

May 2026

BROADCASTER

A magazine of Worship Anew

God's Comfort in

LOVD

Grief



But take heart

I was 7 years old when a boy a few houses down from us was killed by a drunk driver. The boy was 13. A Boy Scout. A seventh grader. His sister was a close friend of my sister, and his mother, who worked for the local emergency services, was among those who responded to the scene that night. And so, when tragedy reached our street on that April evening in 1985, it impacted not just our street, or our small town community, but our very home, as well.

It is precisely into that kind of grief that the Gospel speaks most clearly. As the hymn “Jesus Lives! The Victory’s Won” (LSB #490:1) reminds us:

“Jesus lives! The vict’ry’s won! Death no longer can appall me; Jesus lives! Death’s reign is done! From the grave Christ will recall me. Brighter scenes will then commence; This shall be my confidence.”

Scripture does not ask us to grieve quietly. The psalms are full of anguished cries to God. Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus, even knowing what was about to happen (John 11:35). The apostle Paul writes that we grieve, yes, but not as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). That hopeful distinction matters enormously. Paul does not say we do not grieve. He says we grieve differently. We grieve as people who know something that changes everything.

What I remember most is not the particular details of that day. What I remember is the weight of grief in the days and weeks that followed. The packed funeral. The way a community can fall quiet. The way people search for words and cannot find them. The way the loss of a child feels profoundly wrong in a way that nothing in this world seems able to fix.

In John 16:33b (NIV), Jesus speaks plainly to His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion. He does not soften what is coming. He says: “In this world

That kind of grief is loud. Not always in the sense of sound, but loud in the sense that it can’t be set aside or hidden away. It is constant.

Matthew F. Leighty

Matthew F. Leighty
Executive Director

Cover Photo by Jim Garringer
These five crosses were placed on the highway as a memorial to five Taylor University (Upland, Ind.) students and staff who were killed in a motor vehicle accident in 2006.



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Worship Anew engages and equips aging adults with resources to live a full and abundant life in Jesus Christ.

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“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33 (NIV)

you will have trouble.” There it is, stated without apology. The world will bring loss. The world will bring grief that is loud and heavy and does not resolve on our timetable.

But He does not stop there. He continues: “But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

Not “take heart because the grief will pass quickly.” Not “take heart because things always work out.” But take heart because Christ has conquered sin, death, and the grave. The victory is already won. His resurrection is already accomplished. Our Lord speaks these words not for comfort alone but from authority, the authority of the One who bore our sin on the cross, rose bodily from the grave, and now delivers that victory to you personally through His Word and Sacraments.

For those of you walking through grief right now — perhaps the

loss of a spouse, a child, a dear friend, or the accumulated sorrows of many years — I want you to hear this: Your grief is not a failure of faith. Your grief is honest. And Christ meets you there in the loudest and heaviest moments of it with a promise that is not a platitude but a proclamation.

He has overcome.

Some of you reading this have carried grief like that for decades. A child lost. A spouse. A friend taken too soon and too senselessly. The years pass but the weight does not fully lift. I want you to know that grief is not forgotten — not by those who loved alongside you and not by God. The Lord who says, “I have overcome the world,” speaks that promise over every life cut short, every loss that never made sense, and every sorrow that still surfaces when you least expect it.

The ministry of Worship Anew

exists, in no small part, because of this truth. We serve those who have known loss deeply, sometimes repeatedly. We bring the Word of God to the kitchen table, to the hospital bed, and to the quiet spaces where people may have no one else carrying the Gospel to them. We proclaim God’s Word so that no one faces their tribulation without also hearing His triumph.

Thank you for making that ministry possible through your faithful prayers and generous support. You are part of this proclamation.

“Jesus lives! And now is death But the gate of life immortal; This shall calm my trembling breath When I pass its gloomy portal. Faith shall cry, as fails each sense; Jesus is my confidence!” (“Jesus Lives! The Victory’s Won” LSB #490:5).

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The Rev. Thomas Eggold leads the “Worship Anew” program as a guest pastor for Pentecost.

ARE YOU THIRSTY?

By Rev. Thomas Eggold

If you’re new to the story, Pentecost can feel like a strange day to celebrate. After all, Christmas has a baby in a manger, Epiphany has the Wisemen, and Easter has an empty tomb. But Pentecost? Pentecost features wind and fire, strange languages, and people accusing the disciples of public intoxication. So, what is Pentecost, and why do we celebrate it?

In Acts 2, the risen Christ keeps His promise. The disciples are gathered together when “a sound like a mighty rushing wind” fills the

house, and “divided tongues as of fire” rest on each one of them. They are filled with the Holy Spirit, and they begin to speak in other languages so that people from many nations hear “the mighty works of God” in their own tongue (Acts 2:1-21).

That last detail matters. The miracle of Pentecost isn’t simply that the disciples speak in unfamiliar languages. The miracle is that the Gospel is heard. Here, God is doing what He always does. He’s giving His Word so that



sinners may be forgiven and faith may be created.

Pentecost is often called the “birthday of the church.” It is no accident that Pentecost happens in Jerusalem during one of Israel’s great feasts — when crowds have gathered from around the world. The Lord is gathering a people from “every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). But Pentecost is not only about fire. It is also about water.

This may surprise us because we usually picture Pentecost in the reds and oranges of fire. Yet, Jesus Himself links the coming of the Spirit to “living water.”

In John 7, Jesus stands up during “the great day” of the Feast of Tabernacles (also called the Feast of Booths) and cries out: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me ... ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:37-38). John immediately explains that Jesus is talking “about the Spirit” (John 7:39).

