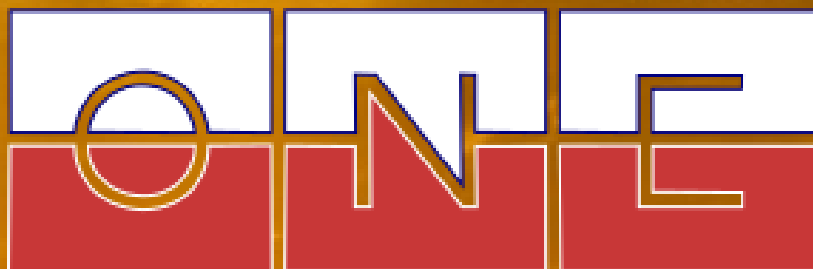


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A Publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance
September 2025





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.

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Topic Articles

***Editor's Note:** ONE is published monthly by the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA). The International Day of Peace this month is September 21st and Jesus was referred to as the "Prince of Peace," so we asked our writers to reflect on what peace means to them.*

The Peace That Passes Understanding

Written by:

Anna Towns

"My four-year-old daughter, Yaffa, in her pink dress, hears a bomb explode. She breathes in deep, covers her mouth with her dress's ruffles. Yazzan, her five-and-a-half-year-old brother, grabs a blanket warmed by his sleepy body. He lays the blanket on his sister. You can hide now, he assures her. As for me and my wife, Maram, we pray that a magic blanket would hide all the houses from the bombs and take us somewhere safe."

- From "My Son Throws a Blanket Over My Daughter"

by Mosab Abu Toha, a poet and Palestinian refugee.

The horrors of this world threaten to overwhelm us at every turn--even while we doomscroll from the comfort of our couch, with our own children safe in bed asleep. How can we comprehend the abject horror, sorrow, rage, etc. that accompanies war? How can those in its midst and those so far removed even think of allowing the hope of peace a foothold in this stark reality of terror and death?

How can we not? Humans are defiant, resilient, persistent--so is our hope and vision of a

peaceful world.

A song we used to sing in Vacation Bible School says, "I've got the peace that passes understanding down in my heart!" Even as a child, that phrasing stood out to me. It's not just "peace" or "the peace of Christ" or "God's peace," but "the peace that passes understanding." I believe there are things in this world that exist outside of our human capacity for understanding. This space beyond our comprehension is not separation from God, but an invitation, wherein the Holy Spirit guides us. God knows we are limited, but God never stops us from striving for more.

The Peace That Passes Understanding (Continued)

This must be how we act with one another—granting grace, and leaving space for growth. In Matthew 5:9 (NSRV), we are told, *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called Children of God.”* We know that there are sides and facets to every conflict that we do not see, plan for, or fully understand, but we are called to walk in faith and find a way toward peace. I believe this passage from Matthew is an encouragement to strive for that “peace that passes understanding.” We, who already know we are God’s children, just need to trust in that truth to bring about the peace God provides.

Peacemaking is not a passive activity. Sometimes in the face of atrocities, all we can do is not turn away, bear witness, and of course—pray. But I understand the eyerolls at the “thoughts and prayers” sentiments we often lay at the feet of the grieving, the starved, the “other.” These well-intentioned, but all too often empty words can be a stumbling block for our siblings in Christ. Without tangible aid, through our

God-given abilities, we cannot ever hope to establish peace in this hurting, sinful, war-torn world.

It is not only our neighbors who need our thoughts and prayers. We should also be praying for ourselves—for the willingness to open our own hearts, minds, homes, wallets—whatever the occasion calls for—to help bring us closer in alignment with God’s vision for us as God’s children.

Each Sunday, during Worship, Pastor Brenda invites the congregation to “share a sign of Christ’s peace with one another.” At Trinity, this means a time of hand shaking, hugs, flashing peace signs to folks across the room. As we go out into the world, that sign of Christ’s peace should look like being a soft spot to land, being freshly tilled soil where hope can take root and peace can bloom. Work to ease conflict, build unity, and create peace by accepting the humanity in one another and striving to see each person as a reflection of God in our midst—no matter their color,

creed, political affiliation, ethnic background, past trauma, etc.

