LWML Pacific Southwest District

Fall 2026

WOMEN OF THE WORD

As Lutheran Women in Mission, we joyfully proclaim Christ, support missions,
and equip women to honor God by serving others.

Greetings Lutheran Women and Men in Mission,

What an exciting time of year. There is a cool breeze on my morning walk, I cherish all the wonderful creatures (big and small) that I meet in the park, and I thank God for them. It really brightens my day and makes me thankful for all God has provided for the animals, and I greet all the wonderful people I meet along the path. It also reminds me how God has provided for me, even in hard times. No matter the obstacles I have faced in my life, God was there with me to give me strength and hope in the hardest of times. My strolls in the morning strengthen me and bring me peace no matter what my schedule will be later on that day. I get to greet the day thanking our Lord Jesus for His love and sacrifice for me, my family, my neighbors, and for all of you. Let us rejoice in this season and share our thankfulness with our neighbors and the members of our church and for those who are on our prayer lists and our church workers.

Did you remember that October is Church Worker Appreciation Month? It is a time that we set aside to show our appreciation for our pastors, teachers, DCEs, secretaries, organists, and all church workers. You can also show your appreciation to everyone who volunteers their time and talents to serve at your church. Invite your church workers to a luncheon, or provide childcare for your pastor and his wife while they have a night out.

Check out these resources and see the next page for more ideas:

Cards of Encouragement for Church Workers
Scripture Gift Tags and Poster
Pastor Appreciation Cards

God's blessings as you use your
time and talents
to serve others,
President Nancy Heredia



More Resources for Celebrating Church Worker Appreciation Month

Look under “Service” on the main page:
lwml.org

Share “Coloring Scripture” resources with teachers.
Put them in a folder or notebook or on a thumb drive.
https://www.lwml.org/coloring-resources
https://www.lwml.org/posts/free-resources/cards-of-encouragement



CALL to refer a
YOUNG WOMEN REPRESENTATIVE
for the next National Convention

Do you know a young woman
(between the ages 22-35) who
loves the missionary heart of
LWML and being part
of your local LWML?

Please send me her contact
information.
I would love to chat with her about
the next national convention.

Blessed to be a blessing,
VP for Special Focus Ministry
Melissa Salomón
mgsalomon@gmail.com

Start making plans to attend the National LWML Convention
July 8–11, 2027
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Oklahoma City Convention Center, 100 Mick Cornett Drive, Oklahoma City, OK 73109
Theme: Transformed in Christ
Scripture Verse: *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect* (Romans 12:2).



MEET Pastor Joël Held

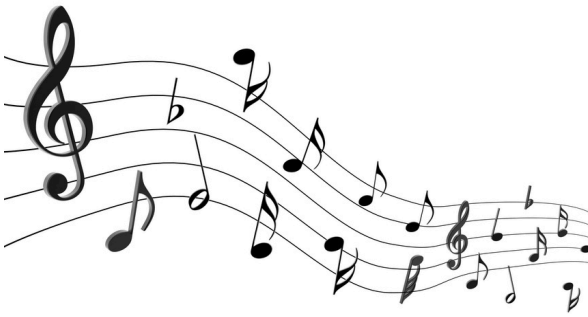
PSD Junior Pastoral Counselor through 2030

I am grateful for the opportunity to introduce myself to the women of the LWML Pacific Southwest District. I enjoyed attending my first PSD LWML Board meeting and seeing firsthand the heart for service, missions, and ministry that is so evident among the women of the LWML.

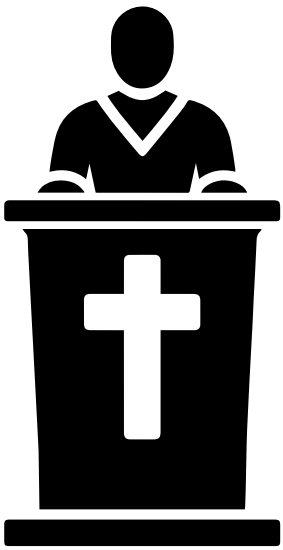
My name is Pastor Joël Held, and I currently serve Edgewater Lutheran Church in Eastvale, California. My journey into pastoral ministry was not necessarily the path I expected when I was younger, but as I look back, I can clearly see how God used the different chapters of my life to prepare me for where He has placed me today.

