

TEXAS

JUNE-JULY 2026

M E S S E N G E R

The Texas District • The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



Christ's love compels us!



Rev. Dr. Jon Braunersreuther

District President

Should what we **believe** based on God's Word make any difference in what we **do**?

Well, of course!

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do

what it says" (James 1:22 NIV).

Jesus: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7:24 NIV).

Today's Word, from 2 Corinthians 5:14 (NIV): "For Christ's love compels us."

Compels us to what? To the "ministry of reconciliation" because God is "reconciling the world to himself in Christ. ... We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" (vv. 18-20).

What we **believe** about Jesus and his love for us makes a difference in what we **do**.

There is a deep connection between our **common convictions** (our doctrine) and our **common cause** (our mission), both of which are best maintained and advanced when we encourage, challenge, hold one another accountable and work together in **common community**. I've been writing about these themes since my election last summer. In addition to the passages above, see 1 Timothy 4:16, Acts 15:1-31, and 1 Corinthians 12:4-31.

And what a wonderful belief about Jesus we have! The compelling force for our cause, our mission, lies not in a word of law, not in a "have to," not something that we're forced to do against our will. The compelling force lies in the Gospel — the Good News of sins forgiven and eternal life through the death of Jesus on our behalf — **given to us as a gift**. One of the confessional documents of our church body, the Augsburg Confession, puts it this way:

Furthermore, it is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight, as St. Paul says in Romans 3 [:21-26] and 4 [:5].
(AC IV, Kolb-Wengert, p. 38, 40)

We, who have been overwhelmed by God's goodness to us, who have been taken off the road to eternal condemnation and put on the road to eternal life, can't help but share that news with others, especially those who are far from God. What we believe is not just dry, sterile doctrine. What we believe has real, eternal implications for everyone, whether they realize it or not.

The way to eternal salvation is through Jesus. Full stop. That's a message we have to share.

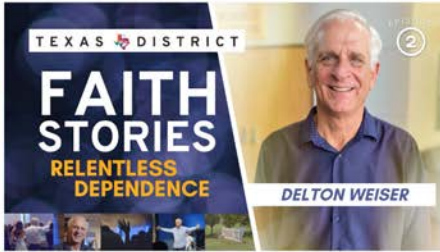
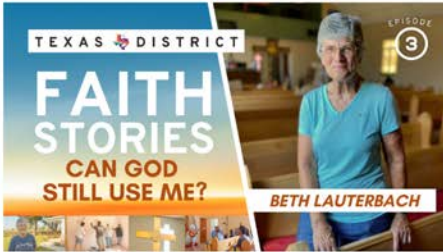
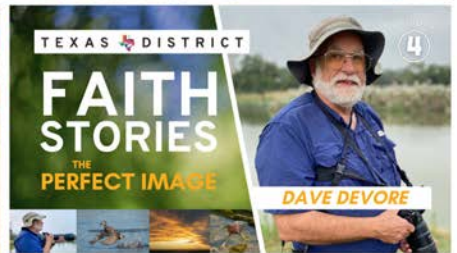
Christ's love compels us.



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Shared space to shared ministry



Rev. Pete Mueller

Mission Strategist, Area C

One-hundred servings of pineapple water. One-hundred servings of horchata. Eighty servings of fajitas — chicken, veggie or beef. What do these

mouth-watering menu items have to do with church planting in Texas?

Only God knows.

Yet one congregation is praying that such simple ingredients might nourish something far greater — a new intercultural expression of the church in Austin.

After launching a string of new churches in the 2010s, ACTS Church Lakeway and its partner, the ACTS Church Network, have been waiting expectantly for their next opportunity. What will the 2020s hold?

As they engaged with other leaders through Exponential Learning Communities (exponential.org/lc), sponsored by the Texas District, a new possibility began to emerge. Their next church plant might look very different from those that came before. Was God leading them to focus on Austin's growing Hispanic population?

It's one thing to dream about an intercultural church. It's another thing entirely to see it come to life.

What might the next steps be? Could a local congregation be formed from more than one tribe, nation and tongue?

As the leaders of ACTS Lakeway prayed over this opportunity, God opened their eyes to what He had already placed before them. Every Sunday afternoon, a Spanish-speaking congregation had been renting their facility for worship. Was the Holy Spirit transforming this relationship from one of shared space into one of shared ministry?

A creative idea soon took shape, guided by a clear intention. After applying for funding through the Catalyst Innovation Lab of the Texas District, the congregation was ready to move forward. They invited Rev. Lincon Guerra, who leads Texas District Hispanic Ministry, into the conversation. With Pastor Guerra's guidance, leaders from both churches gathered to explore what God might be doing.

