

*ALCM grants at work*

# First-Ever Music Camp!



**Drumming and strumming at music camp**

by Leah Matocha

**a**ugust 4–6, 2025, were the dates that anxious, nervous, and excited young people walked through the door of Spirit of Joy (SOJ) Lutheran Church in Seguin, TX, for our first-ever music camp.

The music camp was Pastor Megan Elliott’s idea when she realized how many capable musicians we have as members of SOJ. She, Luke Leverett (church musician), Rebecca Clark (worship and

**Editor’s Note:** ALCM grants are awarded in amounts between \$250 and \$1,500 to provide financial assistance for projects and initiatives that support ALCM’s mission to “nurture and equip musicians to serve and lead the church’s song.” All ALCM members may apply for these grants, and the application window is open twice a year. Stay tuned to the monthly e-newsletters and watch [www.alcm.org](http://www.alcm.org) for the next grant funding opportunity.

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**Spirit of Joy sends a generous “thank you” to ALCM for helping us achieve our vision of bringing music to the lives of so many young people.**

congregational life coordinator), and I started discussing the many possibilities of bringing the camp to fruition. Our goal was to start simple and small for this first time.

We opened the camp to 2nd–5th graders for free, with four different tracks of learning: ukelele, dance, singing/voice, and percussion. We found our group teachers by tapping into those musicians in our congregation who had knowledge and expertise in these areas. When we asked for volunteers to be in the sections as

assistants and lead the children to each of the group experiences, we were not lacking for help!

And of course, there was lunch. SOJ’s talented hospitality leader, Jennifer Ehlers, wonderfully organized the lunches and volunteers. The “lunch bunch” provided ample and delicious food for teachers and volunteers alike.

Looking back at the camp in the leaders’ discussion, one of the highlights of the camp seemed to happen during lunch. The campers ate and then politely sat around and chatted with their new-found friends. The leaders intermingled with the campers and other volunteers. We extended the lunch time unintentionally each day as everyone was enjoying the conversations. One of the leaders who had just graduated from college made a connection for his first job, so that was exciting!

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Following the camp, the leaders did not have to think twice about holding the camp again next year. We identified what we would like to repeat from this year and what we could do differently for next year.

**Some of those “what to do differently” suggestions are:**

- communicating about the camp and moving more into SOJ’s surrounding community;
- separating the groups into ages and perhaps abilities;
- extending the day length by maybe an hour;
- including an experience each day with a whole-group setting, such as a string concert, drum circle, or sing-a-long, or by inviting the parents;
- lengthening lunch time by 15 minutes;
- adding different tracks, such as tone chimes, marimbas, rock band experiences; and



**Discovering that head voice**

- allowing the students to select a track they would be interested in.

The possibilities are endless!

I have saved the best for last. Our camp would not have been possible without the grant money made available to us. Here is a generous “thank you” from SOJ to ALCM for helping us achieve our vision of bringing music to the lives of so many young people and hoping a seed will sprout in many different shapes as these students continue to be curious about the gift of music.



**Leah Matocha** is a member of Spirit of Joy. She accompanies the choir, has led bell choirs, and presented concerts. She also

gives private piano lessons and substitutes on organ/piano for church services in Seguin and the surrounding area. She retired from Trinity Lutheran Church (Victoria, TX), where she was the music director for 35 years. Leah also taught elementary general music and high school group piano for 29 years in the Victoria Independent School District.

*Photos courtesy Bobbie Maddox*

**Putting the beat in the feet**



**Lunch time is coming!**