I was born in Papendrecht, the Netherlands, in the province of South Holland, about thirty minutes from Rotterdam. My family moved to the United States when I was nine years old. My father came to study in this country, but he was always passionate about us learning music. So music became an important part of my life and eventually an important part of my service to the church.

I began serving as a church musician in my early teens as an organist, and in my twenties I switched to worship leading and music directing, which I have done for the last 29 years. My musical background has included classical music, contemporary Christian music, Gospel, rock, and many different worship traditions. Over the years, I have served as a composer, musician, and music educator, alongside my duties in church.



For nearly three decades, I also worked in education. I taught in both public and private schools and spent many years working with children and young people through music. Those years taught me a great deal about teaching, communicating, building relationships, and meeting people where they are.



Yet God opened another door. Over time, I sensed an increasing call toward pastoral ministry. Eventually, that call led me into theological training and preparation for the pastoral office through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. I was ordained and installed as pastor of Edgewater Lutheran Church on June 8, 2025.

One of the things that makes this calling especially meaningful to me is that speaking publicly was once something I could hardly imagine doing. During my teenage years and into my twenties, I struggled with a severe stutter. There were times when simply getting words out was difficult. Looking back today, there is something humbling about realizing that God would take someone who once struggled to speak and call him to a vocation centered on proclaiming His Word.

Pastoral Counselor's Message Continued

That is one reason I am continually reminded that ministry is not about our strength. It is about Christ working through ordinary and imperfect people to accomplish His purposes.

At Edgewater, one of my greatest goals is to help build a congregation firmly grounded in God's Word and centered on Jesus Christ and His Gospel. I want our church to be a place where people hear clearly that salvation is God's gift through Christ, where families are strengthened, children are taught the faith, and people of every generation are encouraged to grow as disciples of Jesus.

I also have a strong heart for reaching people who are not yet connected to a church. Edgewater currently worships in a school, which gives us both challenges and opportunities. We desire to be deeply connected to our community, to share the Gospel faithfully, and to welcome people into the life of the Church through God's Word and Sacraments.

My wife, Sara, has walked alongside me throughout this journey, and together we have two sons. Our first-born, Andrew, was recently married, and is finishing up his studies at Concordia University Irvine. Our younger son, Philip, also attends there as a junior. I am thankful for my family, for the congregation God has entrusted to my care, and for the many faithful Christians I have the privilege of serving alongside.

As I begin getting to know the women and leadership of the LWML PSD, I am especially thankful for your commitment to supporting missions and proclaiming Christ. I look forward to seeing how God continues to use all of us together in service to His kingdom.

Ultimately, my prayer for my ministry is quite simple: that Christ would remain at the center, that His Word would be faithfully proclaimed, and that through everything we do, more people would know the forgiveness, life, and salvation that are found in Him.

Joël Held, M.A.Ed., Th.M.
Pastor - Edgewater Lutheran Church

NATIONAL LWML Website

If you have not gone to the national website, please do.
There is so much information and help with Bible Studies, Programs, Spiritual Growth, Coloring Scripture and much more.
www.lwml.org
The 2026 LWML Prayer Service can be found on the National website. It is based on the acronym P.R.A.Y.E.R. - Praise, Remember, Ask, Yield, Excitement, Rejoice.
It is a classic, yet updated, service from over a decade ago.
If you have not used it, take a look.

What is an Auxiliary??

Auxiliary – *offering or providing extra help or support*. A church auxiliary is a secondary organization or group within a church that provides support, labor, and specialized ministry to help the main body function. An auxiliary is intended to be an integrated part of the church.

The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod Auxiliaries

Lutheran Hour Ministries (LHM)
As the official men's auxiliary of the LCMS, the International Lutheran Laymen's League is the governing body for Lutheran Hour Ministries, a Christian outreach ministry empowering and equipping churches to communicate the Gospel to all people.

Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML)
As the official women's auxiliary of the LCMS, the Lutheran Women's Missionary League encourages and equips women to live out their Christian lives in active mission ministries and to support global missions.

NEW Women's Bible Study on Faith and Mental Health



ST. LOUIS—*Strong in the Lord: A Women's Bible Study on Faith and Mental Health* offers a careful, Scripture-centered approach to understanding mental and emotional struggles in light of God's Word. Written by Dr. Jennifer K. Londgren—a licensed marriage and family therapist, nationally certified counselor, and professor with expertise in anxiety, addiction, and women's mental health—this eight-week study thoughtfully brings together clinical insight and Lutheran theology.

"You were created in God's image, which means you are designed for relationships—with God, others, and yourself. Our emotions, thoughts, and bodies are not accidents; they are part of God's perfect design. However, sin has distorted how we experience our existence as children of God. … My goal with this book is to encourage you while constantly pointing you back to Scripture," Londgren writes.

Addressing experiences such as anxiety, rumination, emotional overload, and relational strain, this study does not separate mental health from the life of faith. Instead, it returns again and again to Christ's promises—given in Scripture and in Baptism—where identity, comfort, and hope are certain. Each session includes Scripture, guided teaching, reflection questions, and prayer, making it well suited for both personal study and group conversation.

Visit cph.org for more information about the book. Contact CPH Publicity to schedule an interview with the author.

About the Author

Dr. Jennifer K. Londgren is the coordinator of the alcohol and drug studies program and an associate professor of health science at Minnesota State University. Dr. Londgren is a licensed marriage and family therapist, nationally certified counselor, and board-certified telemental health provider. She has clinical expertise working with addiction, anxiety disorders, and women's issues. She presents at local and national levels on self-care, well-being, stress and burnout, and innovative teaching techniques.

DISTRICT NEWS & EVENTS

Fall Calendars...

Now that fall is here, our calendars become full. Perhaps a new Bible study or fellowship group, choir practice, children's school activities, etc. are added to our already busy schedules. Calendars also help us plan ahead so that we don't miss important meetings, appointments, and family dinners. Let's remember to keep personal Bible study, devotions, prayer, and worship on our calendars so they don't get pushed to the bottom of our priorities.

Dates to remember:
October 4 was LWML Sunday, but this day may be celebrated any Sunday you wish.
December 1 – Giving Tuesday – for LWML PSD Mission Grants

The Board of Directors collected $160.00 in mite offerings at their September meeting during "Mission Support Opportunity" time.

Group Treasurers: this is a friendly reminder to check your LWML bank account on a frequent basis to be sure that your deposits and outgoing payments are recorded correctly.

Check with your Zone President regarding a "Christmas Stocking" offering idea to perhaps increase Mite Giving in your group. What ideas do you have to promote missions and mite giving in your groups and congregations? Share those with me and I will put a list together for a future WOW.

Endowment Corner

The Special Gift Fund Donation Form has been updated for the current biennium and is available under the Resources tab at psdlwml.org.

The Endowment Committee, 2026-2028:
Nila Rodriguez
JoAnne Sloan
Treasurer Dawn Langemeier
Chairman Barb Virus
President Nancy Heredia

Our district received an Individual Retirement Account distribution in the amount of $4,974.69. The Board of Directors approved application of this gift as follows:
Mites $974.69
Special Gift Fund $2,000.00
PSD Endowment Principal $2,000.00
We are grateful to the member who thought of us with this distribution.

A prayer:
We give Thee but Thine own, whate'er the gift may be; all that we have is Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from Thee. (LSB 781, Public Domain)

Financial Secretary's Report Continued

Renee and Fran were chatting as they walked out of church last Sunday. Renee said, "I finally made the decision to move into a retirement community. My house was just getting to be too much for me, especially after Frank went to be with the Lord. But I just don't know where to get started on the packing. I have lived in that house for thirty years and there is so much stuff to sort through. I'm having a hard time starting." Fran replied, "If you would like, I can come help. I have a lot of boxes, and we can just pick off one room at a time." Renee said, "Oh that would be lovely." The process began on Wednesday with lots of laughter and even a few tears.

