

# Margo Dupre



## Living Forgiven

Standing on the edge of the platform, high above the ground and strapped into a harness, she needed a little push to get started on the zip-line ride of her life. Her experience at that long-ago women's retreat in Michigan is a fun snapshot of Margo Dupre. She might need a little nudge at first, but once she takes the leap, there's no stopping her.

Sitting in her Lubbock, Texas, home office and art studio, in a vibrant pink blouse and with a smile as big as the West Texas open plains, Margo chatted with me on Skype, sharing stories as a wife, a mother, an artist, a teacher, and the 2013–2015 chairman of Heart to Heart Sisters.

*by Beth Foreman, Associate Editor*

### **Please tell us about your family.**

I was born and raised in Detroit. My younger brother and I come from a family with a long tradition of Christian pastors. I have been truly blessed by God. Growing up, God gifted me with a mom who showered me with an immeasurable love, but I didn't fully understand it then. I am also thankful that God later gifted me with my husband, Brian, who is devoted and also provides me with love beyond measure. We have been married for twenty years — my greatest joy! Owing much to what I've discovered through these two significant people in my life, I've had the chance to better understand and reflect on the unconditional love God provides for me.

We have a blended family of four children: Antoine (25), Bianca (23), Marissa (19), and Martina (17). His, hers, and ours! Most people don't even know we are a blended family until they hear one of our older kids call us by our first name.

Genealogy is one of my hobbies and, when I have time, I enjoy researching our family online. We've gone all the way back to 1812 with my father's side of the family — Heath — which is English Creole, a mixture of English, African, and Indian. And my husband's family is French Creole, a mixture of French, African, and Indian.

### **Tell us about your path as an artist and an educator.**

I studied art and education and, just out of college, I moved to California and worked at the Los Angeles Craft and Folk Art Museum, in the museum shop and as a docent in their education department. I returned to Michigan after three years, to work for the Metro Detroit Convention and Visitor's Bureau, and later worked in training and development as Director of Training for a Community Based Training Cooperative at Focus: HOPE, a non-profit community service organization in Michigan. I coordinated staff training designed specifically for a consortium of emergency service providers.

### **Tell us about your art.**

I loved to draw as a child. My kindergarten teacher noticed my talent and encouraged my mom to have me develop it. I consider myself a botanical artist. I use mixed media, acrylic painting, and 100% U.S.-grown cotton yarns. One example is a piece called "Botanical Ballet." The green leaves are acrylic and the flowers are yarn. I attach the yarn, thread by thread, twisting them together. I also do some colored pencil work such as "Tabitha, Arise," which tells the story of Tabitha (Dorcas) being restored to life by Peter in Acts 9:36–43.

I've done some shows and sold work, and I do have a website, though I haven't been focusing as much on my own art, since I've been teaching art at a private school here in Lubbock.

### **Do you have your own studio, a place to create?**

You're looking at it! I've got my drawing table with a microscope lamp to do the yarn work so I can see those really close details. But don't look too closely at the rest of this space! It's kind of junky right now!

### **So what brought you from Michigan to Texas?**

My husband, Brian, is a pastor here at historic Redeemer Lutheran Church, Lubbock, but he wasn't always a pastor. When we first met — at church, by the way — he worked for an advertising firm. He heard God's call and started at the seminary in 2003.

### **So you moved to Missouri . . .**

That's a story in itself! Do you remember the Great Blackout in 2003? It was August, right in the midst of our getting ready to move, and the lights went out. Everywhere. No phones, no electricity, nothing! We had rented a U-Haul truck, but they couldn't track their trucks. But we owned a van! Brian and I prayed about it and decided I should go ahead with the kids. I packed everything in my van. My cast iron skillet was under the driver's seat. We were like the Beverly Hillbillies, pillows and all kinds of stuff packed in the car with four kids and me. I found myself saying, "I'm going to the light! There is light in Missouri!"

### **Sounds like another zip-line experience . . . .**

We hadn't been able to communicate with anybody at the seminary, but they were hearing about it on the news. When I drove onto seminary grounds, people started coming out from all over the place, hugging us, so happy to see us, telling us how they had been praying. It was a real homecoming, almost what it will be like in heaven.

### **So you settled into life at the seminary . . .**

The heavenly Father has truly blessed us with a family of His choosing to enrich our lives as we do His work in the ministry. It was easy to settle into the seminary life because we lived on the campus. There was a great sisterhood among the "sem" wives.

