

# St. Luke's

## 2024 Distinguished Life Award



### Mary and Lee Denson

When Mary joined St. Luke's in 2000, she attended an Alpha class and made lifelong friends. They began a Bible study that lasted 20 years. She has served on mission trips to Kenya and felt God's presence in the shared experiences of her fellow missionaries. She has touched the lives of people as a Stephen Minister. When serving on The Houston Project committee in 2006, she met a widower named Lee Denson. They eventually fell in love, married and began to serve the church together. They led two more mission trips to Kenya. They also poured into youth here at home as Confirmation mentors and Kids Hope volunteers. The verse that hangs in her kitchen captures her daily approach to life: *This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

Lee came to St. Luke's in 1999 and attended a Methodist Men's Group event where the centerpieces were wooden toys. "A guy spoke about the woodshop, and I thought I'd give it a try. There was a time back a few years ago that we made 15,000 toys a year to give away all around the country." The woodshop also repaired furniture and later designed sets for Fine Arts. After Lee was widowed in 2004, he had time to serve on Kids Meals, Hurricane Relief, and Habitat for Humanity. Since 2008, after Lee and Mary were married, they have been a force in mission trips from Africa to Houston. When reminiscing about the old woodshop, Lee says "It was such a mess over there, and everything needed to be fixed or replaced. . . but so much good came out of that shop, and so many relationships. We are a kind of family. Construction is a hard process and takes time and patience, but the dust has now settled, and we still love the work we do and one another. When Hugh stepped down from leading the woodshop 10 years ago I said, *Here I am Lord. Send me.* I wonder where God will call me next?"



### Fannie and Hugh Parker

Fannie was raised in the Methodist church, and that faith led her to attend seminary and become a diaconal minister. Part of that journey required a job in a church, and she was hired to work with Senior Ministries at St. Luke's before moving into Membership. She taught adult Sunday School classes for 40 years and later led the intensive Disciple Bible Studies. Serving outside the church is also in her DNA and she has been on mission trips to Maine and Costa Rica. Closer to home, she supports Hugh's main mission—the Woodshop Ministry.

In his early teens, Hugh felt a call to faith during a Baptist revival. When he moved to Houston, his roommate hosted a Sunday School meeting and that is where he met Fannie. They married and were deeply involved in their church for 25 years before joining St. Luke's. He always loved to fix things, and that passion led him to oversee work projects on many mission trips. After joining St. Luke's staff, he and his team tackled work projects like building wheelchair ramps and assisting with home repairs for church members. As the team aged, working in the hot sun was too much and in 1997 they requested the use of the church's little building on Edloe, and from there the woodshop and the Woodshop Ministry were born. The team has repaired and built furniture for the day school and expanded into toy making for numerous organizations as well as special projects for the church. Hugh often translates Ephesians 4:11 *...and appointed some with grace to be apostles and some to be woodworkers.* He says, "I feel the presence of God in our workshop. Each morning brings life, and I want to be part of it."



### **Jim and Belinda Weatherly**

Belinda Weatherly got a knock on her door in 1967 from a St. Luke's member inviting her to church. She thought, "Why not?" Years later, after she and Jim married, they found St. Luke's again. Belinda re-started the Cub Scouts at church and was active in Sunday School (which Jim declared he'd never attend but did when invited by a friend). From being active in Women's Retreats to Prayer Team, writing Daily Habit devotionals, and singing with the St. Cecilia choir, she has touched many with her gifts. Staying focused on Jesus is her practice "If I can make a difference in someone's life with writing, then that is what it's all about." Describing their marriage, she says, "He's work. I'm words."

Jim started his love of missions when in high school, and to date, he has gone on 54 mission trips. "We cannot sit on the sidelines at church. We have to become involved. Helping improve someone's life is so uplifting. I get so much more out of it than they do." Around town, Jim has invested many hours on the boards of Christian Community Service Center, Search, Habitat for Humanity and Rebuilding Together. While he has served various ministries at St. Luke's for 32 years, his passion has been the woodshop. From providing tens of thousands of children with wooden toys, hundreds of bookshelves for Kids Hope kids and many more projects, Jim says, "The new Woodshop has been in my dreams for a long time. My favorite verse is I Peter 4:10 *Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace.*"



### **Carolyn Hollis**

Carolyn Hollis has always loved church. She grew up with her Plainview MYF (Methodist Youth Fellowship) who surrounded her with love when her mother became ill. Later, as an adult, she moved to Houston and became a schoolteacher. She joined Gethsemane in 1971 and volunteered in the nursery right away, later becoming a Sunday school teacher. When she became single again, she joined the "Older Singles" class, The Discoverers. That class merged with Questers, and then became The Challengers. Over the years, so much has changed on the Gethsemane campus. Carolyn served on the board of "The Little School" and was part of making the difficult decision to close the school. Ever resilient, she volunteered as a Teacher's helper with Small Steps Nurturing Center. Carolyn's favorite verse? Matthew 19:14—*Let the little children come unto me and do not hinder them, for such is the kingdom of heaven.* Her advice to new folks is "Come for more than one visit, and when you do, don't hang in the back. Sit up front with us!"



### **Sammie Simons**

Sammie moved to Houston in 1968. She came to Gethsemane because her kids had friends there. She attended church but really got more active following her Emmaus spirit-filled weekend retreat. Sammie loves to work with youth. She has been a Kids Hope mentor at Sutton for 12 years now. Her current mentee is in the 5th grade and she has been with him since Pre-Kindergarten. She has had a reVision pen pal for 5 years, faithfully sending notes of encouragement as he finishes his incarceration. "My Sunday School class, The Challengers, found me! It was after a teaching on the Holy Spirit that I was asked to serve as VP and later became class president. It was way out of my comfort zone, but God helped me through for five years and it really became a blessing. I still serve as vice president today." When asked about her favorite verse, she says, I have always held onto Philippians 4:13—*I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.*"