. You are here with us now.”

— Maria Barron  
Texas District Evangelist

Every dollar contributed to TPIM 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.

# Becoming a witness like Phillip



**Deaconess Noemi Guerra**  
District Wide Evangelist  
Development Leader

## Why the LCMS needs the priesthood of all believers in mission

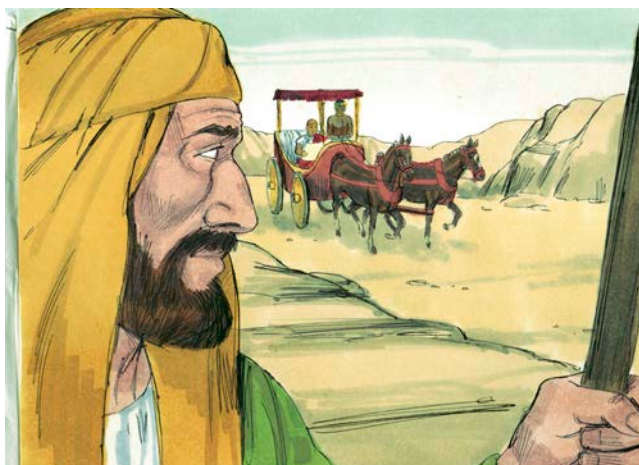
“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.” **ACTS 8:35**

Let's step into this moment together. The church has just been scattered by persecution. Believers are no longer gathered in one place. They are sent out into roads, cities and conversations.

“Philip the evangelist” (Acts 21:8) is sent to a desert road where he finds a man reading Isaiah, searching but not understanding. And Philip draws near. He begins with the Word already in front of the man. And from that Word, Philip tells him about Jesus.

In Acts 6, Philip was first appointed, along with others, so that the apostles could remain devoted to prayer and the ministry of the Word. The church recognized something important. The mission was growing. The needs were increasing. And the apostles could not do everything.

So people like Philip were set apart to serve. Not to replace the apostles. But to support the mission of the church.



And now in Acts 8, we see the fruit of that. Philip is out on the road — sent, attentive, ready. And when the moment comes, he speaks the Word and points to Christ.

Your pastor has been called and ordained to devote himself to the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments. But your pastor cannot be on every road. He cannot be in every conversation. He cannot sit next to every person who is searching.

And this is where **you** come in. This is why the LCMS needs the priesthood of all believers in mission.

In your Baptism, you have been brought into Christ. You have received His Word. You are placed in vocations where your pastor is not.

And like Philip, you are sent.

C. F. W. Walther, in a sermon preached in St. Louis in 1842, “The Holy Desire and Sacred Duty of Every Christian to Save Souls” (published in “Gnadenjahr”), said: “It is not only the office of the ministry that is concerned with the salvation of souls, but this is also the holy concern of every Christian.” Walther reminds us that “every Christian, according to his station, should also work for the salvation of his neighbor.”

The Texas District has responded by equipping the baptized through our Evangelist Training Ministry.

We are not creating a new office. We are equipping the priesthood of all believers to be in mission. We are forming everyday Christians to live as sent people in their daily lives. To notice. To listen. To ask. To begin with Scripture. To point to Jesus. Just like Philip.

The Evangelist Training Ministry exists to walk with you, to equip you, and to give you confidence in the Word so that when that moment comes, you can respond like Philip.

Come and learn. Come and see. Step onto the road with us. Because Christ is still sending His people. And He may be sending you.

Visit [txlcms.org/evangelisttrainingseries](http://txlcms.org/evangelisttrainingseries).

# Legacy in motion



**Pastrick Carlove**  
Chief Executive Officer

## To God be the glory

As I head toward the close of my first year serving as chief executive officer of Legacy Deo, I am deeply honored to

carry forward the important work entrusted to this foundation. I am especially grateful for the faithful leadership of Jerry Kieschnick, whose vision, integrity and commitment to Christ laid a strong foundation for all that Legacy Deo is today. Following Jerry is both a privilege and a responsibility — one I accept with humility and gratitude.

At Legacy Deo, we trust that when faithful stewardship is aligned with the Gospel, God multiplies impact far beyond what we can imagine. This conviction is evident in Legacy Deo's vision statement, which reads: "God's people, each and every one, will leave a legacy for faith and family."

## Advancing the Gospel through faithful stewardship

Legacy Deo exists to serve Christian individuals and ministries with excellence in financial management, planned giving and philanthropic strategy. But excellence alone is not our goal. Our calling is higher — to help God's people steward His resources for the next generation. This includes the people they love, as well as how those resources can be used to advance the Gospel, sustain ministry and shape eternal legacies.

This year has been a season of intentional growth — not simply growth in assets or accounts, but growth in mission clarity, ministry partnership, and long-term impact. Every refinement made and every initiative launched reflects our commitment to serve with both professional excellence and Christ-centered purpose.

