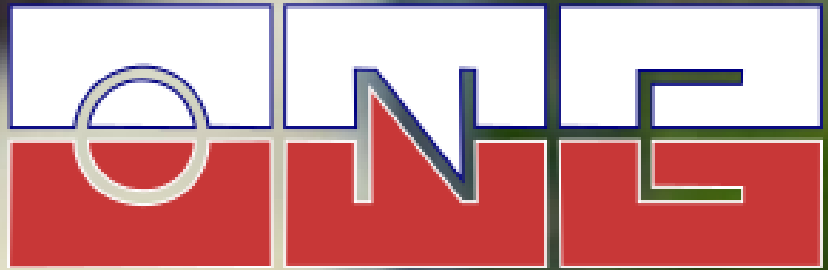


INSIDE:

- + **Random Acts of Kindness**
- + **Get to Know Feeding Hays**
- + **February Events**



A Publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance
February 2025





Ellis County Ministerial Alliance

ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to

one@ourecma.com.

The ECMA ONE Advisory Board will choose appropriate and timely submissions for publication. The columns in ONE represent the views of the author.

Volume 18, Issue 10 • ourecma.com • Copyright 2025 individual authors and ECMA

Advisory Board

Kurt Beyers
Amy Hockersmith
Ben Houchen
Anna Towns

Editor

Terri Braun
terribraun91@gmail.com

Topic Articles

Editor's Note: Random Act of Kindness Week is celebrated from February 14-20th. We asked our writers, "What ways have you shared random acts of kindness or been on the receiving end of an act? What are your thoughts on "paying it forward?"

It Is the Little Things

Written by:

Macey Pfeifer

I personally LOVE doing random acts of kindness. I am a gift giver by nature, so sometimes it's overkill. I love planting hidden gifts or notes for my family or friends to find. It makes my heart happy to be able to see them smile or make their day even just a little brighter. It is especially great when I know they are having a tough day or week, just to plant something random that I know they love. It doesn't have to be something big or expensive; it's usually the little things that have the most meaning. It is just something to let them know that you are

thinking about them.

I do occasionally find myself at the receiving end of a random act of kindness. I am great at giving gifts, but not so great at receiving. I find it totally awkward to receive gifts. Of course I am grateful for them, but I guess sometimes I just don't feel totally worthy of receiving random kindness. I am someone that hates when people go out of their way for me or spend their money on me. I know they are doing it because they want to, not because they think they must... But still, I would much rather be on the giving side.

As for "paying it

forward," I do not come across this much. There is occasionally a pay it forward that I run into when going through the drive through at Scooters or Starbucks. People pay for the car behind them, and then the next car does the same, making it a chain reaction of kindness. I do love to see it, because it isn't often anymore that you see others being kind to strangers randomly.

I think that anyone can benefit from random acts of kindness. I would say though, the people that really can't afford to do it are usually the ones that benefit the most. Because they know that they worked

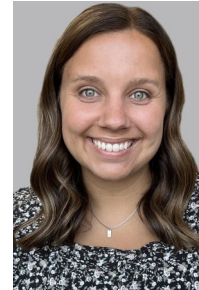
It Is the Little Things (Continued)

hard to earn the money to be able to participate. Money is no object to some people, so paying it forward probably doesn't affect them as much whether their order costs them \$7 or \$47. Not to say that their giving is any less meaningful, just that those that struggle understand and maybe

appreciate the thought a little more.

Working with those less fortunate every day, I understand and empathize with those that work two or three jobs to make ends meet. It is tough, and in our ever-changing and rising economy, it isn't getting any

easier. It makes me appreciate what I have and what I can do to give more.



Macey Pfeifer is the Executive Director of First Call for Help.

Look Through the Eyes of God

Written by:
Terri Braun

"Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see," says writer Christian Nestell Bovee. Kindness wraps around your heart and warms it. It restores faith in humanity and reminds us that people do still care. Random acts of kindness are a wonderful way to show love for others. The person on the receiving end of something special knows someone is thinking of them. The act sends the message that they are cared about and worthy.

But I challenge you to think about Jesus. He didn't wake up in the morning and say, "Today I am not going to care."

Jesus IS love. He didn't just randomly choose when He wanted to display compassion or just selectively pick who He was going to be kind to and not care about the rest. Love, kindness and compassion were always part of His daily life and part of His mission on earth.

Jesus is no longer physically walking on this earth to spread God's Word, but we are. He gave us *"a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another,"* John 13:34 (NABRE). He also taught the greatest commandment: *"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your*

mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself," Matthew 22:37-39 (NABRE).