The setting makes the words even sharper. During the Feast of Tabernacles, the people remembered God’s care during the wilderness wandering, and their worship included a vivid ritual where water was poured out as the people prayed and sang of God’s salvation. It was here that Jesus stood up, and, just as the people were asking to be filled from “the wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12:3), He announced that the true fulfillment is found in Him. And then He said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me” (John 7:37).

And here is the Pentecost connection. The Spirit is never given as a “free-floating” spiritual experience that is detached from Jesus. The Spirit is given because Jesus has been crucified, risen, and ascended, and now the Spirit comes to deliver what Jesus accomplished. The Holy Spirit’s work is always to reveal Christ, to glorify Christ, and to bring the living water of salvation to thirsty

sinners.

The Holy Spirit works through Word and Sacrament. In this way, Pentecost is not just a one-time event. Pentecost continues wherever Christ’s Gospel is spoken and heard. The Spirit is “poured out” where sins are forgiven in Jesus’ name, where Baptism joins people to Christ’s death and resurrection, and where the church eats and drinks Christ’s true body and blood for the forgiveness of sins.

So, just as in Peter’s sermon from Acts 2, Pentecost always asks, “Are you thirsty?” Do you recognize where your life is dry? Do you acknowledge the ways your heart is wilting under sin, guilt, fear, and bitterness? And these questions are so important because Jesus does not say, “If anyone has it together, let him come to me.” He says, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.” And then He gives the promise that, “Whoever believes in me ... ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:38).

When Christ Jesus gives living water to the thirsty, eternal life begins.

The Rev. Thomas Eggold is the senior pastor at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind., and serves as a guest pastor on “Worship Anew” for May 24, Pentecost.



Creating crosses to bring comfort

*By Ashley Wiehe
Director of Advancement*

The sawdust flies around the room. The cuts are careful and precise. No deviation from the blueprints. This project is too special; it means too much to the recipient.

In a few months or maybe a few days, it will stand at the site of a shooting or a fire. A place where the loss is heavy. But, a cross with a blue heart will remain as a reminder of the person who is now gone but never forgotten.

The Hearts of Mercy and Compassion is a ministry through Lutheran Church Charities. This ministry helps in times of grief such as with their Comfort Dog program.

These hearts and crosses are made by volunteer carpenters throughout the country. They are crafted based on a blueprint so that each are the same — a key testament to the life that was lost.

The Rev. Alex Duff helps to facilitate



this ministry through Suburban Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind. (the home church of the Rev. William Mueller who serves on “Worship Anew”). He joins 22 other sites across the country providing this service.

Duff has been coordinating this

ministry at the church for three years. He has a team of carpenters who craft the hearts and crosses and then a team of volunteers who help to deliver them to sites of tragic loss.

The volunteers that go out receive “Spiritual First Aid” training as they visit these sites and talk and pray

Photo provided by Suburban Bethlehem Lutheran Church
At top, a team of carpenters works through Suburban Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind., to create the hearts and crosses.

Photo provided by Lutheran Church Charities
At right, in Maui, 103 crosses stand on the Lahaina Highway after the fires in 2023 claimed lives.



with people who are grieving. They deliver the hearts and crosses but also share how people can write messages on them for the families who will be taking them home.

“I saw how the family was going to be taking this (cross) home,” Duff said. “It’s something that they now could take with them. It was (showing) the support that they had around them.”

Each cross is made for someone who has died. When floods took the lives of many men, women, and children in Texas, they put up 139 crosses in their memory. When fires broke out in Maui, they placed 103 crosses for those who had died. When a student died at a local high school or a shooting in a church took lives or a car crash brought tragedy at an aftercare program, the crosses were there.

“It gives you a canvas to support that person or that family that will be grieving the loss,” said Sarah Sekki, director of Hearts of Mercy and Compassion for Lutheran Church Charities. “It can be a very powerful thing.”

The program was started by Greg Zanis, who has since passed away, after the loss of his father-in-law in a murder. He saw that it could be made for comfort and to show God’s love. But then when Columbine happened, he saw it as an opportunity to help others on a large scale. When he was no longer able to continue to go to all of the sites, he gifted the ministry to Lutheran Church Charities, who continues it today.

“Over the course of 2020 and onward, many things have changed or upgraded,” Sekki said. “We now put the name in Cricut lettering right in the center of the *Ichthus* (fish symbol for Jesus) to make the person’s life the focal point of the loss.”

At his church, Duff makes sure that his team is taking care with each of the 25 crosses that are made each year. He doesn’t know if the crosses will be used today or three years from now, but the crosses are ready because he knows the impact that they will have.

“With the crosses, it feels good to be able to leave a note, word of encouragement that you know they’re going to read, but at the same time, to be there and pray with people,” he said. “(We want to) bring that kind of comfort of faith.”

To learn more about this ministry, please visit www.lutheranchurchcharities.org. All crosses are deployed through local LCMS churches. If you know of a loss in your community, please contact your local Lutheran congregation who can work with Lutheran Church Charities for help.

*Photo by Ashley Wiehe
Suburban Bethlehem
Lutheran Church, Fort
Wayne, Ind., is one of the
churches creating and
delivering the Hearts of
Mercy and Compassion.*



Celebrating the Holy Trinity

*By Thomas Moll
Director of Content*

The first Sunday after Pentecost has a name unlike any other feast on the church calendar. Most commemorations celebrate an event or a saint. Trinity Sunday celebrates who our God is: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Trinity Sunday falls on May 31 this year, and the Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer shares a message titled, “Let God Be God!” on our “Worship Anew” program.