“At the trial of God, we will ask: why did you allow all this? And the answer will be an echo: why did you allow this?” (Illya Kaminsky, Ukrainian-American poet).

“Don’t ever be surprised to see a rose shoulder up among the ruins of the house: this is how we survived” (Mosab Abu Toah). This is not a time to simply stop and smell the roses; we must tend the roses in this world of pain, or we will never again sit in a fragrant and peaceful garden.

To honor the International Day of Peace, the FHSU student group Us 4 U is hosting Peace by Piece, an interactive prayer service, at the United Methodist Campus Center (507 Elm), at 5:30pm, on Tuesday, 9/16. All are welcome to join.



Anna Towns serves in many capacities as a lifelong member of Trinity Lutheran Church, ELCA, in Hays.

Is Peace Possible?

Written by:

Rick Claiborn

"Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" - 2

Corinthians 12:7-9 (NIV).

For large portions of my life, I would have defined peace as the absence of conflict. A younger version of me thought you had to solve all or most of your issues - and then have peace. I have since learned otherwise.

I have prayed many times for God to remove something from my life or for Him to add something I see as a solution. But when I think about it, if God removes struggle upon request, my prayers would focus on requests. Anyone can have peace if God clears a nice smooth path into the future. True

peace is found in the midst of storms.

Rather than remove any source of conflict or struggle, what if God allows us to have some struggle because it will cause us to look toward Him. What if instead of simply "allowing" struggle God actually caused the very thing we struggle with?

Years ago, I heard a sermon from Bishop Larry Jackson in which he talked about the fact that everyone correctly assumes that God has a plan for us. However, if you are a believer and think that Satan does not also have a plan for you, you are mistaken. Evil would kill me if it had the chance.

I believe that spiritual battle is real. I believe that Satan has many schemes designed to hurt me. If I have a struggle in my life, God saw it coming and allowed it because it fit into His will. If it is against God's will, not one arrow Satan shoots at me will reach me because God is

the more powerful being, by far. There is not one instant in eternity where God is less powerful than Satan. If you have a daughter who died in a car accident that can be a struggle to navigate.

We are approaching a date that we have dreaded. Later this year we will wake up to the day when our daughter Jordyn has been gone longer than she was here. I don't hate very many things, but I literally hate that last sentence.

It has been hard. It has been painful. It has also been beautiful. In spite of it, we have found it possible to find peace. The example I use would be comparing the pursuit of peace to the simple act of going for a ride out in the country. You have the radio up listening and then you hear static, then you may hear silence and as you come up a hill you get your favorite song again.

To me, that is a good description of peace. On my journey through life, I

Is Peace Possible? (Continued)

can sometimes find peace easily. At times, I get more static than peace and at times I cannot find peace. I have learned that when this happens - I am the one who moved.

The radio station sending out a signal does not move. The signal is not turned off but once in a while I cannot hear it. I have to move to get back in position to hear it again. The power of God does not vary. His location does not vary. Only I vary.

In our walk through this life, we will meet people who exude peace. People like that are hard to find sometimes, but when you find someone who reminds you of peace, you

should probably spend more time with them. Better yet, we should try to be the person who helps others find peace. You do not have to have all the answers. Some of the questions we have in this life simply have no answer here.

Reflection questions:

What is your most consistent struggle? Have you ever had someone notice your peace and ask you about it? Without the presence of struggle, no one can see the presence of peace in you.

Do you typically find yourself asking God to "fix" something?

Challenge:

Change the way we pray. If I always ask God to remove an issue He becomes a vending machine. But if I ask God to give me the grace to deal with the very same issue, I have already plotted a better course. If my pursuit of peace is aimed at God instead of a clear, obstacle free journey, my peace will be easier to find and easier to help others possibly find their very own peace. It is possible.



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

Empty Me...Fill Me With Your Peace

Written by:
Terri Braun

Some days I am so tired of fighting and dealing with the daily struggles. I wake up already burdened before my feet even touch the floor. I am exhausted and worn.