That is our purpose on this earth: to imitate Jesus. We are to build each other up, to be kind, patient...but most importantly to love. As a Christian, you represent Jesus and His character. God formed you and He chose you to fulfill this purpose. No matter what you are called to do, big or small, do it with love in your heart. Do it for the glory of God.

Honor Him with your whole self and your whole life. When you emulate Jesus and love with all your heart, you form a

Look Through the Eyes of God (Continued)

relationship with Him, and you will be rewarded. Not rewarded with wealth, fame, or power as that is what the world thinks is important; but rather with the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In such a chaotic world, who doesn't need these!

There are so many opportunities to do "random acts of kindness" throughout your day if you are just present in the moment. There are people hurting right now in front of you and in your own community. So be kind...in fact, be kinder than necessary because you never know what kind of battle someone is fighting.

Don't just pick and choose people to be kind to but rather open your heart and look through the eyes of God and be kind to all you meet.



Terri Braun is the ministry coordinator for St. Nicholas of Myra Church.

No Random Savior

Written by:
Rick Claiborn

"Anyone who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty," Job 6:14 (NIV).

"And God raised us up with Christ and seated us up with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus," Ephesians 2:6-7 (NIV).

A big part of our family history includes the loss of our daughter Jordyn. I often write about her and the impact of her death. Some of that impact is painful. But

some of it is still beautiful, in spite of the loss.

Thinking back, I remember the day when I realized we were getting close to marking the one-year milestone. It was almost unimaginable. Now we are approaching 16 years since she left this earth, which is how long she was here, which is far more unimaginable. But as we approached the first anniversary, we wanted to find some way to mark the day. Someone suggested a Random Act of Kindness Day, suddenly we had a path.

For our random act, we picked a family we knew who had young kids with a

backyard that looked a little like the Sahara Desert - dry and empty. We decided to fix that. I do not remember how we found it, but we secured the donation of a slide/fort and some money to buy a swing set.

I remember when we got to their house with everything loaded. Their back yard did not have a gate big enough, but the fence itself was in such bad shape. We just sort of leaned on it and it fell over, which pointed out another act we needed to accomplish. We dropped a fully assembled fort in their yard, and they had no idea we were coming until they heard the commotion

No Random Savior (Continued)

outside. We put the swing set together and dropped sand into their new sandbox. The desert looked much more kid friendly by the time we left.

While we were working on this, someone walked up and asked me for the keys to my truck. A friend and his kids wanted to wash and wax the big black truck I drove as their random act. It was a pretty cool random act to receive. We had no idea how many people participated or what acts of kindness had "randomly" occurred. It was a great day.

A short time later we received two books in the mail, we know who sent one of them, but to this day we have no idea who sent the other. The first was a very thick book that contained all the Facebook posts from her page for the entire year, thousands of posts from hundreds of people. It was breathtaking.

The second book contained a published diary describing a large number of random acts that occurred that day. We have stories of everything from someone receiving a large jar of pickles on their front porch - seriously, I guess

someone knew they liked pickles. We heard about helping a friend buy a new mattress, deliveries of beef, yards being mowed, drive through meals paid for, parent to child relationships changing, people making cakes for neighbors, people gathering to pray for us that day and a long list of other acts. One teacher wrote about acting out the book "I'll love you forever" in her classroom. My wife loves that book.

What I learned from that day is that "random" acts actually require planning. That anniversary was the motivation for the theme that day. But we heard stories of families sitting at the supper table talking about things they could do, planning them, and then doing them - together.

I have learned that if I want to blow through a day without noticing anything but my "to do" list, I can. But why would I want that? No one can be equipped to meet every need they see. But you will see need if you have eyes to see. There are people in our town who are hungry, cold, and broken - in life, in spirit and in finances.

Reflection Questions:

Does your "to do" list include preparing for the random act you may encounter? You cannot give someone a drink if you don't have any water bottles in your car.

Are you aware that you either are or will be someone's random act? God uses us in both plenty and in want.

Challenge:

The ultimate random act of kindness occurred when Jesus did not stop those soldiers from nailing Him to that cross. He could have. Think about it, God revealed that He would send a Savior long before Jesus was born. There was a plan.

I used to look at the cross as being meant for everyone in total, all at one time. But more importantly, as hard as it is for me to understand, Jesus died for my sin, specifically mine. He died specifically for you too and it was anything but random.



Rick Claiborn is a longtime resident of Hays who loves Jesus and attends High Plains Baptist Church.

Leadership Interviews

Feeding Hays: Building Community

Written by:

Terri Braun

Feeding Hays, a ministry of St. Michael's Episcopal Church in Hays, was born four years ago in a basement amongst friends watching the Super Bowl. They wanted to help the community, but how? The brainstorming began. They began to focus on the food inequity in Hays and also knew of the large school lunch debt. It was recognized that there are resources in Hays that are available to obtain food, but there are no places to get hot food. The seed was planted, and objective was known. Now to grow the ministry and fix an affordable hot meal with the church's own monetary donations... spaghetti.

