

LWML EAST TEXAS ZONE CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2023



PASTOR SETH DAVIDSON, LWML ZONE PASTORAL COUNSELOR

Advent.

It is that time of the year again. We turn the corner from Halloween and poof, before you know it Christmas decorations everywhere. We hear Christmas Carols; the TV and media is flooded with feel good movies to get us in the spirit. The stores lay out their Christmas deals, our kitchens are filled with seasonal delights, and we try to enjoy family time... Sounds great right?

Too often we forget the hardships we face while trying to put on a cheery face. For many it is the hardest time of the year. Finances are stretched, schedules are packed, relationships become strained all to fulfill some fake societal standard. Many face the first year without a loved one. With the weather changes, illness runs rampant.

So what do we do? It seems like we are trapped between societal expectation and bleak reality... What if, just what if we tried something different? What if this year we approached this holiday season as if it was the first time. Mary did, Joseph did, the Shepherds did, the innkeeper did. There was a societal expectation none of them met. They faced hardships we could never imagine. They were bound by Jewish law debating if they were clean or if they had fulfilled enough of the law to be godly. All of them faced financial hardships. All of them struggled to live in an oppressive Roman culture...

But. But there was something different that destroyed the cultural expectations and hardships they faced. God's decision. The God of all grace made a decision that would impact the entirety of the human race and creation itself. The Father decided amidst the turmoil to send Jesus into the World. A Savior that would change the course of history. A decision that can change the course of our future. As you approach this holiday season, remember God decided to save you, as with all of those who have come before us to shatter societal expectations, and walk with you through the hardships you face.

In Christ,
Pastor Davidson

ST. JOHN MARY MARTHA LWML, ATHENS

Just a quick update on who we are and what we have done this year. We are a wonderful team of 22 members. At our meetings we have between 12-21 ladies & Pastor present. We have had quite a few projects this year. Our sewing team made 22 quilts. We hosted the Spring LWML Event with amazing speakers. Our first speaker from Abundant Life, Pregnancy Resource Center, told us about the program she had a vision of and how God made it happen!! She runs a program to help young mothers & families with education on caring for the child, as well as free diapers, formula, and other needs. God works wonders. Our second speaker spoke about wills & trusts and help to be able to write and guide you along that path. A subject we all avoid but we all can use. And the caring and knowledge our speaker had was phenomenal. All & all a great day. We are a very blessed group. We help out with coats and personal hygiene items for the High School and Middle School in our town. So, it's been a great and busy year. Can't wait to see what the next year brings.



ST. PETER LWML, GUN BARREL CITY

Made 70 quilts this year. 60 went to LWR. 10 quilts to others in need in our community.

April - Prom Dress event - Free prom dresses donated to girls in area high schools.

Help support local families at a POA in our community.

Easter Event - provide food and candy for the families.

Summer - provide hot dogs and hamburgers for families

November - Fall event- provided food and signed up families for Angel Tree.

December - Christmas event -will deliver Angel Tree gifts to adopted families.

May - Help with spaghetti meal fundraiser to benefit local food bank.

August - Help the church with a Garage Sale fundraiser.

Delivers flowers and other items weekly to local senior citizens and nursing homes. Also, made small blankets for people in these homes and the homeless.

Host a Ladies Lunch once a quarter at local a tearoom... invite all ladies in the congregation. Share LWML information at each of these lunch events.

Celebrated LWML Sunday the 1st week in November. Gathered a mite offering that day and Pastor Nelson blessed all the quilts.

TRINITY LUTHERAN, TYLER

Trinity is now blessed with four Individual Members as Norma Carlton joined after attending the Fall Event in Centerville. These ladies and others are very active by serving through collecting Mites, being Greeters, helping with Pie Ladies & Guys make over 1,000 pies to sell), Worship Team, Choir, Primetimes, Annual Garage Sale with the Youth, Life Groups, Huddles, Church Office Volunteers, Bible Studies, Advent by Candlelight and Altar Guild.

OUR SAVIOR LWML, CENTERVILLE

The ladies of Our Savior continue supporting a Seminary student, Aaron Levenhagen, his wife Jill and two children Faith in 9th grade and Nathan a student at Purdue. Aaron's mentor is Dale Meyer and he will be receiving his call next spring. Please continue to pray for Aaron & all those Pastors being assigned next year. Jill has begun a ministry to 20-40-year-old women named LutherWoman.

They also support local Food Banks including the Lords Pantry in Leon County. The Ingathering at the Fall Event supported this mission with 30 bags of sugar for Christmas baking. They also sponsor an Angel Tree for students in Leon County.



Lutheran World Relief
129 Personal Care Kits & 4 Quilts



Fun Day with ladies visiting the new Christmas Store
in Madisonville

OUR SAVIOR LWML HOSTED EAST TEXAS ZONE FALL EVENT



Beautiful Autumn



LWML Texas District
President Molitor

Welcoming Displays



Debbie Curry, Past District President
Guest Speaker, Ruth Meyer

Registration for Fall Event's 'Eternity Eyes'



Past Zone Presidents
Sharon Sampson, Debbie Curry
Sharon Mills & Jerry Anderson



Fellowship Time with Sharon Sampson, Past Zone President
& LWML Texas District President Frances Molitor





OUR REDEEMER LWML, LONGVIEW

January meeting was enjoyed by playing game of Epiphany Gift Exchange

February 4 members attended the Women's Renewal Retreat at Camp Lone Star. Group met at PHO Vietnamese restaurant.