When I moved there, I planted a flowerbed, right by the front door, with orange cosmos. By Halloween they were almost eight feet tall. I had no idea they would get that tall! The best part was that the monarch butterflies were so hypnotized by the orange flowers that they wouldn't move. I could sit outside on the porch and sketch a butterfly on the flower as long as I wanted.

*Four years later, the Dupre family packed up again and moved to Lubbock. It's only a couple states southwest of Missouri, but it was a world away when it came to meeting a new backyard, new people, a new culture.*

It's a desert here! We live in a new community where the average tree is about ten feet tall, and it took a lot for that tree to get that tall!

I brought my orange cosmos seeds from Missouri and planted them. We gave them a funeral! I tried Calla lilies. Day lilies. I can't tell you how many things I've tried. Junipers. They passed away. I've wasted a lot of money in my backyard, trying to put in plants that were not indigenous. Now I've got red yuccas, sage plants, and prairie grasses — or they call it Mexican feather grass — with beautiful little golden tips that wave at you. I'm learning about Xeriscape landscaping. It's a big change from Missouri and Michigan.



### **So you had to learn a few new things as a transplant to Lubbock . . .**

Yes! We had to submerge ourselves in a West Texan culture, which is even different from the Texas culture. For starters, I learned about dust storms or haboobs. The first time it was scary. They usually last about a half hour — sometimes longer. The dust scrapes your skin, and you feel like you've had a facial. Your hair gets pretty dusty. You don't really want to be out there in it. It's best to stay in your car and turn off the AC. It can be like a whiteout snowstorm in Michigan!

### **How about adjusting to a new church?**

Brian was originally called as Director of the Lutheran Student Fellowship at Texas Tech University, which he did until he was asked to be interim and then called to be the full-time pastor at historic Redeemer. Ordinarily, in a cross-cultural situation, you'd find a Caucasian pastor ministering to an ethnic congregation. Ours is the opposite. Brian is French Creole, and 99.5 percent of our congregation is of German descent. So we have submerged ourselves into the German culture and allowed them to teach us how to "be" in this West Texas German Tex-Mex kind of culture!

That's the interesting thing about America. We are a melting pot. Even within families, we have different cultures and traditions. I remember going to one of my first Christmas Eve celebrations with my husband's family. He has a German great-grandmother who passed down a tradition to sing an old German song before they drink their eggnog. I asked, "Where did you get that song from?" He told me, "Oh, our Great Grandma. She taught it to us, so it's a tradition!"

### **That story reflects the goal of Heart to Heart Sisters — merging cultures. How did you get involved with LWML and the Heart to Heart (H2H) Sisters?**

I grew up in the Congregational Church until I was in my early twenties. My mother became interested in the Lutheran Church, Outer Drive Faith, which was in our neighborhood. I joined with her and learned they had a very active LWML. Those ladies took a soft, gentle-nudge approach to helping me understand that they expected me to embrace LWML — eventually! Let me tell you what they did: Whenever the women gathered for a photo, they rounded up every woman in the church. I explained that I didn't belong to LWML, and they responded, "Oh, yes you do! You're a member just like every Lutheran woman over eighteen. You're just not active."

### **So, that simple invitation planted an LWML seed for you that would spring to life years later . . .**

Yes! It made LWML a memory for me — a fun memory!

Here in Lubbock, the ladies were similar to the ladies at Outer Drive Faith. When I first got here, I would say, "Oh I'm not a member!" And they'd respond, "Yes, you are!" They invited me to all the activities, and then they decided to vote me in as the vice-president!

That's when fear set in. I don't know what to do! How am I supposed to do this job? To learn more about LWML, I read an article in the *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly* [Winter 2007] by Melissa Salomón, where she explained how the Heart to Heart Sisters encouraged, supported, and educated ethnic women on how to serve the church through the LWML. I thought, thank you, Jesus. This is something I can sink my teeth into!

So I called Melissa, and she encouraged me to apply for training; I was trained at the convention in Peoria in 2011.