Since the ministry originated during the Covid years, they felt a drive-through process would be most beneficial and St. Michael's had a perfect U-shaped driveway to go along with the plan. Next was the challenge of how to address the school lunch debt. It was decided that if patrons of the drive through meal provided any donations, that money would go towards the debt.

The program was up and running in August 2021 but



Pictured: Volunteers prepare and deliver spaghetti meals to-go.

struggled for the first year. St. Michael's averaged feeding about 10-15 people weekly. They wanted to reach more people, so they decided a revamp was necessary. They improved the quality of the food and began asking the individuals that came through every week for suggestions on how to improve the program. The church listened and by the end of the summer they were serving up to 65 people every week.

Each step of the way, and every time St. Michael's thought they could not manually or financially feed more people, God opened doors: the Fort Hays State University Leadership Program came and assisted in improving the speed and efficiency, stoves were donated when the stove at St. Michael's broke, supplies were donated such as food and cabinets, community members stepped up and began to get involved, and organizations

made monetary donations and also volunteered.

The first year, Feeding Hays fed 10-15 people weekly and contributed \$600 to the lunch debt. The second year the community donated \$2000 to help with the school lunch debt. The ministry now serves around 220 people weekly and has put \$3000 towards the lunch debt in one semester!

This ministry has exceeded the expectations of everyone within the church. It has become a community ministry, not just a St. Michael's ministry. If you find yourself needing a hot meal on a Thursday night, feel free to take the U-shaped driveway, get your spaghetti, and know that the Hays community cares. Feeding and building community is what this ministry is all about. Just as Jesus did not come to be served but to serve, so are they.

Terri Braun is Editor of ONE Magazine.

Ecumenical Events

February 1: Super Buck Presentation, 5:30pm at North Oak Community Church (3000 Oak St). *See below for additional information.*

February 2: Groundhog Supper, 5-7pm at St. John Lutheran Church in Ellis (394 St. John St. Andrew Rd), North of Ellis on blacktop road.

February 4: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort).

February 4: Moms In Prayer, 3:45pm at Crosspoint Church (1300 Harvest Rd).

February 6: Feeding Hays, 6:30-7:00pm-to go spaghetti dinner at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd). To volunteer to help, contact Ben at 785-259-2851.

February 6: Grief Share Group, 6pm-8pm at North Oak Community Church Center Office (3002 Northridge Court). *See below for additional information.*

February 7: Night to Shine (prom for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities), 6pm at Celebration Community Church (5790 230th Ave). To volunteer go to nighttoshinehays.org. *See below for additional information.*

February 8: Dueling Pianos (United Way Annual Fundraiser Campaign), 6pm at Schenk Building at the Ellis County Fairgrounds. Includes food and entertainment. Get your tickets at <https://liveunited.harnessgiving.org/events/2308>.

February 11: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort).

February 11: Moms In Prayer, 3:45pm at Crosspoint Church (1300 Harvest Rd).

February 13: Feeding Hays, 6:30-7:00pm-to go spaghetti dinner at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd). To volunteer to help, contact Ben at 785-259-2851.

February 13: Grief Share Group, 6pm-8pm at North Oak Community Church Center Office (3002 Northridge Court). *See below for additional information.*

February 15: Rockin and Rolling: The Evening Valentines Banquet, 5:30-8:30pm at First United Methodist Church (305 W. 7th). *See below for additional information.*

February 16: Hays CYO fundraiser, lunch or dinner at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Hall. "All you can eat" menu featuring spaghetti and meat sauce, Italian sausage, garlic bread, salad, and dessert. Adults (ages 13 and older) are \$10 per ticket, Kids (ages 5-12) are \$5 per ticket, and Children (age 4 or under) eat for free.

February 18: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort).

February 18: Moms In Prayer, 3:45pm at Crosspoint Church (1300 Harvest Rd).

February 20: Feeding Hays, 6:30-7:00pm-to go spaghetti dinner at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd). To volunteer to help, contact Ben at 785-259-2851.

February 20: Laundry Love by First Call for Help, 4 -6pm at 27th and Hall St. Laundromat. Up to 5 free loads of laundry per household per month. Please note a time change for this event.

February 20: Grief Share Group, 6pm-8pm at North Oak Community Church Center Office (3002 Northridge Court). *See below for additional information.*

February 25: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort).

February 25: Moms In Prayer, 3:45pm at Crosspoint Church (1300 Harvest Rd).