Gifts of Love
Returning God's Blessings

There are many "Big Things" in life that become easier to begin if we just have someone along with us. Christian estate planning is one of those. It requires organization of your information. It includes conversations about what you want to accomplish. It culminates in putting together legal documents that seem powerful, and maybe even a little scary.

Your LWML Gift Planning Counselor can be your friend who will come along your side to get started. She has expertise and training in helping you move through each step of the process so that you can feel confident about the finished product when you sign documents at your attorney's office (if necessary). Instead of living with the burden of procrastination, you can move forward, putting together a faithful stewardship plan directing the gifts the Lord has entrusted to you.
Contact Sarah Seying for more information. Email: Sarah.Seying@LFND.org
Phone: 800-741-4138 lwmlgiftplan.org

Serving the Lord with joy,
LWML PSD Gift Planning Advocate and Financial Secretary
Barb Virus
Email bvirus@juno.com or call/text 714-801-5252.



Send Mite Box offerings or request vouchers and mite boxes:

Barb Virus
542 E. Lomita Ave.,
Orange, CA 92867-6848

MONTHLY Bible Study



Please plan on attending our District Bible Study.
It is held by Zoom on the Third Monday at 6:30 p.m. California time. Various ladies from our District are facilitators, and the Bible studies are from the national LWML site. It is a great way to connect with your sisters in Christ. There is information on how to join us on the site:

www.psdlwml.org

or you can contact me:

Rita Grover, Vice President, Christian Life

rjgrover1@aol.com.

THROUGH CHRIST

One of my favorite Bible verses is Philippians 4:13: *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* It reminds me that whatever I'm doing, Christ strengthens and sustains me through whatever circumstances I face.

As Lutheran Women in Mission, we are called each day to share God's love with others, often by serving women in our own congregations. We can offer a needed hug to an exhausted caregiver, welcome a visitor with a smile and greeting, babysit for a young mother attending a Bible study, provide a ride to a doctor's appointment, or bring a meal to someone who is homebound.

Many of these actions take a leap of faith and the courage to step out of our comfort zone. These actions also take time and effort. However, it is these actions that bind us together as Sisters in Christ.

My encouragement to you, as we celebrate Lutheran Women in Mission Sunday around the country this month, is to reach out in love to a woman in your congregation who needs you to share Christ's love with her. You can do this because Christ strengthens and sustains us.



In Christ,
Michelle Jenks
Vice President, Organizational Resources

ZONE NEWS & EVENTS



Celebrate 80 Years of the PSD!

In 1946 women of southern California met at St. John's Lutheran Church in Orange to organize the district's Lutheran Women's Missionary League. The first convention was held in June 1946 in Long Beach, California, with 400 in attendance, and the Southern California District became the 26th district of the LWML. In 1955, Phoenix held their first zone rally, with over 100 attendees from eight desert congregations. Southern Nevada was welcomed into the Southern California District in 1968.

The Pacific Southwest District now includes Southern California, Southern Nevada, and Arizona. Over the 80 years many new changes have been made to the Pacific Southwest District, but one thing that remains the same is that Lutheran Women in Mission love to support missions.

80 pairs of socks for shut-ins

80 cards to service members

80 canned goods for a local shelter

80 boxes of pencils for your school

80 personal care kits for local agencies

80 fleece blankets for senior homes

What's your 80?

