

*Christ at the Center*  
*E-News*



Central District

Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church

## EVENTS & DUE DATES

Feb. 19 - District Leadership Team Meeting

Feb. 23-26 - General Conference

Mar. 21 - DCOM Continuation Interviews for LLP's

Apr. 11 - DCOM Continuation Interviews for LLP's

Away from me, Satan!

Matthew 4:1-11

**4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness** to be tempted<sup>[a]</sup> by the devil.

<sup>2</sup> After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup> The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

<sup>4</sup> Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’<sup>[b]</sup>”

<sup>5</sup> Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. <sup>6</sup> “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’<sup>[c]</sup>”

<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’<sup>[d]</sup>”

<sup>8</sup> Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. <sup>9</sup> “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

<sup>10</sup> Jesus said to him, “**Away from me, Satan!** For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’<sup>[e]</sup>”

<sup>11</sup> Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

### **Finding your strength in the Wilderness**

We are roughly 30 days away from the Called General Conference of the United Methodist Church to take up the work of the Way Forward Commission. Faithful people on all sides of this discussion, have lamented that this time of waiting is a wilderness experience. For most United Methodists, there is a general uncertainty of the future of the church, there is a hunger for a

solution where we are all united, and if we are completely honest, there are times we desire the power for “our will” to be done over God’s sovereignty. In these wilderness days, these days of just waiting, it is easy to begin to wonder “what is the purpose of this time?” It is important when we find ourselves in the wilderness, we take time to realize: like Christ, it is the Holy Spirit that has led us to this place. In an unprecedented move during the 2016 General Conference, there was a call from Bishops to help lead us to a resolution to a 46 year old debate. This led to the creation of the Commission for the Way Forward, which faithfully worked together to address the current crisis in the church and try to create a way forward. It was a move of the Holy Spirit, which brought us to this place.

Yet, if we look closely at scripture, we will see clearly: time in the wilderness was an important part of Jesus’ preparation for his ministry. As we wait in the wilderness, we take courage, because Christ has already “been there and done that.” We are not alone. Driven to the wilderness, Jesus fasts and prays for forty days and forty nights. He spends this time drawing closer and closer to God’s purpose and will. Quality leaders will almost always point to a wilderness experience as part of their leadership preparation; a time that forced them to their knees seeking to grow closer to God’s purpose and will.

John Maxwell writes, “the wilderness will help to purify our motives, solidify our backbones, and help us gain clarity in our calling.”<sup>[1]</sup> In his book, *In the Name of Jesus*, Henry Nouwen reminds of that the three temptations of Jesus correspond to the three temptations leaders still face today:

1. The temptation to be self-sufficient (verses 2-4) Jesus didn’t become controlling, even with his legitimate needs. He trusted God.
2. The temptation to be spectacular (verses 5-7) Jesus refused to become a stunt man. He didn’t perform in order to become a celebrity.
3. The temptation to be powerful (verses 8-10) Jesus won’t take a shortcut to

gain power or worship.<sup>[ii]</sup>

As hard as it is for some to imagine, this time has purpose. In his explanatory notes, John Wesley points out that Jesus was able to handle the temptations brought on by Satan, because he had prayed and fasted for 40 days. Instead of lamenting this time, what if we followed the example of Christ and spent time in prayer and fasting... preparing for the temptation which will come after the called General Conference? Temptations to gloat and celebrate.... temptations to go into despair. Temptations to make a run at power... Temptations to walk alone and be self-sufficient.

This week, take time to read Matthew 4:1-11. Study Jesus' method for combating these familiar temptations. Pray, Fast, and Meditate upon the word of God. Seek first the purpose and will of God for these days and the ministry of your church. Setting aside your own desires, knowing God's ways are higher than ours.

Storm the Gates!