March found the group providing and serving a Lenten meal.

April 4 members and Pastor Bragdon attended the Spring Event in Athens.

May officers were elected, Zone President, Sharon Mills, presented Zone information, bought prayer book for Confirmand.

September planned for LWML Sunday, heard report on National Convention, worked on Fall Event 24, attended Fall Event 23.

October LWML Sunday passed out cookies stamped by our Lutheran Lady in Mission trainee, Maggie Stephens, 3-D banner.

November Thanksgiving Bible study on LSB 785 "We Praise You, O God," plans for congregation Christmas dinner.

December will decorate tables, serve catered church dinner, youth skit, Christmas carols.

BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN WILLING WORKERS, PALESTINE



Dogwood Trails



Ladies enjoying luncheon together



Annual Bazaar



Assembly of 81 LWR Kits



LWR Kits ready for shipping

Bethlehem LWML has had a busy 2023. We enjoyed a Fun Adventure Day during Dogwood Trails, shopping, and lunch. We attended the Spring Event at St Johns in Athens and the Fall Event in Centerville and enjoyed visiting with old friends and making new friends. We honored our High School Graduate with a reception and surprised long-time member James Taylor on his 80th birthday. We supported many mission projects, held our annual Bazaar and Bake sale, provided meals and assisted our congregation as we helped, served, donated, and prayed.



Cindy Baucum – St. John Mary Martha Group, Athens

This retreat held in September 2023 was my first Lutheran Women's Retreat. Spending time with like-minded people was a true joy. I was able to bond more closely with the few people I already knew, as well as developing new friendships with women from across North Texas, expanding my faith-based support system.

Attending this retreat allowed me to get away from my normal everyday demands of life, and in this beautiful tranquil location I was able to relax and enter a contemplative frame of mind, especially as it relates to my personal faith. The energy displayed in group exercises was fun to be around, and we were able to benefit even more by bringing dozens of the fleece tied blankets home to be donated to our local pregnancy resource center.

If I had any criticism or suggestions for improvement of the retreat is that it was too short. An additional day would be great — or even start the retreat on Friday at noon instead of in the evening.

I do hope to be able to attend more LWML retreats in the future.

Candy Biggs – St. John Mary Martha Group, Athens

I am so thankful I was able to attend the LWML retreat in Glen Rose. It was the first time I have been to one. I would encourage anyone who has not been before to attend.

It was a blessing to be surrounded by so many women of faith of all ages and from different congregations.

The theme was "It's a WonderFull World". We sang many songs about the wonders of God.

The study of the suffering woman who touched Jesus' robe in the crowd and was healed because of her faith was very meaningful. He called her "Daughter" because she mattered to Him. To help make this point, after forming a circle our leaders came around, held our hands, and told us Jesus loves us and cares for us. What a touching and affirming reminder this was for me.

I look forward to attending more retreats in the future.

Cindy La Pardi – St. John Mary Martha Group, Athens

I just wanted to say a few things on my very first LWML Retreat. I hope that it was the first of many!! I loved the companionship of the three other ladies from our Church. I was so afraid they would ignore me as well as the other ladies I hadn't even met. (I know, kind of paranoid but I'm new and nervous) But I was TOTALLY WRONG!! My friendship deepened with the people I went with. And I made so many new friends within the two days. The fellowship was beyond amazing, the things we learned were great. I still go thru our little books they gave us to reread some of the exercises. We learned so much in so little time and had a blast doing it. If any of you ever get the chance to go, PLEASE DO SO. It is fun, heartwarming, and educational. The memories you make will last a lifetime. And so will the friendships. Bless all the ladies that put the retreat together and all my now family & new friends.





As this year comes to an end, our hearts return to memories of this year. This year has been filled with mountain top highs and also valleys so low. Times of joy and gladness celebrating God's richest blessing with those we know and love. There have also been times of deep sadness and sorrow as we said farewell on earth to some of our family members, dear friends, and even beloved Pastors as they entered heaven. Years ago, I was given the following poem by an unknown author that helped me after my Mother's death. There are no words to explain one day celebrating Christmas in Heaven but Jesus has gone to prepare that special place for each of us so it will be more than amazing. May God continue to bless you with His loving peace, comfort, and joy as you celebrate His holy birth.

Sharon Mills President LWML East Texas Zone

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

MY FIRST CHRISTMAS IN HEAVEN

*I see the countless Christmas trees around the world below,
With tiny lights, like Heaven's stars, reflecting on the snow.
The sight is so spectacular, please wipe away that tear,
For I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.
I hear the many Christmas songs that people hold so dear,
But the sounds of music cannot compare with the Christmas choir up here.
I have no words to tell you of the joy their voices bring,
For it is beyond description to hear the angels sing.
I know how much you miss me. I see the pain inside your heart.
But I am not so far away. We really aren't apart.
So be happy for me, dear ones. You know I hold you dear.
And be glad I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.
I send you each a special gift, from my heavenly home above.
I send you each a memory of my undying love.
After all, love is a gift more precious than pure gold.
It was always most important in the stories Jesus told.
Please love each other, as the Father said to do,
For I cannot count the blessings or love He has for you.
So have a Merry Christmas, and wipe away that tear.
Remember, I am spending Christmas with Jesus Christ this year.*

Merry Christmas