An event was planned: the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking congregations would come together for a time of singing and praise. Lunch would follow, made possible through Catalyst Innovation Lab funding. And, of course, it would be a joyful fiesta of Mexican food.

Moving from shared space to shared ministry is not easy. Language and cultural barriers must be crossed with humility and grace. Yet the congregation is hopeful that these interactions will serve as a training ground for their next church plant — one composed of both Anglo and Latino disciples of Jesus.

This story is still being written.

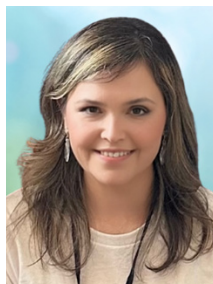
Only God knows how it will unfold.

But already, the learnings outweigh the challenges. Perhaps there is a lesson here for you as well:

- State a clear intention that aligns with the Great Commission, and watch how God fulfills it.
- Don't rush the season of prayer and discernment.
- Look first to what God has placed right in front of you.
- Rely on ministry partners — fellow leaders, congregations and the Texas District — as you carry out the mission entrusted to Christ's church.

After all, sometimes the Kingdom of God advances through prayer, friendship and a shared table — and even 100 servings of pineapple water.

Every gift matters



Dayna Dinan

Marketing/Communications
Coordinator

It is easy to believe that generosity belongs to someone else.

The ones with more.

The ones with margin.

The ones who can make the “big” gift.

Somewhere along the way, we started to measure impact by size. Bigger gifts feel more significant. More noticeable. More worthy of celebration. And while those gifts absolutely matter, they are only part of the story.

Because the truth is, generosity has never been about the size of the gift. It has always been about the heart behind it.

I have the privilege of seeing gifts come in all shapes and sizes. Some are large and transformational. Others are quiet, simple and deeply personal. And yet, time and time again, it is not the number that stays with me. It is the story.

It is the man who gives faithfully, month after month, even when it would be easier to hold back.

It is the family that chooses to stand in the gap for underserved children in their community, moved by the burden God has placed on their hearts.

It is the individual who gives sacrificially, trusting that everything they have has first been given by God.

Their hearts long to make a difference.

And it does.

Every single time, it does.

What if we shifted the way we think about giving? What if instead of asking, “Is my gift big enough?” we asked, “Is my heart in it?”

Because a gift given with intention, with prayer, with trust in what God can do through it — that is where impact begins.

Imagine what happens when hundreds, even thousands, of people each decide their gift matters.

Not someday. Not when they have more. But right now.

Small gifts become steady support.

Steady support becomes lasting impact.

Lasting impact becomes a legacy that reaches far beyond what any one person could do alone.

This is how lives are changed and ministries are sustained. Not by a few extraordinary gifts, but by many faithful ones.

So whatever your gift may be, know this: it matters.

It matters because of what it represents.

It matters because of the faith behind it.

And it matters because God has always done extraordinary things through ordinary acts of obedience.

You do not have to give the largest gift to make a lasting difference.

You simply have to give with your whole heart.

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HAPPENINGS

HILLSBORO

Kaiyanni Aria Johnson was baptized at Christ Lutheran Church on March 29. Pictured are, from left, Braydon Wilder, Keagan Dentler, Amanda Dentler, Cylee Dentler (holding Kaiyanni), Dana Schaefer, Tim Schaefer, Kaziah Johnson, Riley Dentler and Rev. Michael Nemeec.



Christ Lutheran Church recently welcomed with gladness three new members — David and Dottie Briggs and Mike Kruger, who are pictured with Pastor Nemeec.



Jason Bontke completed his Texas District Evangelist Training, and the sending ceremony was led by Pastor Nemeec at Christ on March 1.

Happenings around Texas

Submit your news!

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

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Texas Messenger • 1221 Satellite View • Round Rock, TX 78665

Please be sure all photos sent electronically are in high resolution.

The Texas Messenger is available online at txlcms.org.

ABILENE



Vivian Bradley and Benjamin Brown were confirmed at Our Savior Lutheran Church on March 29. They are pictured with Rev. Robert Pase, Our Savior pastor.

DALLAS



From left, Dr. Don Rotermund, Dr. Sam Eatherton and Dr. Scott Hyslop gathered at Zion Lutheran Church for the memorial service of Don's beloved wife, Doris. Don retired as minister of music at Zion in 1999; Sam is kantor and dean of Chapel at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis; and Scott is minister of music at Zion.