And then, a question comes to my heart: What exactly am I fighting? I realized -I was fighting life itself alone. Suddenly, I heard the truth in my own words: "I" am tired, and "I" am exhausted. That "I" carries so much weight.

Because I've been trying to do it all in my own strength. I've been beating my head against a wall, wrestling with my own limits, shouldering the burden of every worry, every doubt, and every responsibility.

Empty Me...Fill Me With Your Peace (Continued)

But I am not enough on my own, and I was never meant to be. But God's strength never runs dry. His timing is perfect. He has a plan that will satisfy the deepest desires of your heart, not in your timing, but in His. He will see you through those hard times, not in your strength, but in His.

Life has never been a burden that God meant for me to carry on my own. In my striving, I have filled myself with anxiety, sorrow, doubt, bitterness, and blame. I've carried these things like armor, thinking they'd protect me or help me push through. But they only weighed me down. And while I was fighting my way through life, I was unknowingly letting the enemy win. The world had taken hold, and I didn't even realize it. I thought I was fighting for survival, but I was actually fighting against surrender. And when we stop clinging to our will, and surrender to His will, that's when real peace begins.

When we feel overwhelmed, it's often

because we've let the world take first place instead of God. Our peace gets replaced by pressure. Our hope gets buried beneath headlines, deadlines, and lies we believe about ourselves. But healing and freedom begin when we allow ourselves to feel – and surrender. Surrender is not weakness. It's trust. It's faith. It's saying, "God, I can't do this on my own. And I don't have to."

Sometimes, that means doing an inventory...a soul check. We need to open that closet door we've been avoiding. Yes, there might be cobwebs, pain, old lies, and even regret. But we're not opening it alone – God is already there. That is another mistake I have made: thinking I had to figure it out, carry it, and fix it alone. But I am never alone. God is with me... always. He's been there, waiting patiently, not to shame me, but to carry me and fill me with his mercy and grace.

The world will try to steal your peace every

day. But the only way to keep your peace is to nurture your relationship with God. And that relationship isn't built in a moment. It takes patient endurance. So today, if you're tired of fighting, it's time to stop fighting life and start trusting the One who gave it to you. You are not alone. Let him fight for you. Lay it all down at his feet and surrender.

Empty me, Lord, and fill me. Take away all the feelings that drag me down – the hopelessness, heaviness, and the urge to give up. Fill me instead with Your love, Your grace, Your mercy, Your strength, Your redemption, Your forgiveness. Let me hold onto You and Your promises. Let me lift my eyes from the weight of the world as you empty me and fill me with your peace.



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

Working Together

Written by:

Cheryl Glassman

Certain events in a person's life stick with them. Most of them are life-changing in one way or another. One such event happened to me almost 10 years ago! I was an RN working at HaysMed and helped part-time in pastoral care.

My passion has always been church and music. I also minister/work at St. Nicholas of Myra Church as music director. Being music director means I work hand in hand with the pastor at the time. When I started music ministry at St. Nick's the pastor was Fr. Jarett Konrade. Fr. Jarett tried his best to attend meetings for an organization called Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA). His schedule was pretty full with teaching, radio shows, meetings, and services. He felt bad he could not attend the ECMA meetings. One day he approached me and said he would like me to

attend the ECMA meetings, representing St. Nick's.

I said yes, but as I got to thinking about it I wasn't really too sure. I had heard of ECMA, but that was about it. Would they accept my presence? I am Catholic and would be, according to what I knew, the only Catholic present. That kind of made me nervous.

When I worked in pastoral care and saw all new patients, there were times I had been asked to leave a room because I was Catholic. I would always respect that, and tell the person I would be praying for them anyway. I also know there were Protestant pastoral care workers who were asked to leave Catholic patient rooms. But, how would the folks at the ECMA meetings feel about me? It was a bit nerve racking, but I have come to realize God doesn't put us where we don't belong.

When I entered the meeting, I saw people I knew from around town.

Karen Harvester, Director of Ministry at HaysMed was there. At first, I didn't say much of anything at these meetings. I would bring the information back to Fr. Jarett and go from there.