The feast has a surprisingly contested history. In the early medieval church, local celebrations of the Trinity were common, but Rome resisted making it a universally accepted observance for centuries — partly out of concern that singling out one Sunday for the Trinity implied the other Sundays were somehow less Trinitarian. (Fair point!) It wasn’t officially added to the Roman calendar until 1334 under Pope John XXII. Martin Luther kept the feast, and the Lutheran church calendar has observed it ever since as a fitting capstone to the great half of the church year.

The famous hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy!” — a staple of Trinity Sunday worship — draws its text directly from Isaiah 6 and Revelation 4, where angelic voices cry out before the throne of God. The threefold “holy” (Sanctus) has been understood by the church as an implicit witness to the Trinity since the earliest centuries of Christian worship.

Lutherans confess the doctrine of the Trinity, not as a philosophical puzzle to be solved, but as the living God who speaks, saves, and sanctifies.

The Athanasian Creed — one of three ecumenical creeds — is traditionally read or sung on Trinity Sunday as a bold, comprehensive declaration of who God is.

“Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty! God in three persons, blessed Trinity!” (LSB #507:1).





Worship Anew in May

Year 2026 | Series A



You Are Chosen!

May 3, 2026 – Fifth Sunday of Easter ~ Rev. William Mueller

We live in a world where everyone wants to be special; everyone wants to receive a trophy. As the redeemed people of God in Jesus Christ, we are so much more than special. We receive so much more than a trophy! We are chosen and “mercied,” and Christ has given us a glorious mission!

*Sermon Text: 1 Peter 2:2-10**Readings: Psalm 146; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14*

Featured Choirs: St. Paul Lutheran School, Fort Wayne, Ind.; Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Emmaus Lutheran Church, Wauseon, Ohio



Keep on Keeping

May 10, 2026 – Sixth Sunday of Easter ~ Rev. Scott Zeckzer

Keepsakes — we all have them — those special things that remind us of special people, places, or events in our lives. God has given you keepsakes to remind you of what He’s done for you. He also has sent the Holy Spirit to help us to “Keep on Keeping.”

*Sermon Text: John 14:21**Readings: Psalm 119:89-93, 105; 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21*

Featured Choirs: St. Paul Lutheran School, Fort Wayne, Ind.; Holy Cross Lutheran School, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Redeemer Lutheran Church, Convoy, Ohio



Lifted to a Higher Reality

May 17, 2026 – Ascension of Our Lord (observed) ~ Rev. Dr. Walter Maier III

Why celebrate Christ’s ascension? He visibly left this earth, and we cannot see Him! There are wonderful reasons to celebrate this event. Christ’s ascension lifts us to a higher reality.

*Sermon Text: Luke 24:44-53**Readings: Psalm 47; Acts 1:1-11; Luke 24:44-53*

Featured Choir: St. Paul Lutheran Church, Decatur, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: St. James Lutheran Church, Archbold, Ohio



Living Water

May 24, 2026 – Pentecost ~ Guest Pastor – Rev. Thomas Eggold

People who think they are healthy don’t go to the doctor, and those who are satisfied in themselves can’t accept a Savior. But to those whose sin has left them desolate — to the one whose life is dry and whose spirit is wilting — these words mean everything!

*Sermon Text: John 7:38**Readings: Psalm 25; Acts 2:1-21; John 7:37-39*

Featured Choir: Indiana District LWML Choir

Featured Art and Architecture: Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Ind.



Let God Be God!

May 31, 2026 – The Holy Trinity ~ Rev. Dr. Thomas Ahlersmeyer

Christians across the world gather today to worship the Triune God. In Jesus Christ, we encounter the true God — One who challenges our expectations, yet gracefully comes to us with purpose and promise. The invitation given to us is simple and profound: “Let God Be God!”

*Sermon Text: Matthew 28:19**Readings: Psalm 8; Acts 2:14a, 22-36; Matthew 28:16-20*

Featured Choir: Holy Cross Lutheran School, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Featured Art and Architecture: Trinity Lutheran Church, Auburn, Ind.

WHEN GRIEF IS LOUD

Finding God's comfort

*An Introduction by Ashley Wiehe
Director of Advancement*

Grief can come in many forms. It can come as a whisper in a quiet moment, and other times, it comes as a boom that shakes us to our cores.

Many times, grief is experienced individually within a family or a close group of friends. But sometimes, the grief is so large that it affects a community or even a whole nation.

It's 9/11, Columbine, Pearl Harbor, Sandy Hook, and Hurricane Katrina. It's the shooting in a church. It's the tornado that rips through a community. It's the bus crash that claims the lives of a team.

It's the grief that surrounds us. It's replayed in news reports and immortalized through memorials. It's remembered on anniversaries of the tragedy. It's talked about by neighbors and friends on Sunday mornings.

It's loud grief.

In this issue of the Broadcaster magazine, we are sharing stories of tragedies that have affected communities, neighbors, and a nation, and how you can cope in your own loud grief.

If you or someone you know is experiencing grief, please connect with us through our Grief Ministry. We offer resources for aging adults, as well as their caregivers, who have experienced a loss. Visit WorshipAnew.org/grief to learn more.

The lights represent a memorial to the Twin Towers in New York City and the lives that were lost during a terrorist attack on Sept. 11, 2001.