HEREFORD



Ryan and Misti Polster are new members of Immanuel Lutheran Church. Ryan is also the new Hereford city manager and Misti teaches the English-as-a-Second-Language classes recently begun at Immanuel. They are pictured with Rev. Joe Andrajack, Immanuel pastor.

SAN ANTONIO



The son of Mikea Morrison and Jayziah Goodwin-Fountain, William, was baptized on March 15 at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church. Also pictured is Rev. Craig Meissler. Sponsors are Anna and Joseph Morrison.

HAPPENINGS

HOUSTON

Memorial Lutheran Church held a special introduction of new members during the Easter Vigil on April 4. It was a very special way to welcome Memorial's newest members during Holy Week. The new family members are pictured with Rev. Ned Moerbe, Memorial senior pastor.



CANYON



New Member Sunday was held at St. Paul Lutheran Church on April 12. Pictured are, from left, Rev. Brian Shane; Andrew Grimm; the Olsons: Emily, Mike and Gunnar; Jeremy Simpson; and Linda Mullins.

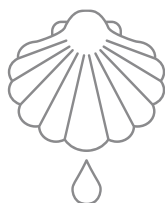
DENISON



The spring 2026 new member class of Grace Lutheran Church was celebrated on Palm Sunday, March 29. The new members are pictured with Rev. David Edge, Grace pastor.

GUN BARREL CITY

On April 12, St. Peter Lutheran Church received, by Baptism, from left, Jerry Jacinto, Jennifer Gragsone and Michelle Jacinto. Pictured in back are Rev. DR Nelson and Elder Rob Anderson.



MCKINNEY

Our Savior Lutheran Church commissioned its first Lutheran Church Charities (LCC) K-9 Comfort Dog, Shamgar, and team (eight handlers) on March 22. Shamgar and the Comfort Dog Ministry team successfully completed all the required training. They are now ready to serve the community!



HAPPENINGS

SAN ANTONIO



Kim Cobb, LWML president at King of Kings Lutheran Church, presents a check for \$849 to LINC San Antonio to help an African congregation started by Rev. Chris Rusare (seated) in San Antonio. This check was for half of the funds raised from a chili cook-off held in February.



The King of Kings LWML put together 50 comfort bags for The Children's Shelter of San Antonio. From left, Dee Eisenbraun and Mary and Larry Woelfel delivered the bags on Feb. 27. Each bag contained crayons or colored pencils, a coloring book, Arch Books, hand wipes, gummies candy, socks, a fidget, and a stuffed animal.

CLEBURNE

On April 19, the members of Ascension Lutheran Church broke ground on the site of their new sanctuary. Three years ago, the congregation voted unanimously to build the new structure. Rev. Eddie Scheler led the ceremonies, which was held "BYOS" — bring your own shovel. All members present were invited to turn over some ground and "throw some dirt!"

Robert Ledlow, an Ascension member and chairman of the building planning committee, gave a summary of the planning

process over the past three years. Construction will be conducted by db constructors, inc., of Fort Worth.

The original sanctuary has been serving as a chapel for the Next Generation School and has now been renovated into the Rev. Ben Rathgeber Fellowship Hall. Ground for the first sanctuary was broken in July 1966. Long-time member Rebecca Roe was invited to use the golden shovel that was used in 1966 for the groundbreaking.

Work on the sanctuary has begun, but no date has yet been set for its completion.



Rev. Eddie Scheler holds the golden shovel used in the 1966 groundbreaking for Ascension's first sanctuary.

SAN ANTONIO



Vienna Moriah Wilson was baptized at Holy Cross Lutheran Church on Palm Sunday, March 29. She is pictured with her parents, Shane and Paloma Wilson (right), her Godfather, Mr. Rodriguez (left), and Rev. Elder McCants.



ALAMO

Rev. Carlos Sandoval, pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, confirmed his wife, Cynthia (right), and Zoe Navarro on April 12.

RIESEL

RIGHT: Trinity Lutheran Church held a confirmation reunion for classes celebrating milestone anniversaries on March 29. Several current and former members gathered to take part in the reunion and potluck following the service.

BELOW: On March 7, Trinity held a prayer workshop led by Biblically Balanced Prayer Ministries. Participants were from all over Texas.



HAPPENINGS

HOUSTON



Rev. Russell Strimple, pastor of Beautiful Savior Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, was surprised by a few of the members wearing their costumes for Holy Humor Sunday on April 12.

COPPERAS COVE



Trinity Lutheran Church recently celebrated the 30th ordination anniversary of Rev. Dave Reedy (right). He was presented with a cake by Jon Cella, congregation president.