## Strategic initiatives fueling mission and growth

Several key initiatives undertaken this year position Legacy Deo for increased Gospel impact and sustainable growth:

- **Mission Legacy Fund:** The continued

development of the Mission Legacy Fund remains central to our vision. By inspiring legacy-minded generosity and reinforcing giving through strategic matching, this initiative encourages donors to think beyond immediate needs and invest for eternal influence — strengthening both donors and ministries for generations to come.

- **Strengthening client and ministry service:** We invested intentionally in team structure and accountability by developing a dedicated Client Service Team. This approach ensures consistent, high-quality service while allowing our team to walk alongside donors and ministries with care, clarity and confidence.
- **Deepening ministry partnerships:** Legacy Deo continues to strengthen relationships with Christian schools, churches, camps and non-profits — within Lutheran and other Christian communities — as we continue to expand nationally. By partnering with ministries to help them build successful funding plans, we help move organizations from sustainability toward long-term vitality.
- **Building for the future:** With a vision to responsibly grow assets under management and expand our reach, we are laying a strong foundation for the future — emphasizing sound governance, fiduciary faithfulness, and systems that support growth and help impact the world with the Gospel.

## Looking ahead with gratitude and expectation

As I reflect on my first year at Legacy Deo, I do so with deep gratitude — for the trust placed in me, for the foundation laid by those who came before, and for the ministries and families we are privileged to serve. I also look ahead with confidence and hope, trusting that God will continue to use faithful stewardship as a powerful witness to His provision and grace.

Thank you for being a part of the Legacy Deo mission. Together, we are not simply managing resources — we are strengthening ministries, shaping legacies and advancing the Gospel for the glory of God.

**WALBURG**



Nineteen new member families were welcomed into the congregation of Zion Lutheran Church on March 1. They are pictured with Zion pastors Rev. Kevin Hintze (above left) and Rev. Zach McIntosh (above right).

# Happenings around Texas

## Submit your news!

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

[txmess@txlcms.org](mailto: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).

The Texas Messenger is available online at [txlcms.org](http://txlcms.org).

## HOUSTON



Memorial Lutheran Church held several Baptisms in February, including Ellis King, who was baptized on Feb. 22. Pictured are Garrett and Shelby King and their sons Elliott and Ellis (being held by his father). Also pictured is Rev. Ned A. Moerbe, Memorial senior pastor.

**ABELINE**

Zion Lutheran Church received new members on Feb. 1.

**MCALLEN**

On Feb. 15, Rev. Gregory Lorenz had the honor of baptizing two of his grandchildren at St. Paul, where he serves as pastor. They are Elowen Brooke Hempel, daughter of Jamie and Marissa Hempel of McAllen, and Oliver Martin Lorenz, son of Rev. Matthew and Shannon Lorenz of Alexandria, Minn. Matthew serves as senior pastor of Zion, Alexandria. Four generations of the family were gathered together for the celebration. From left, Nanette and Chuck Henkel (great grandparents); Marissa and Jamie Hempel and their children, Rowan and Elowen; Rev. Matthew and Shannon Lorenz and their children, Oliver, Mabel and Evelyn; and Stephanie and Rev. Gregory Lorenz.

## HAPPENINGS

### BIG SPRING



On March 1, Rylan Reyes and Jaylin Salinas were baptized by Rev. Bobby Roever at Alive in Christ Lutheran Church.

### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

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

#### **Gethsemane, Houston**

Jim and Janet Goodman  
53 years, May 5

#### **Beautiful Savior Our Redeemer, Houston**

Charles and Sherryle Groce  
50 years, Feb. 28



#### **St. Paul, Bellmead**

Donald and Vickie Savage, April 27



#### **Immanuel, Giddings**

Franklin and Lorene Hoffman  
70 years, Feb. 19

### MANSFIELD

In 2006, the youth of St. John began sharing the story of the Passion of Christ in a shadow drama, presented on Good Friday. More than 30 youth (and a few adults) work together each year to make this happen! Youth serve as directors, actors, singers, musicians, and on technical crew.



# Celebrating in Thorndale



**Becca Jones**

Texas CEF Executive Director

In February, Texas CEF was deeply grateful to return more than \$550,000 to our ministry partners. We recently had the

opportunity to celebrate one of our partnerships by presenting St. Paul Lutheran Church, Thorndale, with a 2025 loan rebate check. This was a meaningful reminder to the members of how their supporting investments impact ministry.

Raelyn Pracht, CEF marketing specialist, and Steve Saunders, manager of Loan and Investment Development, visited St. Paul in February to present the check and share in the joy, and talk about the blessings of investing with Church Extension Fund and its impact on ministry.