But one meeting the president was discussing the fact ECMA coordinates the free Thanksgiving meal, National Day of Prayer in Ellis County, and helps to fund First Call For Help, among other things, and how more help was needed. And then it hit me. I realized I wasn't there primarily as a Catholic representative. I was there as a volunteer, a caregiver, a supporter of those in need. So was everyone else in the room!

The president and directors of sub-committees talked about those who are in need in our community; how we have homeless living here and families needing shelter and food. I wondered - how would ECMA be able to get the

Working Together (Continued)

word out that help was needed? At home that day, I thought about it. I also prayed, and remembered Matthew 7:12; do unto others as you would have them do unto you. But is that the real reason to help? No. The real reason is understanding no one person is greater than another.

God made us all and loves us all. In order to care for one another we must work

together. As it says in Philippians 2:3 "Do nothing from rival or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." So, almost 10 years have passed. I am now President of ECMA. I'm not anywhere close to the best president. But I know one thing. Each and every person who is part of ECMA is there to help those in need.

Our churches and church

families help others through the information we bring to them because of our presence and action within ECMA. We do it together, as one family in Jesus' name. As Jesus says, "love one another I have loved you." AMEN!



*Cheryl Glassman
is the Director of
Music at St.
Nicholas of Myra
Catholic Church in
Hays.*

Leadership Interviews

All Are Welcome

***Written by:
Terri Braun***

Anna Towns is a born and raised Hays native who grew up as an only child in a Christian home. Her mother was her major influence during her youth as her father was called into God's care at an early age. Growing up, Trinity Lutheran Church became just as much her family as the mom and stepdad who

raised her.

While Anna's mom was busy teaching Sunday school, the older ladies of the church would take Anna under their wing. Her baptism and confirmation took place in the very building where Anna attends today. She was "that kid" who wanted to sit on the pastor's lap during the children's message. Anna jokes, she



Pictured: Anna Towns

Leadership Interviews: All Are Welcome (Continued)

really just wanted to sit on the pastor's lap because she wanted to be as close as possible to "Pelly the Pelican," a puppet the Pastor Jim used.

Her love for Christ didn't waiver as she blossomed into a young adult. She was president of the youth group while in high school and was the on the Worship Team for the Lutheran campus ministries at the University of Kansas. But Hays was beckoning her to come home. She finished college at Fort Hays State University (FHSU) with a Cultural Geography degree. Anna currently is a Library Engagement Specialist at Forsyth Library on the FHSU campus.

Anna's drive to make a difference has found her highly active within her church as well as on various community committees. Anna felt that Trinity Lutheran Church needed to have "more connection to campus." She had a calling to be the Trinity liaison for the group

"Us 4 U", a registered student organization at FHSU, who partners with St. Michael's Episcopal Church.

**We are all children of God;
we all serve under one God
and together we can do
more than we can apart.**

"Us 4 U" is a faith-based organization whose motto is "Come as you are. Serve as you can." Anna describes it as a place where students can express their love for Christ. "They can be the child of God they know they are and also be their full self." This organization openly accepts everyone and when this campus ministry says that all are welcome, it is genuine.

Anna is also a part of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance and on the Advisory Board for their ONE publication. As a member of a progressive church, Anna believes "it's important that we

acknowledge that different churches have different beliefs, but we all follow the same God, and we all believe in Jesus. I think that there's much more benefit from us working together to send that message. We are all children of God; we all serve under one God and together we can do more than we can apart."

Anna continues Jesus's mission of love, and this is evident in every aspect of her life: in her work on campus, her dedication to Trinity Lutheran Church, and her involvement in the community. She has an unwavering passion for people and believes in meeting people where they are and accepting people for who they are, as we are all siblings in Christ. As for her church family, she commits to keeping Trinity "a place that I want to come, a place that I want to invite people to and a place that can be a church home for others." All are welcome.

Terri Braun is Editor of ONE Magazine.

Ecumenical Events

September 2: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort).

