

Serving the Littlest and the Least of These

BY JEAN ADDISON, DIRECTOR OF ST. PAUL CHRISTIAN ACADEMY WITH EDEN KEEFE, MISSION EDITOR

Don't worry! You aren't the only one questioning the grammar in the title of this article (Littlest) ... so were my iPhone and computer. One thing that needs no correction is God's Word. When contemplating what Scripture reference to use in correlation with our LWML Mission Grant, "The Littlest and Least of These," and our project's focus, Matthew 25:40 came to mind. *"And the King will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did to me.'"* In this case, I wanted to personalize it for the families we serve at our childcare center — the children, who are the "littlest," and the low-income families, who are the "least."

Prior to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Reverend Byron R. Williams, Sr., shared his vision with our congregation, Trinity Lutheran Church in New Orleans, Louisiana, to establish a daycare. Fast-forward to 2006, he echoed that same vision with our congregation, St. Paul Lutheran Church in Dallas, Texas. Overcoming many obstacles, that vision became a reality in August of 2019 when we opened the doors of St. Paul Christian Academy: a full-time childcare center for children six weeks-four years old and before and after school care for K-5th graders.

With God's blessings and many prayers, enrollment increased from three to 55 children within four months. With that growth, the need to provide transportation, additional space for parent trainings, as well as to hold food, clothing, and school supply drives became apparent. St. Paul Lutheran Church and Christian Academy answered its call to become a mission ministry for our low-income,

unchurched, childcare families, as well as to the elderly, the local school, and the community.

During our ribbon-cutting ceremony, God placed an angel in our midst, Christine Weerts, Editor of the *Black Lutheran Ministry Timeline Newsletter*, who provided a wealth of information regarding available grants and resources that would support our improvement and expansion efforts. With her guidance, we applied for an LWML Texas District mission grant. We received \$20,000 to purchase a van which we use to provide children transportation to and from school, as well as transportation for families to attend worship service and church/childcare activities.

As a recipient of a \$42,000 LWML Mission Grant, "The Littlest and Least of These," we completed needed repairs, renovations, and updates to our Fellowship Hall and kitchen. There is now adequate space and updated equipment/appliances for childcare and fellowship meals, bi-weekly worship services, special services/ministry events, training classes, and physical activities when weather prevents outdoor play. Our childcare families, church, and community have been impacted by this building improvement tremendously!

Thank you, wonderful women of LWML, for supporting our mission ministries through your mission outreach as we reach those in need of God's Word while expanding His Kingdom! **Q**

Jean Addison served as a 20-year educator in the New Orleans Public Schools before relocating to Dallas, Texas, following Hurricane Katrina. She then served 15 years in the Dallas Independent School District before assuming the role as childcare director at St. Paul Christian Academy.



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