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

St. Paul, The Grove

Richard and Judy Riess
59 years, May 13

Bill and Trish Rogge
62 years, June 6

Carl and Barbie Symm
62 years, June 6

Curtis and Helen Domel
56 years, June 13

Alton and Darlene Riske
69 years, July 21

Ted and Beverly Winkler
55 years, July 24

Our Savior, Abilene

Earl and Sue Foster
59 years, May 26

Ronald and Glenda Ivey
58 years, May 25

Christ Our Savior, Laya Vista

Rev. David and Charlotte Hintze
53 years, June 9

Trinity, Dime Box



Glenn and Joyce Mikulin
50 years, March 20

Messiah, Plano

Armin and Karen Bernhardt
50 years, June 19

Beautiful Savior Our Redeemer, Houston

Charles and Sherryle Groce
50 years, Feb. 28

Resurrection, Fredericksburg



Paul and Diane Garza
50 years, May 22

A week of celebration



Becca Jones

Texas CEF Executive Director

On March 22, Texas CEF joined the saints of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Cedar Park, to celebrate the groundbreaking of their campus expansion. This exciting step forward will allow Good Shepherd to reach even more people for Jesus in a rapidly growing community.

As shared in their Faith Forward Campaign:

“Good Shepherd’s building expansion will update our outward appearance and increase our presence in the community. It will serve as the launching pad for all ministries within the church. For the first time in Good Shepherd’s history, we will have a church designed primarily to meet the needs of both worship styles. Our new gathering area will also provide space to do life together, build relationships,

and point people back to the hope we have in Jesus.”

Just one week later, on Palm Sunday, March 29, Texas CEF celebrated alongside Immanuel Lutheran Church, Giddings, for the dedication of their new Early Childhood Center and Welcome Center — both spaces designed to serve families and create meaningful connections within their community.

These milestones are more than building projects. These are visible reminders of God’s faithfulness and His ongoing work through His people. Each step forward is made possible through His provision and through the faithful LCMS members who share in the mission of expanding ministry across Texas.

texascef.org • 888-951-1233



Pictured is the groundbreaking for the expansion at Good Shepherd, Cedar Park.

Celebrating our schools



Dr. Bill Hinz
Director, School Ministry

Leadership in our Lutheran churches and schools is a call to serve God. For pastors, administrators and lay leaders, it is a divine calling to serve His children by reflecting and modeling the light of Christ. To honor this calling and to lead effectively, they must never stop being students.

For all of our dedicated Lutheran administrators and educators, being a “constant learner” isn’t just a professional development goal; it is spiritual discipline. It is the recognition that because God’s creation is vast and His Word is inexhaustible, our growth must be continuous.

In our Lutheran schools, the drive to learn is rooted in stewardship. We believe that every faculty member and student is a gift from God, endowed with unique talents. A leader who is a constant learner views their own mind as a resource to be cultivated for the sake of the Gospel.

Just as we grow in faith through the Word, we grow in our craft to better serve our students. It is the

hope of every Lutheran teacher and administrator to model the discipline of being a lifelong learner to our students.

Leading as a learner means encouraging questions. It means gathering on a regular basis to collaborate and exchange ideas and discuss important topics of the day.

Two such groups that gather on a regular basis are the Texas District Early Childhood Council, whose members serve as a resource for all of our early childhood programs; and our Secondary Administrators, who collectively through a cohort of collaboration serve the high schools of the Texas District.

We do not pursue knowledge for the sake of prestige, or “innovation” for innovation’s sake. We learn so that our Lutheran schools remain “excellence-driven and Christ-centered” for the sake of the Gospel, so that we can share with each student the love and forgiveness of Jesus and the salvation He gives to each believer.

Soli Deo gloria — To God be the glory.



Pictured is the Texas District Early Childhood Council, from left (front) Kathy Entzenberger, LEAH, Houston; Christine Armstrong, Resurrection, Spring; Bev Childs, Living Word, The Woodlands; Katy Rohr, Shepherd of the Hills, San Antonio; Diane Dillow, Crown of Life, San Antonio; Laura Scott, Grace, Arlington; (back) Lee Gaines, Texas District School Ministry; Rev. Dr. Jon Braunersreuther, district president; Sheri Losoya, Salem, Tomball; Brandy Simmons, Lamb of God, Flower Mound; Amy Sanders, CrossRoad, Katy; Heather Kosi, Light of the World, Fort Worth; Tiffany Kirkwood, St. Paul, Thorndale; and Dr. Hinz.

Send me!



By Pat Fick
CAN-DO Director

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.”