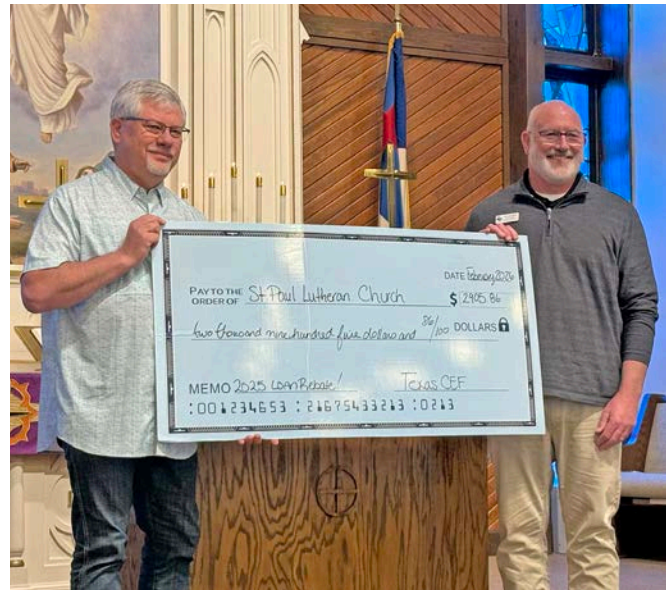
The following is from Rev. Jeff Doria, St. Paul pastor:

It was a nice surprise for many people here at St. Paul. Receiving a loan rebate check shows the dedication of Texas CEF as well as our members who invest through them.

Many of our members are unaware of this ministry as we have newer folk joining our congregation regularly; therefore, Raelyn's visit and presentation is a good start to help get the word out to our members. We have a challenge before us to increase our number of investors. I believe we will rise to the challenge.

It was nice to see, although not planned, the loan rebate check being presented on the same day we had our first townhall regarding needed sanctuary remodeling. Our sanctuary consists of the same pews, carpet and wall paint/texture as originally installed over 43 years ago. I'm still looking for someone living in the same home situation for the last four decades without painting their walls or upgrading their carpet or seating.

Texas CEF is a trusted ministry for people to invest in kingdom work here in Texas.



**Brit Ging (left), St. Paul, Thorndale congregation president, receives the rebate check from Steve Saunders, Texas CEF manager of Loan and Investment Development.**

Partnering with them, whether for church buildings, schools, food banks, shelters, etc., Texas CEF is a blessing from our Lord for work in our communities.

Of course, facilities are not the ministry; however, facilities support and enhance ministry. As we rebuild our church ministries after Covid and a three-year pastoral vacancy, the Lord continues breathing hope and joy into our midst, even in the face of struggles.

We have called upon Texas CEF in the past ... we will call upon them again in the future. To God be the glory.



**Texas District Church Extension Fund**

• [texascef.org](http://texascef.org)

• 888-951-1233

# Thank you, early childhood educators



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

Early childhood educators gathered Feb. 26–28 at Concordia Lutheran Church and School, San Antonio, to celebrate, learn and grow in sharing Jesus with the children and their families where God has called them to serve. This year's theme was "Rooted & Rising," based on Colossians 2:6-7.

We also shared in the joy as Romina Mier y Arce was presented with the 2026 Early Childhood Educator of the Year award. She serves Crown of Life Lutheran Preschool, San Antonio.

And congratulations to the other finalists: Nancy Lockhart, Concordia, San Antonio; Christine Rhodes, Living Word, The Woodlands; and Adrienne Stewart, Light of the World, Fort Worth.

Our Lutheran early childhood centers are places where the whole child is embraced — academically, emotionally and spiritually. We provide our children with a strong foundation to build upon in an environment where they experience the unconditional love of Jesus through nurturing, dedicated teachers.

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 to our congregations for investing in children. Thank you for all your prayers in support of the ministries of our congregations, schools and early childhood centers to children of all ages.



Dr. Hinz is pictured with the 2026 Early Childhood Educator of the Year finalists, from left, Adrienne Stewart, Light of the World, Fort Worth; Romina Mier y Arce, Crown of Life, San Antonio; Nancy Lockhart, Concordia, San Antonio; and Christine Rhodes, Living Word, The Woodlands. Romina Mier Y Arce was awarded Educator of the Year.

# Prayer is...



**By Pat Fick**  
CAN-DO Director

I have been reading a book by John Devries called “Why Pray?” It highlights different ways to think about prayer, which have been helpful and inspiring.

Think about people with whom you share a strong relationship. How did you grow that relationship? Probably through time spent together and constant communication. The ultimate love relationship is the one we have with God. Prayer is not a program, but a relationship. It is abiding in the Vine.