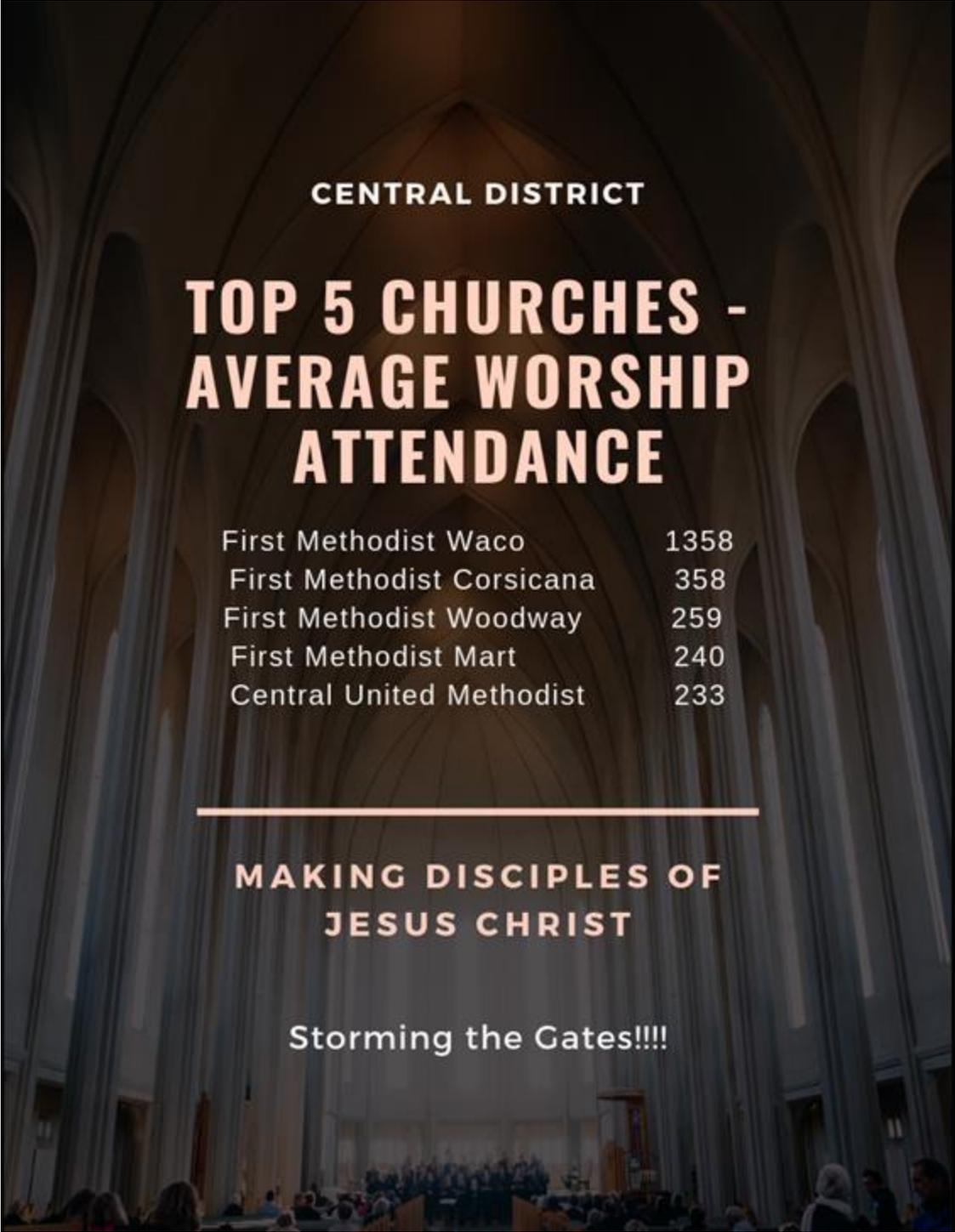
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<sup>[i]</sup> The Maxwell Leadership Bible, Matthew 4:1-11

<sup>[ii]</sup> In the Name of Jesus, Henry Nouwen, Referenced in i

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**CENTRAL DISTRICT**

**TOP 5 CHURCHES -  
AVERAGE WORSHIP  
ATTENDANCE**

First Methodist Waco	1358
First Methodist Corsicana	358
First Methodist Woodway	259
First Methodist Mart	240
Central United Methodist	233