Loud **GRIEF** meets loud **GRACE**

Reflecting on 25 years since 9/11

*By Rev. Dr. Dien Ashley Taylor
LCMS Atlantic District President
Hastings-On-Hudson, N.Y.*

Twenty-five years have passed, but the raw soreness has not, as the throbbing pain still lingers and the searing memories remain jarringly vivid.

How does one process this indescribable grief when each reference to the phone number of the emergency services — 911 — recalls the date of the surprise attacks that changed the course of history? When every airplane trip's security requirements remind us of the weariness of terror threats? When suspicions about allegiance poignantly persist, and as post-traumatic stress syndrome's enduring images negatively affect individuals, families, communities, and nations for years to come?

Children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews have been born who never saw those slender twin edifices that jutted upwards from the bedrock of Manhattan. They only know the paradoxical waterfalls of profound emptiness with perimeters imprinted with the names of those whose voices are no longer heard.

We dread the remembrances because 25 years does not simply allow people time to “get over it.” Yet, we are humbly honored to recollect the names of everyday people who never saw their family members again after the blue skies of the Big Apple were smeared in gray dust that hung over the charred tombs of silenced soldiers.

Instead, loud grief is often shared and lived as stories of where one was that day. The stories are retold with chilling detail.

Sharing stories is not simply an attempted therapeutic exposition of scabbed yet festering wounds; it is a pattern of resilience echoed by prophets of old who recount corporate pain for the sake of healing, who recollect for deeper meaning, and who grieve with the desire to process — to move forward — as one walks by faith and not by sight (Lamentations 1; 2 Corinthians 5:7).

It is not that time heals all wounds; it is that the Lord of all time heals broken hearts and binds up wounds in His time (Psalm 147:3), which, oftentimes, brings to remembrance those unconscionable events that demonstrate how His power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12).

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Photo by Ashley Wiehe
Two squares of waterfalls surrounded by names of those lost now stand as a memorial to the Twin Towers in New York City.

**He heals the
brokenhearted
and binds up
their wounds.**

Psalm 147:3

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It is not by two slender vertical beams that the greatest world trade was accomplished, but by One who on one vertical and one horizontal beam who beheld and bore the world's unending grief that humanity willingly brought upon itself.

"It is finished," cried the Lord Jesus from the cross, signaling His perfect obedience to the Law that purchased righteousness for His people (John 19:30b). The rippling of His abundant mercy allows people to remember each Friday as a Good Friday, each Sunday as a resurrection day, and each moment of loud grief as an opportunity to revel in the Lord's gracious and saving hand in and through it all.

Because Jesus died and rose from the dead for us, new life is lived not only when God's people close their eyes and sleep in Christ, but also from the moment that they are baptized into Christ and are gathered to receive His precious body and blood for the forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation. Loud grief is met by loud grace.

There is no need to plow through loud grief dispassionately. Loud grief need not be muted. It need not be feared. It need not be ignored. The Lord did not disregard our grief, but He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4a).

Retracing the battle scars and weathered wounds that continue to itch and ache, the Lord's people behold the active and saving will of Christ Jesus in the midst of despair. They see the healing hand of Christ touching and restoring amid the ruins. They hear the still small voice of the Deliverer saying, "Peace, be still." They feel the everlasting arms of the Redeemer who carried slaves into freedom through the Red Sea so that, in the recounting of loud grief, God's children may learn of salvation's loud grace.

In Christ, every "Ah!" of disappointment, discouragement, and disbelief becomes a triumphant "Alleluia."

Twenty-five years of grief after the Twin Towers fell on Sept. 11, 2001, in New York City will yield to an eternity of bliss. While the Spirit still calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies us, He whispers peace and calm to all those whose persistent grief is loud by reminding faith-filled pilgrims of the abiding words of Jesus: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

In Christ, loud grief that affects a people for years yields to loud grace that recreates the cosmos for eternity.

Thanks be to God for this indescribable gift.

The Rev. Dr. Dien Ashley Taylor is the bishop and president of the Atlantic District of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod (LCMS) as well as the Synod president's voting representative and vice chairman of the LCMS Board for National Mission. He is also the pastor of Redeemer Evangelical Lutheran Church in The Bronx, New York.

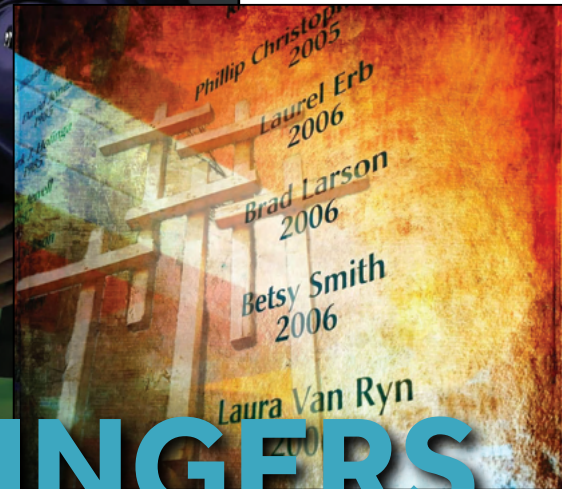


Photo by Ashley Wiehe
"Empty Sky" is a memorial that stands in Jersey City, N.J., facing the New York City skyline where the Twin Towers once stood.

REDIGER CHAPEL

Photo by the Associated Press
At left, Taylor University (Upland, Ind.) students gathered to pray in 2006 after a tragedy.

Photo by Jim Garringer
Below, the names of the five who died in that crash are listed in a memorial on campus.