John 15:4-5 reminds us:

“Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

One of the stories Devries shares is about his grandson, Andrew, who loved to drive the tractor with his Poppa. He would sit on Poppa’s lap and put his hand on Poppa’s hand as Poppa drove around the farm. Poppa warned little Andrew never to get

on the tractor alone. We too get to sit in God’s lap as He steers the world and guides each of our lives. Don’t try to do it alone. Prayer is depending on God!

Prayer is also filling the gas tank. If you were in a hurry to get somewhere, but your gas tank was near empty, would you stop to fill up or keep driving ahead almost without fuel? The wise thing to do would be to stop and fill up.

How many of us use the excuse that we are too busy to pray or take time to be in God’s Word? How do we expect to run on an empty spiritual tank? Jesus, in Acts 1:8, reminds us that our spiritual power comes from the Holy Spirit:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

One of my favorite stories about prayer is in Luke 11. A hungry traveler is offered hospitality by a friend. However, the friend has nothing in the house to feed the hungry traveler, so he must go knock on the door of his neighbor, who is already in bed. The neighbor doesn’t want to get up and give him anything, but because of his persistent knocking, he has no choice but to provide what is needed.

What a wonderful invitation to keep knocking, to bring our needs to our gracious heavenly Father, who can meet the needs of the world around us. Luke 11:8-9 says:

“Because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

**LORD, HELP US** to abide in you, depend on you, be filled with your Holy Spirit and keep on knocking — with audacious boldness because You can do more than we ask or imagine.



# 44th Biennial Convention of the LWML Texas District

## June 11–13 • DoubleTree by Hilton Austin

Delegates will vote on Mission Grants for the 2026–2028 biennium and elect new officers. More information on the proposed grants and candidates is available at [lwmltxdist.org/lwml-texas-district-conventions](http://lwmltxdist.org/lwml-texas-district-conventions).

### Proposed Mission Grants

1. Youth Gospel Outreach — Glocal Mission, Houston, \$6,000
2. Christian Family Discipleship — Concordia Center for the Family, \$10,000
3. Spanish Resources — Lutheran Heritage Foundation, \$12,500
4. Community Gospel Outreach — Redeemer Lutheran, Lubbock, \$20,000
5. Sharing Our Savior, One Meal at a Time — Forged by Fire Services, \$7,500
6. ASL Jesus Signs Workshops — Texas, \$15,000
7. Deploying Lutherans Doing Life Together — Baylor University, Waco, \$20,000
8. Generating Power of Christ — Camp Blessing Texas, Brenham, \$8,000
9. Interactive Classroom Displays — St. Paul Lutheran, Vernon, \$25,000
10. Spiritual Care — Upbring, Canyon Lake, \$10,000
11. Together We Go, Together We Grow — Expansion Mission Network, Rockwall, \$24,000
12. Learning Center Flooring — Trinity Lutheran, Riesel, \$20,000
13. Bridge to Belonging — Camp Lone Star, La Grange, \$20,000
14. Mobile Ministry Van — Bryan-College Station, \$20,000
15. Feet on the Ground — MOST Ministries, \$12,000
16. Tailgate Outreach — Lutheran Student Center, Lubbock, \$15,000
17. Reaching Forward — Bethesda Lutheran Disability Ministries, \$5,000
18. Shine San Benito Mission — The Table Lutheran Church, San Benito, \$15,500

(The Mission Grants Committee is also recommending Seminarian Scholarships for Texas Students for \$50,000 for the 2026–2028 biennium. The delegates will be asked to approve the amount.)

**Total requested: \$315,500**

### Slate of Candidates

#### Vice-President of Gospel Outreach

- Elizabeth Burnett, Bluebonnet Zone
- Debra Heckmann, Sunshine Zone

#### Recording Secretary

- Pam Jeske, White Oak Zone
- Lisa Snow, Heart of Texas Zone

#### Pastoral Counselor

- Rev. Kelly Krieg, Bluebonnet Zone
- Rev. Russell Etzel, White Oak Zone

#### Nominating Committee

- Heather Barratt, Golden Harvest Zone
- Nancy Beckcom, Post Oak Zone
- Mandy Halbert, White Oak Zone
- Amy Heard, Panhandle Zone
- Melissa Houchin, Sunshine Zone
- Frances Molitor, Bluebonnet Zone
- Rosie Schoenfeld, Bluebonnet Zone

#### Vice-President of Communication

- Cindy Carter, Dal-North Zone
- Wendy Hart, Trinity Zone

#### Treasurer

- Terry Frazier, Bluebonnet Zone
- Sharon Stoerckel, Bayou City Zone



**2024-26 Mite Goal: \$403,000**

Total Mites received for 2024-26: \$424,211  
Mites received over the Mite Goal: \$21,211  
All Mission Grants paid

Send your mite offerings along with a remittance form to:  
LWML Texas District  
Attn: Alissa Elley, Financial Secretary,  
P.O. Box 183, Seguin, TX 78156