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**MAKING DISCIPLES OF  
JESUS CHRIST**

**Storming the Gates!!!!**

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CENTRAL DISTRICT

***2018 TOP 5 CHURCHES -  
PROFESSION'S OF FAITH***

FIRST METHODIST WACO	38
FIRST METHODIST MART	30
FIRST METHODIST WOODWAY	26
FROST UNITED METHODIST	20
CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST	17



**OFFERING CHRIST TO PEOPLE WE  
ARE NOT ALREADY REACHING!!!**

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**MAKING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST AND STORMING THE GATES!!!**

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*Center for*  
**EVANGELISM, MISSION, & CHURCH GROWTH**  
*transforming local congregations & creating new places for new people*

the 100 New Faith Community (NFC) Initiative for the CTC, we just surpassed 30 grant proposals. We also have many churches that are participating with this initiative without the grant. This is an exciting season for our conference as we reach people we are not already reaching.

In this note I hope to review the application for the grant itself which is as much a process to succeed in the NFC, as is the application. Each piece is designed to help us give the NFC as much chance of success as possible. You will find [information](#) and the application on the CTC web site in the center for Evangelism, Missions, and Church Growth. Select the 100 New Faith Community page with resources that might help.

1. **Location of New Faith Community** ~ Is it going to be on the church campus? Which space will be used? Will it be in a separate place, school, restaurant, barn, or large home, etc. Identifying the space can help define what the NFC needs to look like, who can be reached there, and give how much time to ready the space with needed upgrades. Planning is everything in making a NFC work.
  2. **New Faith Communities leader or leaders** ~ Who is going to lead this, preach this, be the main driving force; it can be the Sr. Pastor, Assoc. pastor, or another person. Someone must have this as the priority for the leadership and work in this season. This cannot be an addendum, or it will get lost and fail.
  3. **Who do you intend to reach that you are not already reaching?** Most NFCs that succeed do so because they aim not just at a group, but at a group that the church is not already reaching in existing services. It can be the unchurched, young families, singles, or an ethnic group. But this decision should be decided early on as it will drive what the service looks like and who will be involved in leadership.
  4. **Vision: what is your vision for this New Faith Community? Be specific and include numbers:** Maybe the most important part of this NFC season is finding a passion for reaching people with the good news of Jesus Christ, a sense of this being a priority for the church and the leadership involved in the journey. Decide the focus, work on the metrics and identify the purpose. These are all things that will keep leadership on track and allow the NFC to work through the ups and downs, and even possible revisions as you go on this adventure. This is just like beginning a new church. The leaders must be absolutely committed and depend on the Holy Spirit.
  5. **Discernment: what research and due diligence has been done in preparation?** This preparation process might take months or even a year and should involve many of the church leaders and members; including studying other models that have worked, breaking down past NFCs that have begun but failed, exploring the needs of the community, examining what is needed in the space of choice that needs to be upgraded, possible new staffing, etc. Don't jump in, gently and wisely with steadfastness move through the process.
  6. **Target: Who are you trying to reach, what demographics, what needs, and what leads you to believe this or these groups might be receptive?** Part of this is not only doing a MissionInsite study or another study to see who is in your community you are not reaching.
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but being selective as to who you think the church might be able to reach. It is frustrating to target a group that we might not have the ability, knowledge, or leadership to reach. This is an important decision. Knowing who you want to reach and think you might reach will be everything in deciding the many layers and elements that will form and shape the NFC. This should be decided early and is often the mistake that failed NFCs have made. Reaching people, we are already reaching seldom requires a NFC, it's new people who do. Design the New Faith Community around them.