September 3: Old Testament Bible Study, 12:50 pm at Epworth Towers Community Room (2800 Augusta Lane).

September 3: Underneath Oasis, a program to help recovering addicts and their families, 7:00pm at Hays Living Waters Prayer Chapel (1410 Toulon Ave, Hays). *See below for additional information.*

September 4: 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.

September 6: 5th Annual 9/11 Memorial Event & Stair Climb, 7:46am at Lewis Field Stadium (1st and Elm, Hays). Registration is at 7am. Participants may choose the challenge of their choice from either climbing stairs, walking, or a combination of both. No registration fee.

September 6: Operation Christmas Child Project Leader Workshop, 2:30-4pm at Messiah Lutheran Church, (2000 Main). *More information below.*

September 9: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort).

September 10: Old Testament Bible Study, 12:50 pm at Epworth Towers Community Room (2800 Augusta Lane).

September 10: Underneath Oasis, a program to help recovering addicts and their families, 7:00pm at Hays Living Waters Prayer Chapel (1410 Toulon Ave, Hays). *See below for additional information.*

September 11: 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.

September 12: Deadline to register for free Hospice Volunteer Training at Hays Medical Center. The free training will take place 8am - 4:30pm on Oct. 1. To register call (785) 623-6200. *See below for additional information.*

September 13: Out of the Darkness Community Walk, Check-in at 1pm and walk begins at 2pm at North Frontier Park. This is an awareness walk that focuses on mental health and suicide prevention. No charge to participate. Contact Leigha Dobson, (785) 432-0989, for more information.

September 13: MomCo. Meeting, a new interdenominational organization for mothers, 9:30 - 11:30am at North Oak Community Church (3000 Oak St.) Free childcare will be provided. *See below for additional information.*

**“AS WE POUR OUT OUR
BITTERNESS, GOD POURS IN
HIS PEACE.” - F.B. MEYER**

Ecumenical Events (Continued)

September 14: First meeting for perspective board members for Feeding Hays, 6:30pm at St. Michael's Episcopal Church (2900 Canal Blvd.) *More information below.*

September 16: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort).

September 17: Old Testament Bible Study, 12:50 pm at Epworth Towers Community Room (2800 Augusta Lane).

September 17: Underneath Oasis, a program to help recovering addicts and their families, 7:00pm at Hays Living Waters Prayer Chapel (1410 Toulon Ave, Hays). *See below for additional information.*

September 18: Laundry Love by First Call for Help, 4 -6pm at 27th and Hall St. as Laundromat. Up to 5 free loads of laundry per household per month

September 18: 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.

September 20: Hays Symphony Orchestra will present "Fall Classics: Simply Strings," 7:30 - 8:30pm at St. Joseph Catholic Church (215 W. 13th St). Free tickets at hayssymphony.org.

September 23: Text Study, 10:30am at Trinity Lutheran Church (2703 Fort).

September 24: Old Testament Bible Study, 12:50 pm at Epworth Towers Community Room (2800 Augusta Lane).

September 24: Men's Study on "C.S. Lewis: The Most Reluctant Convert", 6:30 pm at Hays Christian Church (1318 E. 22nd).

September 24: Underneath Oasis, a program to help recovering addicts and their families, 7:00pm at Hays Living Waters Prayer Chapel (1410 Toulon Ave, Hays). *See below for additional information.*

September 25: 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.

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

October 1: Hospice Volunteer training, 8:00am - 4:30pm at Hays Medical Center (2220 Canterbury Dr). Registration is due by Friday, September 12, to (785) 623-6200. *See below for additional information.*

October 1: Old Testament Bible Study, 12:50 pm at Epworth Towers Community Room (2800 Augusta Lane).

October 1: Underneath Oasis, a program to help recovering addicts and their families, 7:00pm at Hays Living Waters Prayer Chapel (1410 Toulon Ave, Hays). *See below for additional information.*

October 2: 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.



Ecumenical Events: Additional Details

MomCo

MomCo. is an interdenominational organization for moms of all ages with children of any age, from infants to adults. The group will meet on the second Saturday of the month from September through May. Its first meeting is from 9:30am -11:30am on Saturday, Sept. 13, at North Oak Community Church, 3000 Oak St.