WHEN GRIEF LINGERS

A crash, a loss, & mistaken identity remembered 20 years later

By Dr. Donna Downs
Professor at Taylor University, Upland, Ind.

When we experience tragedy in life, grief often lingers for years. Especially when anniversary dates of tragic events approach, our minds relive them in the days leading up to THAT treacherous day.

April 26 is one such date for me. Twenty years ago, as a faculty member at Taylor University in Upland, Ind., I, along with all faculty, staff, and students at the time, experienced the aftermath of a fatal accident that killed five members of our Taylor community. What ensued grew more than anyone could have imagined as mistaken identity and tragedy led to worldwide attention.

Anyone visiting Taylor's campus today can walk through a memorial prayer chapel that holds larger-than-life pictures of those lives taken in that accident on Interstate 69, a highway frequented by travelers between Fort Wayne (a satellite campus at the time) and Upland.

To today's students, they are photos with little meaning.

But those of us who were on campus in 2006 approach those photos with quiet reverence; for to us, they represent students full of life, zeal, and faith. We remember. We ponder. We grieve.

The week of April 26, 2006, started out as any other week at Taylor University, full of activity and education. As a part of their learning experience, my public relations students were planning a special event — a fundraising concert for the Boys and Girls Club and the young couple who run the club.

We had arranged for Sanctus Reel, a Christian band, to come to campus Tuesday night. Several of our students consistently worked with the inner-city kids in Marion, and so many volunteered that night. The concert was a hit. We reserved free tickets for 20 kids, ages ranging from 8 to 16. They went backstage to meet the band. None had ever attended a live concert before.

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Photo by Jim Garringer

The Memorial Prayer Chapel stands at the center of the Taylor University campus in Upland, Ind. It was erected following the death of four students and one staff member in 2006.

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This particular course normally averages around 18 students and always plans a special event. The previous fall class had planned an event called the One-on-One Connection, where we arranged an evening of free pizza, fun, and games for students at Upland Elementary School and their Taylor student-mentors. That particular class was an anomaly because it held only five students, one of whom was Laura Van Ryn.

An exciting piece of Tuesday night's concert event for us was that Monday we had received word from a local couple that their foundation would underwrite the cost of the concert (\$3,500) AND they would personally give us \$1,500 for the young couple's family needs (their son was quite ill). We were praising God for His provisions and blessings. The week was off to a great start!

Tuesday was full of excitement, planning, running around, and serving dinner to the band — a mixture of happiness and panic.

My class and I were on campus until about 2 a.m. Wednesday morning, cleaning up after the concert so things would be ready for chapel at 10 a.m. the next morning. Our president's wife was scheduled to speak. Everything needed to be spotless.

The next day continued as normal. That evening, I had just fallen asleep when I received a call to say a Taylor van had wrecked on I-69 and at least five Taylor people were involved. Some were dead. She said an all-campus meeting had been called in Rediger Chapel at 11 p.m. So, I jumped out of bed, called my son Brandon, a freshman at Taylor, got in the car, and drove a half hour back to campus.

When I arrived on campus that night of April 26, 2006, students were flocking to Rediger. Everyone was quiet; the atmosphere was solemn. Questions of, "Who could it be?" were whispered throughout the auditorium, with some saying they knew this certain person or that certain person was not there. All anyone knew was that a van had wrecked, some people had died, and some were injured.

People were praying and hugging all around me. I awaited news. At 11 p.m. Dr. Gene Habecker, our president, gave us as much information as he knew or could give us at the time. No names were released, but five were dead and four were injured. Parents still had to be notified; names of the deceased needed to be confirmed.

In the chapel, the band played praise and worship songs. People prayed; people spoke. Everyone was looking around to see who wasn't there.

At around 1 a.m., I walked over to my office to see if anything was on television or online. People were milling around the parking lots on either side of the chapel. Our university webmaster found me outside and asked if I could provide him with yearbook pictures of those in the accident. Just as we were talking, someone came out of the auditorium and yelled, "They're about to give more information." Slowly the names were announced. With each name mentioned, groups of students sobbed and fell to the ground or into one another's arms.

President Habecker told all the students to go call their parents and assure them that they were alive and OK. Taylor was inundated with parent calls, asking if their children were safe.

After we found the photos, I went back outside. The site was one I will never forget. Students were lying on the ground wailing.

I recalled Matthew 2:18: "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."

Classes were canceled the rest of the week as Taylor mourned. The following Monday was a difficult day as classes reconvened. Funerals were occurring almost daily.

Many students never regained momentum after the accident. The seniors, in particular, had begun their emotional separation from one another. They were preparing for life beyond college and leaving the Taylor

family when suddenly they were forced together in this desperate, emotional search for answers and understanding. Some changed their whole career goals, vowing to make a difference in the place of those who had died. Some found more purpose. Some lost what purpose they had. All of us either realized our need for Jesus more or had to work out our frustrations with what He had allowed to happen. Very few sat in the middle.

A song we sang that night (and many times during the days thereafter) stands out in my mind: "Blessed be the name of the Lord ... You give and take away" ("Blessed Be Your Name" by Matt Redman). It invariably still brings tears to my eyes as I sing or hear it — whether in chapel, at church, or online — as I remember that night. Having a God who understands grief is crucial in times like this. We can trust that He is close to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18) and binds up our wounds (Psalm 147:3).