7. **Strategy: give a time frame with dates on the calendar, name the New Faith Community, and resources such as budget and staffing** ~ What is the dedicated space being used, and the core groups already dedicated for the NFC. It takes passion, work, people, and deep faith to make a NFC succeed. If you are lacking any of these, or go out half-hearted and half way, it will fail and disappoint many. Make it work. Put the starting date on the calendar and work backward to meetings, gatherings, budgeting, preaching points, communication, marketing, practice services, preview services, kick off, and the how to's that will drive the first few weeks. The beginning is critical and planning thoroughly is a non-negotiable piece of this. If we try to do this without the work and proper planning, it will fail. A minimum of planning probably takes at least six months in a small church and one year in a larger church. Then ensure that you can maintain past the beginning and lead and do the work for months and even years.
  1. **Discipleship Pathway ~ How will this make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world? What is the pathway to discipleship for this New Faith Community?** The goal can't just be community or friendships. Church has a clearly defined purpose of making disciples of Jesus Christ. How are we going to do this? How might we connect this with other processes and people in the church? How are we going to help people enter faith, grow in their faith, and then participate in making more disciples. This is the Book of Acts model. Making disciples is not accidental or a by-product, it is intentional.
8. **Who will the lead person be, who will assist them - give the names of the team?** There should be one lead person responsible. Are there a few key people on the team, music, worship, hospitality, marketing, group leaders, set up, and audio visuals, etc. Name them, know who they are, get buy-in, get them together, involve them in decisions, and pray together. Don't wait till it begins or you will hit roadblocks before you do this. The New Faith Community will fail.
9. **Identify the prayer team who will be praying for and supporting the New Faith Community.** Create a prayer team that prays for this NFC for months ahead. Include people who will be a core part of the NFC but also others in the church who will not be. We want to unite the church around it's mission, not divide it. Prayer and centering in Christ and His call is a critical part of this.
10. **Identify any community partnerships that will be a part.** Sometimes NFCs can begin in partnership with other churches, or even community organizations. This can be especially true in a NFC centered in addiction, recovery, ESL, preschools, bingo halls, restaurants, or other organizations. Have these kinds of discussions early. Even a space that is used can be in a partnership with the main use of the space.
11. **Is there a specific model that is being used for inspiration and direction?** Creativity is very encouraged, but sometimes an existing model that has proved successful can be very

helpful. It reveals what is working to reach new people today, unchurched people, or a certain demographic. There are many ways to do this research and it's certainly encouraged.

- 12. Please provide a financial plan that includes benchmarks that must be achieved that define success for this New Faith Community. This includes a defined process for when and how to end the New Faith Community if it does not reach those dated benchmarks.** What kind of offerings are expected and or needed? What is the process that will help achieve these offerings? When do you need it to become self-sustaining? What numbers do you expect to participate, how much does it need to grow, and what metrics define a success? Prepare for growth and try not to settle. But also, if those benchmarks don't succeed, what is the pathway to end the NFC and involve the NFC participants, so they can participate in trying to reach the goals and understand the outcome if they are not met.

We continue to discover how an existing church can be transformative and begin a growth season by beginning a NFC. I am also guessing if you read this all the way through (I know it's longer than usual) you might be ready to become a NFC. If that's you, check out the [100 New Faith Communities page](#) or give us a call. We would love to give your church a grant.

*Rev. Mike Ramsdell, Executive Director  
Center for Evangelism, Missions, & Church Growth*

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Early Response Training Opportunities:

Saturday, March 2, 2019 9am-5pm  
Joshua First United Methodist Church  
111 Paula St.  
Joshua, TX. 76508  
Instructor: Donnie Sherwood  
Class Fee \$30  
Registration closes February 26

Recertification/Advanced Training  
Opportunity:  
Saturday, March 2, 2019 9am-1pm  
Joshua First United Methodist Church  
111 Paula St.  
Joshua, TX. 76508  
Instructor: Susan Luttrell  
Class Fee: \$20  
Registration closes February 26



[Register for 3/2/19](#)

[Enroll for Recertification/Advanced Training](#)