ISAIAH 6:8

During spring break, Victoria Vergara, Alberto Olvera, Isabelle Finley and I answered God's call and headed to St. Louis to serve! After traveling 13 hours in a minivan, we arrived at Peace Lutheran Church and were blessed with an opportunity to pray over one of my former youth, Sarah Irwin, who is fighting brain cancer. The next day we had the privilege of praying with our DCE interns and seminary students who were serving in nearby Columbia, Ill.

The whole week was infused with opportunities to be a blessing. We did a mini vacation Bible school for refugee children, tore out metal shelving, painted a room at St. Trinity Lutheran Church and at the Peace Center, and sang for Immanuel Lutheran School and the seniors at Meramec Bluffs.

Here are some reflections our students had about their trip.

“I had such a great time helping in so many different ways,” Alberto said. “This whole trip has been such a great experience.”

“There is so much that the Lord does, and sometimes we forget to open our eyes to the wonderful world and work He continues to do,” Victoria said. “I felt a sense of closeness to God during this trip and was able to strengthen my faith.”

“I wasn't really sure why I was going to St. Louis when I signed up,” Isabelle said. “The great thing about God is that He shows up when we least expect.

“God showed up in the little

moments the most. When we didn't have a hot shower, God provided. When we didn't know how we were getting lunch, God provided. When we didn't know where to sleep, God provided. I realize this is why God put St. Louis on my heart — to show me what His faithfulness looks like. Person after person, moment after moment, from silly songs to bank vaults to praying continuously, God painted His faithfulness on the hearts of His children, His goodness on their lives, and His beauty on their souls.”

This final comment was a text I received from my friend, John Stevens (of St. Trinity):

“OK, I had to go to the doctor and couldn't say goodbye to you, but Alan just told me that you just met my 'spiritual accidental project neighbor,' Diane, the lady who cusses like a drunken marine, has a son with bad cancer, survives on local church dinners, fears no one in this neighborhood, and still comes to this church because I asked her to, because I told her it didn't matter if she has money, or if she is loud and cusses. Alan said you barely met her, your team circled her, and you prayed with and for her! I'm leaking now. I wish I could have been a part of that!

You prayed when she said it wouldn't work. You smiled because we know it did and it will work! You loved her and didn't even know her! You and your peeps gave her Jesus! I love you so much! Yup! I done sprung a leak out my eyeballs! Praise Him! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!”



Blessing the ministries we love

Did you know that the greatest transfer of wealth in all of history is happening right now? Trillions of dollars are expected to be passed down through inheritance and planned gifts to non-profits over the next 20 years.

This is an amazing opportunity for kingdom work if every Christian has an estate plan that blesses their families and the ministries they love. There are great ways to make that happen, but often we hesitate to get started because it feels overwhelming.

LWML Texas District members have two great resources that are free and confidential to help with that plan: **Legacy Deo** (our district's endowments trustee) and **LWML Gift Planning Services** (through the LCMS Foundation). Both offer guidance in creating a plan tailored to your wishes.

For more information, visit lwmlgiftplan.org and legacydeo.org. For more information on our endowments and Gifting Today to Bless Tomorrow, visit lwmltxdist.org/endowments.

— Submitted by Tiffany Harmon

Remember when...

It is time for the LWML Texas District's 44th convention!

If you have attended a past convention, do you remember your first one, and maybe a favorite memory that stood out to you? It was a blessing to attend my first district convention as a Young Woman Representative (YWR) in 2022, and I especially enjoyed feeling the love and peace of so many Lutheran ladies singing God's praises together, just as we will all do in heaven, and being joyfully immersed in His Word and work.

So many precious memories are made at conventions. Do you remember:

- The first convention, held in Fort Worth in 1943?
- The many hats worn at the 1954 Waco convention (pictured at right, above)?
- Gladys Kaltwasser, Gladys Oswald, Lil Kobs and Ann Garrett, pictured (from left) at the Odessa convention in 1964, serving as LWML district presidents?
- The virtual convention in 2020?

As we gather together once again, making new memories and reminiscing about old ones, we

remember what a gift it is to be part of an organization that allows and equips so many sisters in Christ to join together and serve our Lord in ways we never could on our own.

We remember Paul's admonition to use our Christian freedom to serve one another in love (Gal. 5:13), and that all of our service is simply doing what is required of us in gratitude for the grace we have received through Christ (Luke 17:10). God be praised for conventions and all that He continues to make possible!

— Submitted by Laura Fisher



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Send LWML news and photos to the VP of Communication at communication@lwmltxdist.org.

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