A couple of weeks after the accident, we learned that two of the girls had been misidentified. Whitney Cerak was alive; Laura Van Ryn had died that night. Laura was one of my students and advisees. After the accident, we had signed up for 24-hour prayer vigils for her healing. And now, we learned, she had been gone all along. Yet, another tragedy. Yet, another moment of mourning.

After that, the two girls became the focus of the world. Their story was shared in a best-selling book, "Mistaken Identity: Two Families, One Survivor, Unwavering Hope," by Don Van Ryn and told on "The Oprah Winfrey Show." The world knew of our grief.

Year after year when April 26 rolls around, heartache penetrates my soul. Those of us who experienced this tragedy together will forever be bound by memories of the Taylor van accident. Almost every year around the anniversary of the accident, I meander to the memorial prayer chapel. Sometimes I sit on the bench and pray for the families. Sometimes I gaze upon each photo one by one and in my mind's eye see those represented there as they lived in our midst 20 years ago.

Sometimes I just sit and remember. Monica. Brad. Betsy. Laurel. Laura. We will never forget.

We will never forget.



Texas wept

ONE YEAR SINCE FLOODING CLAIMED LIVES IN TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

*By Rev. Michael W. Newman
Retired Texas LCMS District President*

Just mention a few dates or locations, and you will evoke strong emotions: September 11th, December 7th, Sandy Hook, Columbine. There are many more.

Nearly one year ago, Kerrville, Texas, was added to that terrible list as tragic flooding overwhelmed the Texas Hill Country. After being pummeled with rain by an unusual summer weather system, the Guadalupe River swelled to deadly proportions, sending a wall of water downriver that swept away homes, automobiles, RVs, and campground buildings. More than 130 precious people lost their lives, including a group of 8- and 9-year-old girls who were participating in what was supposed to be a fun and memorable Christian camp getaway.

The nation was shocked. Texas was heartbroken. It wasn't supposed to be this way.

You see, the Texas Hill Country is a picturesque oasis of rolling geography set apart as a favorite place for camping, hiking, and visits to quaint small towns that dot the countryside.

It is also a special refuge in God's beautiful creation for children and adults who want to experience a variety of Christian camp and retreat settings.

And that is why Texas was so sad. A place of beauty, a restoring refuge for young and old, and a setting for

growing in faith became the source of unspeakable grief and loss.

How do collective hearts cope with this "loud" and public grief? What do we do when tragic events plunge a community or nation into anguish? How do you cope when the passing of time brings you back around to the dreaded dates of despair?

First, let grief press you into prayer. God's Word declares, "What great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1a NIV).

Yes, we are children of God, knit together with Him through the atoning blood of Jesus, raised to walk in the newness of life in Baptism. We are not alone. Hearing His gracious invitation to "call upon me in the day of trouble" (Psalm 50:15a), we freely "Cast our cares" upon the Lord, "and he will sustain" us (Psalm 55:22a).

Let prayer be your first action — not worry, anxiety, fear, or hopelessness. We are confident in God's promise that "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32 NIV). Pray for God's gracious help, comfort, and hope. Invite others to do the same.



Second, let your sadness direct you to community. Collective grief not only validates the gravity of the loss; it underscores that God created people to be in community. Human beings need each other. The world buckles under the weight of loneliness. That is why God created the church — not just a building or organization, but people knit together under God’s grace and gifts to support one another, love one another, guide one another, and build one another up.

Don’t shoulder grief alone. Seek the company of God’s people to help and support you in your sadness. Talk together. Pray together. Worship together. Then, give of yourself to help others by contributing in some way. As people in this fallen world, we are called by God to “bear one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2a).

Third, let your heartbreak lead you to the consolation of God’s gifts. Too often, when a tragic event takes place, you will be tempted to devour every news source or scroll endlessly on social media. Your anxiety level will soar and any hope will be drained away. There is a better path for dealing with shared trauma in our world that groans (Romans 8:22-23).

Jesus calls us to “seek first (God’s) kingdom and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). That means you need to monitor your intake. Instead of seeking worry-inducing information streams, God’s Word of comfort, grace, presence, and strength is at your fingertips to stabilize your life. It is also the source of Good News that will shape you into Jesus’ shining light of peace and hope for a broken world that weeps.

Yes, YOU bring God’s voice of hope to the loud and collective grief of the world.

The Rev. Michael W. Newman is the retired district president of the Texas district of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS).

My community is grieving, but I’m not reacting in the same way. Is something wrong with me?

Grief is one of the most deeply personal experiences a human being can have, and there is no single or right way to walk through it. Some people weep openly; others feel a strange numbness for weeks. Some need to talk constantly; others grow quiet. Some feel relief alongside sorrow, especially after a long illness. None of these responses means you loved less or that something has gone wrong inside you.

Scripture gives us room here. The shortest verse in the Bible — “Jesus wept” (John 11:35) — tells us that grief is real and that God in the flesh entered into it with us. But we also read that David’s response to the death of his child surprised everyone around him (2 Samuel 12:19-23). Grief in the Bible doesn’t come in one shape.

We also know that we do not grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). That doesn’t mean we grieve less; it means our grief is held within the promise of resurrection. If your grief looks different from those around you, that’s not a sign of failure. It may simply be a sign of how uniquely God has made you.

The word “Trinity” isn’t in the Bible. So where does it come from?