In thankfulness and celebration of our 80 years as the LWML Pacific Southwest District, we encourage you to put God's love into action by collecting 80 items that can be donated to a mission in your community. This can be done as an individual, a group, or a zone. Remember to take a picture of your donation with the recipient and send it to Brenda Hood for publication: james67brenda@gmail.com

Zone 80s

Trinity Lutheran- Cedar City, Utah

Our goal was 80 items: a combination of tissues and Clorox disinfecting wipes for Fiddlers Canyon Elementary. They are literally across the street from our church. Stacie Hehn took the time one day and visited the principal of the school and asked if their LWML could provide something the school needed. The principal said Kleenex and Lysol wipes. One class can go through a box of tissues in a day during cold season!

submitted by Stacie Hehn and Elaine Voight





Left: Fiddler Canyon secretary receiving the items
Above: Sharol, Luella, Bird and Stacie of Trinity Lutheran

Redeemer Lutheran- Wickenburg, Arizona

We assembled 81 mini hygiene kits with the help of the congregation and a Thrivent Action Team card. The kits were delivered to the local CAP Office.
submitted by
Barbara Wade





Red Rock Zone 31/32

Happy fall! It is one of my favorite times of the year, spring being my other. Wherever you live, you can feel the crispness of fall. For LWML, fall means Fall Celebrations, Church Worker Appreciation, maybe a fall boutique or bake sale. It is truly a time to remember Psalm 100, not just verse 2 but starting with verse 1: *"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!"* We survived both the hot summer and the lazy days of summer, and now it's volunteer time! YEAH!

The LWML at Trinity in Cedar City, UT doesn't stop their activities during the summer months. They welcome the entire congregation to participate in all of their ingatherings and activities. One of the fun Saturday afternoons spent at Trinity was their "It's Not Your Momma's Bingo" event held in August.

Zone 31/32 is gearing up for our Fall Celebration Saturday, October 17, at Good Shepherd Lutheran, Kingman, AZ. At our Fall Celebration we will be honoring and supporting our veterans by providing gifts of household items to help them in their daily lives. I am coming to the end of my presidency of Zone 31/32. We will be holding elections of new officers, as many of the other Zones will be doing.

Trinity St. George held their elections and started their new year of serving the Lord with gladness in September. The first activity they will be hosting is an after-service brunch for the church workers in their congregation on Sunday, October 11. In the picture below are Elaine, President, Pleasance, Vice President, and Judy, Secretary.



My Zone has LWMLs in three states: Southern Utah, Southern Nevada and Northern Arizona. Amazingly, the territory looks the same-Desert Red Rock! The Dr. Seuss book *Oh, the Places You'll Go* comes to mind. To put a religious view on what Dr. Seuss is saying, God has called each of us to serve Him in the vocations and opportunities He places before us. Through faith, worked in us by the Holy Spirit, we respond to His grace by serving our neighbors in love. Don't be afraid to volunteer for something out of your comfort zone. When we remain in our comfort zones, we may miss opportunities to serve the neighbors God has placed in our lives. What a blessing that God works through ordinary people like us to share His love and serve others.

Have a great Fall! Serve the Lord with gladness always and everywhere you are given opportunity.

submitted by Elaine Voight

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

First Good Shepherd Lutheran- Las Vegas, Nevada

Zone 31/32 at First Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in downtown Las Vegas gave Bibles to every student at Mountain View Christian School for the 2026-2027 school year. This was only possible through very generous donors at First Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, including visitors to the church.

FGS LWML planned a Back-to-School Bible Mission for the Christian school which leases the school buildings of FGS. This mission was to allow each third through twelvth grader to have the same New International Version (NIV) Pew and Worship Bible to take home and use for class. Due to an overwhelming response by the members and visitors of the church, each 3rd through 12th grader received one Bible, two highlighters, and one mechanical pencil. The donations were so large that all preschoolers through second graders also received My First Bible. The Bibles were purchased by the case, allowing leftover Bibles for students who come in during the school year.

Bibles were presented to MVCS students and staff during their weekly chapel service on Wednesday, September 2, 2026 *(pictured below)*. The students were so happy with their new Bibles. We received a large amount of hand-drawn thank-you notes as well as verbal "thank you" shouts from the playground to the parking lot.

submitted by Linda Olsen





Mountain View Lutheran- Las Vegas, Nevada

One of the most memorable service projects enjoyed recently by the ladies of the Mountain View Lutheran Church LWML focused on bringing joy to children experiencing long-term hospital stays. The ladies assembled 40 Easter baskets for Once Upon a Room, a nonprofit organization that decorates hospital rooms for children facing extended stays. Each basket was filled with cheerful items, such as socks, a blanket, window clings, Play-Doh, bunny garland, a coloring book, a plush animal, and more. *(continued)*



(Mountain View Lutheran- Las Vegas, Nevada, continued)



Although hospital guidelines did not allow the baskets to include religious materials, the ladies included a note identifying the baskets as a gift from Mountain View Lutheran Women in Mission, along with a QR code for the church website.