The MomCo. is a faith-based community who meet together to encourage and support one another. They walk through motherhood and their relationship with Jesus together.

Free childcare will be provided. Alicia Kumer, one of the group's leaders, said it will be helpful if moms could call the church at (785) 628-8887 to let organizers know how many children will be accompanying them.



**FIND YOUR PEOPLE,
ELEVATE YOUR
MOTHERHOOD.**

Motherhood is complicated.
Mom friends help.



Underground Oasis

The Hays Living Waters Prayer Chapel is sponsoring a program new to this area. It is called "Underground Oasis!" It is a program to help recovering addicts and their families as they struggle to stay sober.

It is a 12 Step program based on Biblical Principles and uses Scripture and Bible Stories to enhance and support an individual's recovery efforts! "Underground Oasis" meets each Wednesday evening at 7:00 pm at the Hays Chapel: 1410 Toulon Ave., Hays, KS.

For more information, please contact Jen Hagelgantz at 785-259-2633 or Toby Jones at 785-656-6151. Everyone is always welcome! Your struggle is our struggle!

Hospice Volunteer Training

Hospice of Hays Medical Center will offer volunteer training from 8am -4:30pm Wednesday, Oct. 1. Registration is due by Friday, Sept. 12, to (785) 623-6200. The training is free, but organizers are requesting the advance registration to prepare adequate materials.

The training will address a variety of roles, the philosophy of Hospice, advance directives, care of the dying person, and spirituality. Hospice at Hays Medical Center serves Ellis, Rush, Russell, and Rooks Counties.



Opportunities to Serve



Board Members for Feeding Hays

Feeding Hays is looking for passionate folks to join the Board of Directors. If you've been looking for a way to make a real difference in Hays, this could be a fantastic opportunity. We're especially interested in people who are enthusiastic, have fresh ideas and are ready to roll up their sleeve to support our mission

Interested in learning more? There will be a perspective board meeting on Sunday, September 14 at 6:30pm at St. Michael's

Episcopal Church, 2900 Canal Blvd in Hays. Thanks for considering joining us in the fight against food security in Hays!

Warmly, the Feeding Hays team

Operation Christmas Child

An Operation Christmas Child (OCC) Project Leader Workshop will be held Saturday, Sept. 6, in Hays. The workshop will be offered from 2:30pm – 4:00pm at Messiah Lutheran Church, 2000 Main.

Individuals will pack simple shoeboxes with school supplies, small toys, and hygiene items. The shoeboxes are then collected and shipped to children in need around the world. Each box also contains a pamphlet in the child's language telling the child about Jesus and how much He loves them.



Door prizes, light refreshments, and free shoeboxes will be offered, she said. So that adequate materials will be on hand, attendees are asked to contact Rachel Albin, the OCC leader for Northwest Kansas, at (785) 639-1325 or at ralbinmk@yahoo.com.



Special thanks from First Call for Help

A special thank you goes out to Joe Bob Outfitters!

They are a big part of our Backpacks for Kids program with helping us haul everything to our distribution location! The biggest blessing of all is that they allow us to have extra storage in their warehouse. Hope you enjoyed the cookies!

Our Community Youth



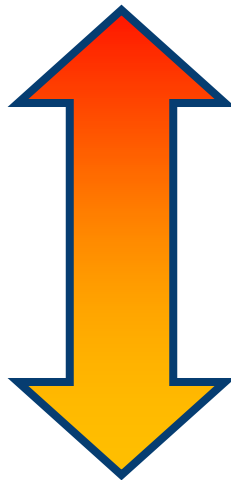
This summer the North Oak Community Church took a group on a Mission to Mexico.



A youth group from Hays First United Methodist Church helped at the Ellis County Big Brother Big Sisters Duck Derby.



The Hays Baptist Church had a booth at the FHSU Back-To-School picnic.



The Catholic Youth Organization split into teams and purchased school supplies for the Backpacks For Kids program put on by First Call For Help.