The word “Trinity” doesn’t appear in Scripture, but the truth it describes certainly does. At the moment of Jesus’ Baptism, when the Son stands in the water, the Spirit descends like a dove, and the Father speaks from heaven (Matthew 3:16-17). The three persons of the Godhead are present together. Jesus commands His disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

The word “Trinity” was simply the church’s way of naming what Scripture already taught — that we worship one God in three persons. The early church didn’t invent the doctrine; they gave it a label so they could defend and teach it clearly. Lutherans confess this faith every Sunday in the creeds, and we celebrate it in a particular way each year on Trinity Sunday.

A note from the Editor ...

In our letters to the editor section, we would like to answer any and all questions that you have about Scripture, aging well, and our ministry. Please send your questions to editor@worshipanew.org. Please know that we will try to answer as many questions as we can. Thank you and enjoy!

WHEN GRIEF IS LOUD

Finding calm amid constant exposure to distressing news

By Marta Rees
Content Specialist for
Lutheran Church Charities

Some grief comes quietly. It settles into our lives with tenderness and tears. Other grief arrives loudly — sudden, overwhelming, and shared by an entire community. Loud grief follows tragedies that affect many at once: natural disasters, acts of violence, or losses that dominate the news and remain in our hearts long after the headlines fade.

For many older adults, this kind of grief is especially heavy. It can feel impossible to escape, replaying repeatedly through television screens, newspapers, and phones. Loud grief does not only affect our emotions; it touches the body, the spirit, and our sense of peace.

WHEN THE GRIEF KEEPS COMING

Loud grief is different because it does not allow much rest. It is reinforced by constant images and updates that keep the nervous system on alert. Counselor Jeanette Singer, explains why.

“Doomscrolling is not weakness. It’s the brain looking for safety and certainty,” she said.

Wanting to understand what is happening in the world comes from compassion and care.

Yet, prolonged exposure to distressing news can quietly



Photo provided by Lutheran Church Charities
The Hearts of Mercy & Compassion were on display at The Coming King Foundation’s Sculpture and Prayer Garden in Kerrville, Texas, after the July 4th floods took the lives of 139 people.

keep the body in a state of fight or flight. Over time, this can affect sleep, raise blood pressure, worsen chronic pain, and increase feelings of anxiety or despair. For older adults, whose bodies may already be more sensitive to stress, loud grief can feel exhausting and unrelenting.

A WEARY SPIRIT NEEDS GENTLE CARE

Many older adults describe not only emotional fatigue, but spiritual weariness during seasons of loud grief. Dr. Devin Custons, who serves on the board of Lutheran Church Charities and is a counselor who practices in Arizona, Missouri, and Texas, names this “spiritual fatigue” — not a lack of faith, but the result of carrying more

suffering than the heart was created to hold at once.

“Wanting to stay informed comes from compassion, not weakness,” Custons said.

The invitation is not to turn away from the world, but to practice discernment. Scripture speaks tenderly to this need: “Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28 NIV). Turning off the news at times is not denial; it is stewardship of the heart and mind.

WHEN THE BODY HOLDS THE GRIEF

Grief is not only something we feel; it is something the body carries. Loud grief



“Be still and know that I am God.” ~ Psalm 46:10

may show up as tension, shallow breathing, headaches, digestive trouble, or a constant sense of unease. When the nervous system is overwhelmed, grief can feel like being frozen or stuck.

Another gentle truth is the importance of presence over fixing. Much like the Lutheran Church Charities K-9 Comfort Dog ministry, healing often begins not with more information, but with a calm, quiet presence. When the nervous system is overwhelmed, grief tends to freeze. When calm is restored, grief can begin to move. A comforting dog, a listening ear, or a peaceful moment of prayer can communicate safety when words are hard to find.

With this in mind, there are gentle ways to care for ourselves during seasons of loud grief.

GENTLE PRACTICES FOR TIMES OF LOUD GRIEF

There are faithful, practical ways to care for the heart and body during difficult seasons.

Set aside a “worry time.”

Singer, who is a Lutheran Church Charities K-9 Comfort Dog handler (Lord of Glory Lutheran Church, Grayslake, Ill.) in addition to her work as a counselor, suggests choosing a daily time (perhaps 20 minutes) to write worries down, pray through them or speak them aloud. When worries arise outside that time, gently remind yourself, “Not now. I have time set aside for you.” This can help quiet constant rumination.

Replace doomscrolling with purposeful moments.

If a phone or television provides comfort, consider shifting what is viewed:

- ▶ photos of loved ones
- ▶ audio psalms or hymns
- ▶ calming music
- ▶ peaceful nature scenes

The same device can either increase anxiety or bring calm.

Let community grief be met with community care.

Loud grief often calls us toward gentle action. Writing a card, making a phone call, praying by name, attending worship, or participating in a grief group can reduce feelings of helplessness. Small acts of love bring relief to the nervous system.

Share stories and meaning together.

Support groups or simple conversations allow grief to be witnessed. One healing question is: “Tell me one thing you admired about them, or about the helpers.” This helps shift the heart from despair toward meaning and gratitude.

Create loving boundaries with the news.

Receiving one daily update from a trusted church leader or family member by phone, text, or printed bulletin can help older adults stay informed without becoming overwhelmed.

PERMISSION TO REST

Perhaps the greatest gift is permission — permission to turn off the television, permission to step back during intense news cycles, and permission to trust that caring deeply does not require constant exposure.

“You can care deeply without carrying everything,” Customs said.

In seasons when grief feels loud, God’s invitation remains quiet and steady: to rest, to be held, and to know that even in sorrow, we are not alone.