February 27: Feeding Hays, 6:30-7:00pm-to go spaghetti dinner at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd). To volunteer to help, contact Ben at 785-259-2851.

February 27: Grief Share Group, 6pm-8pm at North Oak Community Church Center Office, 3002 Northridge Court. *See below for additional information.*

Ecumenical Events: Additional Details



Super Buck Presentation

In 2015, Jim VanSteenhouse of Houston was bow hunting for moose in Canada. A grizzly bear attacked him and left him with massive injuries. VanSteenhouse believed in God, but he said his last thought as he stared death in the face was, "Am I going to heaven?" VanSteenhouse will be in Hays sharing his story of faith and survival at a dinner for sportsmen and their families at North Oak Community Church at 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 1. Tickets are \$25 per adult and \$10 for children ages 15 and younger. Tickets and more information are available at www.superbuck.org. He and his wife will also be speaking at both of North Oak's services at 8:30 and 11 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 2. The community is invited.

Grief Share Group

GriefShare is a support group offering hope and healing to those who have lost a loved one to death. North Oak Community Church is hosting this 13-week grief recovery program beginning February 6, 2025 – May 1, 2025, on Thursdays from 6:00 – 8:00PM at the North Oak Community Church Center Office, 3002 Northridge Court in Hays, Kansas 67601. Each week you will view a 30-minute video filled with helpful guidance, discuss grief related issues, and gain personal recovery tips through your workbook in a safe, comforting environment.



For more information contact Rich Matzke at (785)650-2946 or email: richardmatzke48@gmail.com



Rockin and Rolling

Celebrate with a loved one at the Rockin and Rolling: The Evening Valentines Banquet at the First United Methodist Church on February 15th at 5:30pm. Tickets can be purchased at the church office or by calling the church office at (785) 625-3408. It begins with dinner and ends with musical entertainment by Fast Freddie & the Sidewalk Serenaders.

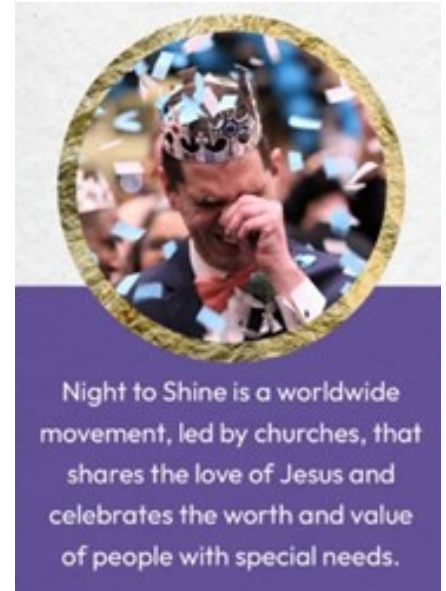


Opportunities to Serve

Night to Shine Needs Volunteers



Volunteers are a vital part of Night to Shine, Hays. Volunteers at Night to Shine, Hays get the opportunity to show God's love to individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Volunteers will have access to food and beverages in the volunteer room throughout the night.



Volunteer Opportunities Include: Set up, Buddies, Food Preparation, Food Service, Paparazzi, Guest Registration, Volunteer Registration, Parking, Medical, Coat Check, Usher, Floral, Karaoke Room, Clean up.

To volunteer, sign up at nighttoshinehays.org.

Part-time Pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Hays, KS

A part-time Pastor position will soon be available for the Presbyterian Church of Hays, KS. As one of the oldest churches in Hays, KS, the congregation numbers hold steady at just under 100 members. The part-time Pastor will have a desire to help and encourage the church members to continue to carry out God's mission for our community. We are looking for individuals who are self-motivated with good communication skills that will engage with and empower our members to discern God's calling.



A few of the responsibilities of the part-time Pastor will include working in concert with congregation members in leading worship, providing pastoral care and moderating session and church activities. The part-time Pastor will also work alongside our part-time administrative assistant and as needed, the part-time Pastor will perform weddings, funerals and baptisms.



For more information, please contact Melanie Hancock, General Presbyter with the Presbytery of Northern Kansas at 785-825-1654. You can send your resume to Melanie at Presbytery of Northern KS, PO Box 3287, Salina, KS 67402-3287.

First Call for Help would like to extend a big thanks to the Heartland Community Foundation. The grant was made possible by the *Ellis County Legacy Fund* of the Heartland Community Foundation. These funds will be used to purchase carts for Backpack for Kids.



Trinity Lutheran Church had a good group get together for their First Friday Fellowship at Verdant Bistro on January 3rd.

Even though the weather was cold, some still ventured out to enjoy the Wes Windholz and band at the Polka and Popcorn event on January 19th at St. Nicholas of Myra.