The project became even more special when a church member and his comfort dog, Lola, *(pictured at right)* helped deliver the baskets to Summerlin Hospital. Lola brought some extra joy to the visit and plenty of smiles to the faces of the pediatric patients. It was a wonderful opportunity to show Christ's love through simple acts of kindness and care.
submitted by Amanda Stepanek

Faith Lutheran- Vista, California



During the month of August Faith's congregation abundantly supplied our LWML with enough school supplies and backpacks to fill those 63 backpacks for Lutheran Border Concerns Ministry. Each backpack was outfitted with folders, paper, a notebook, pencils, pens, erasers, glue sticks, scissors, colored pencils, colored pens, a small toy, and a handwritten note from a member of our congregation or one of the children in our after school program (CAT). This year was especially fun because the CAT children helped us to sort and organize the mountain of supplies we received. *(continued)*



Following church on Sunday, August 30, more than twenty volunteers attended a "stuffing party" to fill the backpacks and compose messages on handmade cards.

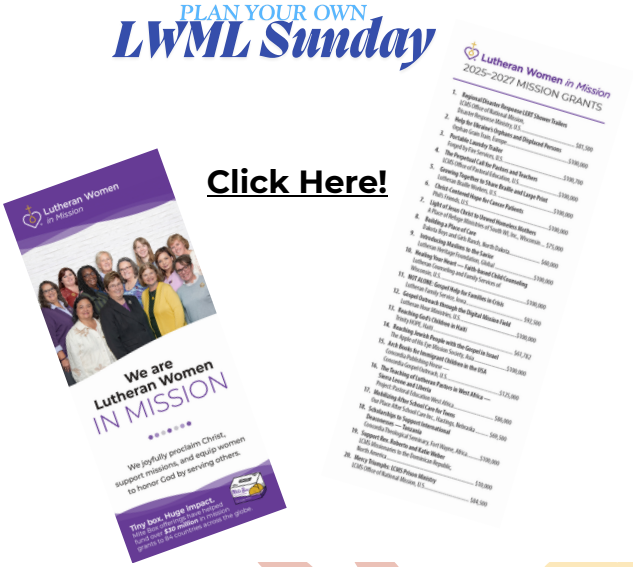
(Faith Lutheran - Vista, California, continued)

Our congregation joyfully celebrated LWML Sunday on October 4 with a sea of ladies in purple! Once again we were reminded that the LWML's greatest mission is to speak the Gospel to everyone with whom we have the pleasure to work and serve. We used the informational inserts, bookmarks, and bulletin cover provided through the National LWML. During our children's message the kids learned how they can support LWML through their prayers and pennies, and each child was given a mite box with a quarter starter. Enthusiastic child volunteers handed out mite boxes at the conclusion of the service. After the service congregants were able to view our informational displays and write a card to a service member. We were so abundantly blessed with monetary donations during our school supplies drive that we are now able to build a care package for our military members and include those precious cards.

submitted by Brenda Hood



Purple flows through Faith's Cantorum as they warm up for the lovely piece they sang during the LWML Sunday Service.



Women of the Word Fall 2026

Women of the Word (WOW) is published quarterly.

Brenda Hood, Editor and Layout
Pastor Joël Held, Doctrinal Review
Nancy Heredia, Nila Rodriguez, Linda Koch, and Kathy Baumhofer, Copy Readers

Send submissions to james67brenda@gmail.com
Send copy in the body of emails and attach photos separately.
Winter Submission Deadline is November 15, 2026.
Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/psdlwml:
post pictures and make comments but remember not to tag photos.

Soli Deo Gloria