-----*ADDITIONAL ERT/ADVANCED TRAINING CLASS*-----

**Early Response Training**

Saturday, February 9, 2019 9am-5pm

**Meridian First United Methodist Church**

300 N. Main

Meridian, TX. 76665

Instructors: Kevin & Lee Morton

Class Fee \$30

Register [HERE](#)

Registration closes February 5

**Recertification/Advanced Training**

Saturday, February 16, 2019 9am-1pm

**Meridian First United Methodist Church**

300 N. Main

Meridian, TX. 76665

Instructor: Susan Luttrell

Class Fee \$20

Register [HERE](#)

Registration closes February 5

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## [Youth Ministry Information from Conference](#)

**Individual Registration is now open for Mid-Winter 2019: “Despite the Fear.”** Our Conference’s annual youth Winter retreat will feature small group studies, worship, games and fellowship at Glen Lake Camp. Choose from two weekend sessions, Feb. 1-3 and Feb. 15-17. Visit [ctcumc.org/midwinter2019](http://ctcumc.org/midwinter2019) to read more about Mid-Winter, or to register groups and/or individuals.



NURTURING A CULTURE OF GROWTH

Contact the district office if your church is interested in this initiative!

For more information: <http://www.ctcumc.org/grow>



The Bishop's Pilgrimage to Iona -  
May 16-25, 2019

[For More Information and/or Apply](#)



# SCOREBOARD

CENTRAL TEXAS CONFERENCE DISTRICTS

97%

42,447 / 43,828 ← 2018 GOAL

73%

42,408 / 57,788 ← 2026 WIG GOAL

## CONFERENCE SCOREBOARD

		ACHIEVED/SET GOAL
CENTRAL	101%	5,364 / 5,300
EAST	95%	17,521 / 18,478
NEW CHURCH STARTS	101%	491 / 488
NORTH	97%	9,214 / 9,517
SOUTH	97%	6,779 / 7,000
WEST	101%	3,078 / 3,045

## AVERAGE WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

JAN. 2018 - DEC. 2018

LEGEND

- 0-69% of goal
- 70-89% of goal
- 90% and above of goal

Data Source: VitalSigns Dashboard



# SCOREBOARD

CENTRAL TEXAS CONFERENCE DISTRICTS



2,171/2,251 ← 2018 GOAL



2,171/3,500 ← 2026 WIG GOAL

## CONFERENCE SCOREBOARD

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	ACHIEVED/SET GOAL
CENTRAL	117%				293 / 250
EAST	97%				776 / 796
NEW CHURCH STARTS	101%				81 / 80
NORTH	75%				467 / 625
SOUTH	104%				414 / 400
WEST	140%				140 / 100

## PROFESSIONS OF FAITH DECEMBER 2018 (YTD)

LEGEND

- less than 10% of YTD target
- within 10% of YTD target
- on or exceeding YTD target

Data Source: VitalSigns Dashboard



This Lent, imagine Peter striding in your church, a net slung over one shoulder, tales of Jesus on his lips. This is *Sea Change*, a Lenten event presented by Mark Winter's One Man Show Ministries, featuring the big fisherman in a series of dramatic vignettes throughout worship.

With its themes of repentance, sacrifice and devotion, *Sea Change* can be used anytime during Lent, and there are special adaptations for Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday, in which your own costumed church members participate in a re-enactment

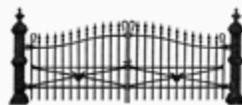
of the triumphal entry. The service ends with Peter singing *Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore*.

Rev. Michael Cyr of Newcastle UMC noted, "Mark is a consummate professional. His portrayal of the Apostle Peter in *Sea Change* is a perfect blend of humor and drama, with an ending that dares you not to cry. Our church loved him."

Host churches receive a preparation packet, complete with promotional materials. Mark can come for mileage reimbursement and a love offering with no minimum required. Contact One Man Show at 817-454-1129 or send an email to [info@onemanshow.org](mailto:info@onemanshow.org).

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*Energizing and equipping local churches to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.*



“STORM THE GATES”

Matthew 16:18

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