

Timeless grace: After 52 years, chapel continues to bless

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By Miranda Bradley

Children At Heart Ministries

ROUND ROCK—As the population north of Austin has grown exponentially over the last five decades, longtime residents have looked to the familiar stained-glass windows and limestone walls of Hankamer-Fleming





Stained glass windows
in the Texas Baptist
Children's Home chapel
depict the life of Christ
and show biblical
characters raised by
people other than their
biological parents.

Chapel at Texas Baptist Children's Home as an enduring landmark.

"The chapel sits in the heart of our campus, just as Christ is at the heart of our ministries," said Jerry Bradley, president of the children's home and chief executive officer of Children At Heart Ministries. "It's more than a building. It's a reminder to everyone of who we are and what we stand for."



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Built in 1955, the chapel started as a place of worship for orphans who lived at the children's home.

Today, children on campus attend Sunday morning services in the community with their cottage families. But on Sunday nights, residents still gather for worship inside Hankamer-Fleming Chapel.

The structure was patterned after a church in North Carolina, down to its distinctive chandeliers. Stained glass was hand-selected to send a specific message of hope and comfort to kids in care.

Louis and Billie Sue Henna-Cariker donated the original land and the first five buildings to start the children's home. She chaired the board that oversaw the chapel's building process.

“I think it’s wonderful that the building has withstood the test of time,” she said. “I’m glad to have been part of it.”

Five stained-glass windows on the east side of the chapel depict a different child in the Bible who was raised by someone other than his parents, including Daniel, Moses, Joseph, Samuel and David. The five west windows represent important milestones in Jesus’ life, and a large back window shows Jesus welcoming the little children into his open arms.

“Each of these windows is a reminder to everyone that God loves children and welcomes anyone with pain and suffering,” said Keith Dyer, executive director of Texas Baptist Children’s Home.

The chapel also is a standing representation of community partnership. When the need for the structure first arose, Curtis Hankamer and William Fleming provided the money to build it. Money for the windows was provided by Broadway Baptist Church of Fort Worth and Second Baptist Church of Houston, along with major gifts from individual donors in Houston, Fort Worth and Taylor.

Nearly 20 years after it was built, the chapel received another significant contribution. After losing their 16-year-old daughter in a fatal car accident, Diane and Stanley Williams decided to purchase bells for the chapel.

“We wanted to do something to honor children,” Diane Williams said. “I love that the bells are not only a witness for Christ, but they are also a legacy for my daughter.”

The bells ring every hour and half hour throughout the year and play Christmas carols during the season.

“I’m thrilled that other people can enjoy them,” she said. “Giving is even more special when you know those blessings continue every day.”

Besides being a highly sought-after site for weddings and funeral services, the chapel also has been a source of comfort during times of national tragedy. On Sept. 11, 2001, area residents gathered there to pray, reflect and grieve the lives lost in terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. Every year, it also is the site of Round Rock's National Day of Prayer services, inviting visitors to fellowship.

Throughout its 52 years, Hankamer-Fleming Chapel has been witness to tears of joy and pain, all from its highly visible location on the corner of Highway 79 and North Mays Street.

"This city has grown and evolved," Dyer said. "But this chapel will always be here as a silent reminder of God's timeless love and grace."

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