*It's fitting that the Peoria convention's theme was "Being with Jesus: Living on the Edge." Here Margo was getting another nudge.*

Meanwhile, women here were gently nudging me to do devotions and Bible studies. I was then invited to be a member of the first LWML Heart to Heart Sisters standing committee, under Angelina Gomez, along with three other women. Angelina was an excellent mentor. She would say, "This is your assignment, and I know you can do it!" I guess people figure out really fast that saying, "I know you can do it!" works well for me!

### **Tell us about your work with Heart to Heart Sisters.**

It really is a sisterhood. We are women from different ethnic groups, with a love for God wanting to serve the church. One of our goals is to have leaders in every district. It's a matter of time and education to get this in place. Right now we are in our infancy stage.

Many women don't realize that what they are already doing is service. Taking care of older people. Taking care of new mothers. Providing meals for families when someone has lost a job. Many women often connect it as a cultural thing. It is that, but it is also a Christian thing. They don't have to be doing something different to be part of LWML. I tell them, don't change what you are doing. Just connect with LWML because there might be someone who can help you make it better — not different — just better.

One of my jobs is to train and educate. Recently, we created online Power Point® presentations to present the H2H Sisters' history in a way that would engage women on a personal level. It has taken three years and a lot of teamwork to put this together. I interviewed women, sent emails, and read Marlys Taege's material on the history of LWML, while working with our Vice President Pat Reichert, Melissa Salomón, Angelina Gomez (now Jauregui), and Marilyn McClure. This presentation is on the website now.



*Cosmic Dreamin'* by Margo Dupre



*Botanical Ballet* by Margo Dupre

### What is your greatest joy as you work with the H2H Sisters?

It's definitely the opportunity to work with so many wonderful Christian women. I believe that the H2H program has truly grown to be the heart of LWML.

### The heart of LWML? Can you explain that?

H2H gives women opportunities because of the diversity. It's a place many women get the exposure to so many different people. It's where we are really most conscientious about how God wants His church to be. H2H gives us a chance to recognize that we are all God's people. We all have one important thing in common and that is our belief and faith in Him. We speak to each other from one heart to another heart.

The best example of this is Jonathan and David. Naturally, they could have been enemies, but their hearts were so connected that they reached past all that other stuff. They were able to trust and love each other because it was part of God's plan for Jonathan and David as well as for us. You can see God's hands at work: then, with Jonathan and David, as well as today through the Heart to Heart Sisters program. The H2H program is part of God's plan for the LWML. God's plans are always the best plans.

### What 5-year goal do you have for Heart to Heart Sisters?

Recently, I explored all the districts' websites and realized that there were not any H2H Web pages. I've started encouraging districts to develop this. I'd like to see every district have a H2H Sisters Page on their websites. Our focus is definitely on continuing education, trying to figure out ways to educate our active H2H Sisters as well as our future ones.

### What prayers can be lifted up for the Heart to Heart Sisters?

I wrote a Bible study about Esther; here are three points from that study that apply to H2H Sisters:

1. For women to recognize that their time to serve in the church is the heavenly Father's time, not their own.
2. For women to be encouraged to serve as the Holy Spirit leads them, submitting to His will.
3. For women to know that sharing the love of Jesus and the message of His Good News is the source of their service.

### Please share your thoughts on the theme "Living Forgiven," for you and for LWML.

Living forgiven is a gift from God! Day to day we live practicing the behavior of forgiveness, being always mindful that we want and need it from others. Living forgiven isn't always easy. Sometimes it's not easy to forgive someone. It's also not always easy to believe that you've been forgiven. And it's not easy to ask for forgiveness from others. Even if people say they've forgiven you, guilt sometimes allows us to doubt whether we've really been forgiven. The devil wants it that way. He wants us to doubt that God has given us this gift of forgiveness. However, through His Word and Sacraments, this gift of forgiveness is never in doubt.

From my own experience, the LWML is fertile ground for any woman who wants to strengthen her conscience of living forgiven by practicing it. We have such great mentors who are purposefully mentoring living forgiven to those around them.

*Living forgiven and embracing new experiences, Margo remembers the gentle nudges that have set her on different paths, the encouragement to try something new, the pushes that got her started — all the way back to that zip-line ride. "I don't like heights at all, but I did it." She added with a laugh, "My eyes were closed the whole way across, so I saw nothing!"*

*But, since then, her eyes have been wide open as she embraces her loving family, her supportive LWML sisters and Heart to Heart team, and her Lord and Savior whose sacrifice gives eternal life. Q*