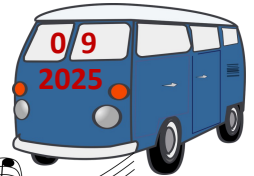




# TRITON COMFORT DOG MINISTRY



## On the road again



Lutheran Church Charities 2025 Conference with Amy Plenger, Katherine Wolfe and Steve and Marti Matz attending, "plus a few others" and approximately 100 Golden Retrievers!!

The theme for the conference was Isaiah 40:1, "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." Lots of learning, training, fellowship and new friends made.



Onto South Central Texas the following week, Marti Matz and Amy Plenger were there to share comfort, prayers, hugs, and the Light of Jesus with those who have lost loved ones and the hurting communities from the Guadalupe flood.

When making plans to attend the Lutheran Church Charities Comfort Dog Conference, none of us attending imagined how soon after we would be deploying to the Hill Country. We couldn't fathom the scope of the loss and devastation these communities were, are, and will be facing for months and years to come. Yet God knew. In hindsight, the theme of the conference was spot on. "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." Isaiah 40:1

Weeks before, I thought about how I could learn and grow and be encouraged, while God was planning to make sure we became better comforters because we would be called upon immediately. By the time we arrived at the conference, deployment plans were forming. So it was time to absorb all that God had prepared in advance.

We learned that the first verse of chapter 40 is the turning point in the book of Isaiah where despair begins to turn to hope. The word comfort is not spoken as a suggestion, but an imperative command to all of God's people. We were reminded that the Holy Spirit would be with us and encourage us and give us the words to say and the prayers to pray. We heard from speakers who advised that there is no peace or comfort without being aligned with God. We were urged to contain our emotions in a moment of crisis, regardless of the circumstances, because calmness is contagious. We were reminded to take care of ourselves so we could continue to comfort others, because there is no spiritual first aid without self aid. We were bolstered with many verses to take to heart: Ps 34:18; Joshua 1:5; Romans 8:26.

Our "job" is to notice who is hurting, be present, and listen as they share, so that we can be their lifeline to Christ. People of the Hill Country community responded to comfort offered through petting Triton "He's so soft!" Comfort Dog, sometimes sharing their experiences, horrific as they were, even breaking down and crying with strangers who offered a safe space to do so. We could hear their pain, simply touch their shoulders, or hug them, as they let it all out. So many times, the opportunity to pray wasn't even a question, as the Holy Spirit led the way. I've never hugged so many people I had never met before in my life. Near the end of our conversations, I would laugh through tears and ask, "By the way, what is your name now that we've cried/hugged/prayed together? I'm Amy."

The geographic devastation is overwhelming at first, and the size of the debris piles are hard to take in, with photos barely capturing the impact. That soon leads to the internal, emotional devastation of all who are connected to and grieving those lost in the river. Although the flood waters receded, the damage is deep and will not heal quickly. But the love and hope and outpouring of selflessness shown in the Hill Country was amazing to witness. I believe what we saw may be a pretty close parallel to what the early modeled. Whatever someone needed, someone else showed up and gave it freely. Those who could search the waters did so. Those who could haul debris or muck out homes made that their focus. Those who had organizational skills and space kept the supply donations flowing smoothly. Those with extra space, or even an empty school, made it into lodging for the volunteer teams. Those who could cook did so constantly, with ingredients donated by those who had funds to share. And yes, the local BBQ is unmatched! Everyone who received anything showed gratitude, thanking especially those who had traveled into the area to help. There is a firm base of faith in Christ in that area of our state, and a whole lot more who are interested in learning about this hope that endures or this peace that passes all understanding. I pray that our church family finds more ways to continue to support the Hill Country communities and share from the talents and blessings that God has freely given to each one of us.

Submitted by Amy Plenger



**Come celebrate Triton's 7th Anniversary at Messiah Plano, September 7th between services!**