ABOUT LUTHERAN CHURCH CHARITIES

Lutheran Church Charities (LCC) works through LCMS churches to help individuals and families. Headquartered in Northbrook, Ill., LCC is a faith-based ministry and coordinates the deployment of thousands of volunteers for disaster response, crisis care, and mission projects in the United States and abroad. To learn more about LCC Ministries, visit www.lutheranchurchcharities.org.

Shared Sorrow

**“I WAITED PATIENTLY FOR THE LORD; HE INCLINED TO ME AND HEARD MY CRY.”
PSALM 40:1**

By Rev. Harry Edenfield

Years ago, I was asked by his parents to identify the body of their teenage son. As I drove home from the hospital, my tears did not hide the fact that other drivers were not sharing my grief. A strange solitude.

Death is a trumpet call to gather. The theologian Augustine encourages us: “Let us mourn in company; let us weep together.” Shared sorrow reminds humans that we have death as a common enemy and sin as an innate trait. When death “wins,” we have a mutual loss.

In grieving over His people’s idolatry, the Lord God speaks: “Consider, and call for the mourning women to come; send for the skillful women to come; let them make haste and raise a wailing over us” (Jeremiah 9:17b-18a). These professional mourners are called to demonstrate a public commemoration of sorrow.

Even as God sees our tears, He mixes His sorrow with ours. God invites the whole world to read what He sees: the murdered body of Abel. To Cain: “The voice of your brother’s blood

is crying to me from the ground” (Genesis 4:10b).

God consistently shares sorrow publicly. “And (Jesus) said, ‘Where have you laid (Lazarus)?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept. So the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’” (John 11:34-36).

My beloved brother Dan Edenfield died in 1998 at age 49. As an Allen County, Ind., sheriff, he was handling security at the War Memorial Coliseum in Fort Wayne. Dan took responsibility seriously. He died within three hours from a heart attack sustained while chasing a “bad actor.”

In October 2025, Dan posthumously received a great honor from officials of Fort Wayne and Allen County. A



Photo by Ashley Wiehe

A sign stands on Parnell Avenue in Fort Wayne, Ind., as a memorial to Sgt. Dan Edenfield, brother to the Rev. Harry Edenfield. Sgt. Edenfield died of a heart attack in the line of duty in 1998. The sign was hung in his honor in 2025.

section of Parnell Avenue, bordering the Coliseum, was renamed Sergeant Dan Edenfield Memorial Parkway. The ceremony was attended by dignitaries, police officers, and family. Dan was honored and grieved through shared words.

Some of Jesus’ final words to His disciples were about sharing sorrow: “You will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:32b-33).



I was vacationing hundreds of miles away the day my brother was honored. My absence was not out of avarice, but rather my lack of appreciation for sharing enduring sorrow. Sorrow always lingers. God wants us to continually comfort each other. The Father comforted Jesus; Jesus comforts us.

Some God-searching and self-searching have led me to where I should have been in October 2025. God created us as one race, one human family. He called us to salvation as one redeemed family. To all God-pleasing gatherings, God calls us to interact with His people with kindness, understanding, and love in worship and in sorrow.

One day, shared sorrow will become a shared song: “All tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb’” (Revelation 7:9b-10).

The Rev. Harry Edenfield is the pastor emeritus at Christ The King Lutheran Church and School in Southgate, Mich., and an author for Worship Anew’s Hope-Full Living devotional.

This month’s study text:

David’s Child Dies

15 And the LORD afflicted the child that Uriah’s wife bore to David, and he became sick. 16 David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. 17 And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. 18 On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, “Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm.” 21 Then his servants said to him, “What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food.” 22 He said, “While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, ‘Who knows whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?’ 23 But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me.”

2 Samuel 12:15-18, 21-23

Reflection Questions:

How does this passage from 2 Samuel demonstrate that “shared sorrow” is not always exhibited in the same manner?

How was the little boy an innocent victim? How was he not an innocent victim? Who pronounced the final verdict?

At his son’s death, David’s fasting stops and his sorrow calms. What caused this seemingly emotional contradiction?

Prayer:

Father, Your sorrow over death in creation and our sorrow as a part of a dying creation was not Your intended outcome. Jesus, thank You for being the sacrifice for our sins and the resurrection for our hope. Holy Spirit, thank You for bringing us together in this shared but hopeful sorrow. Amen.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

Hold My Hand

Even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

Psalm 139:10

We chose the hymn, “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” (LSB #739) for my daughter’s memorial service. “Precious Lord, take my hand, Lead me on, let me stand; I am tired, I am weak, I am worn. Through the storm, through the night, Lead me on to the light.” This beautiful hymn was written by gospel singer, Thomas Dorsey, out of deep grief after losing his young wife and baby in childbirth in 1932. His words and music have reminded many broken spirits that we’re never alone.

Our faith, family, and friends give us comfort during the storms of life. Even during our darkest moments, God’s with us! I know I look forward to being with my church-pew friends each week. Their hugs feel like my precious Lord is holding my hand!

*Clare Hilgendorf
Appleton, WI*

Lord, help me feel Your presence through others. Amen.

Reflect: Read Thomas Dorsey’s hymn and envision him seeing God’s light in the darkness of his grief.

Read: Psalm 34:18 and Romans 15:5



Through Hope-Full Living, a devotional of Worship Anew, find comfort in your grief. Our authors write from their own personal experiences. It’s seniors writing for seniors. If you are interested in subscribing to Hope-Full Living for only \$16 per year, please visit our website at HopeFullLiving.org.



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SOLUTIONS

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Find Comfort

As one whom his mother comforts,
so I will comfort you.

Isaiah 66:13a



Happy Mother's Day