

Christ at the Center
E-News



Central District

Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAR. 7 - DISTRICT CLERGY MEETING

MAR. 21 - DCOM CONTINUATION
INTERVIEWS FOR LLP'S

APR. 11 - DCOM CONTINUATION
INTERVIEWS FOR LLP'S

MAY 19 - DISTRICT CONFERENCE

JUNE 9 -12 - ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Anyone who watched General Conference this past week came away “standing in the need of prayer.” O Lord Hear our prayers! Since the conclusion of GC2019, the most asked question that I am getting is, “is it over?” My question back is, “is it ever over?” The Church has been fighting for almost 2000 years. Ecclesia semper reformanda est (Latin for “the church must always be reformed”.) We are just much more aware because of technology.

Here is what we have to remember. Church fights don’t happen between the unfaithful, but rather the faithful. I know to someone on the outside that does not make sense and has caused people to look with disdain toward the church. People of great faith were part of UMC GC2019 on all sides and let me assure you everyone in that room walked away wounded. Here is what I also know. If a huge natural disaster occurred today... those same people would be working side by side to be the hands and feet of Christ. Serving together and loving alike. That’s what brothers and sisters do. Sometimes fight... sometimes come together. Lord help us to come together more.

I also believe God did a work this week despite the best efforts of the deceiver. We are broken... some say beyond repair.... but we all know that it is in our brokenness that God can use us the very most. Whether separate or apart we are all brothers and sisters in Christ!

For this United Methodist nothing is black and white... everything is held in tension. I want to offer this... To my LGBTQI brothers and sisters... you are welcome in our churches and you are beloved by God. We long to do life with you and grow in deeper understandings of God with you. While we can’t get to the point of redefining marriage or approving ordination... we do believe you are Imago Dei. Your presence in our churches make us richer.

To my Orthodox Brothers and Sisters... you are not a virus and neither is your commitment to 2000 years of Orthodox Biblical Teachings.

To my fellow Clergy Sisters... we have all wrestled with Paul and for me I came out with a deep appreciation for his words and his love and use of women in ministry. Throughout scripture both OT and NT we see God using women. Your ministry should never be questioned.

For my fellow divorced and remarried clergy friends... we are a people of GRACE. God makes all things new.

To my brothers and sisters who supported the OCP... I am sure the pain is deep. Thank you for your creativity and for your love of the church. Your commitment and your work demonstrate your deep faithfulness to God and the UMC.

To our international brothers and sisters... America is not superior to you at the foot of the cross. We are richer because of connections with you.

To all those who are not part of our church but watched with horror on Tuesday... please don’t judge us by our worse day, but by the subtle ways we do ministry to EVERYONE... 12 million people doing billions of dollars worth of mission and ministry every year worldwide.

Please be patient with one another as wounds begin to heal. Whether you agree with me or not... I love you... you are my brothers and sisters in Christ... and I am better for having you in my life.

Blessings!

Dr. Leah S. Hidde-Gregory

Central District Superintendent

Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church

Storm the Gates!

Matthew 16:18



As many of you are aware, the beautiful sanctuary at Mooreville UMC burned on 2/7/2019. The church has set up a fund if you would like to extend your generosity at this time.

Online Giving
e-checks & debit/credit cards accepted

<http://www.moorevilleumc.org/give/>

Click Give Now

or text an amount to

254-655-1774

or send a donation to

Mooreville United Methodist Church Fire Relief Fund

Account at all Bancorp South Banks

P.O. Box 808

Marlin, TX 76661

Donations can also be made at any Bancorp South location. The church thanks you for your prayers.



The focus of this event is to energize and equip the lay leadership of our local churches to help lead the transformation taking place throughout our conference

in response to our [Wildly Important Goal \(WIG\)](#). You will hear stories from people whose lives were changed (even saved) via their relationship with Jesus and the local church. We will also share best practices on how laity can best partner with clergy to make disciples of Jesus Christ, and much more.

This gathering is open to any and all Central Texas Conference laity not just the official Lay Leader nor the lay

members to Annual Conference. We want and need all the movers and shakers of your congregation – those folks who you know are always at the front, leading whenever anything good and positive happens at your church, in your community or associated with one or more of the vital ministries of your church. Churches are encouraged to bring groups of laity (churches can even count participants in your worship attendance for the day). The event is free, but [registration](#) is required so that we can adequately prepare. A free, box lunch will be provided.

Please bookmark this page and come back often for more information on our featured speakers, agenda, worship, parking and more as it is available.

Agenda	
This is a preliminary agenda and subject to change. Details to be announced as available.	
9 a.m.	Worship – featuring Bishop Mike Lowry, Rev. Estee Valendy
10 a.m.	Opening Comments from Mike Ford
10:15	Break
10:30	Session 1 – Keynote Speaker
Noon	Lunch
12:45	Session 2 – Faith Community Presentations
1:45	Break
2 p.m.	Session 3 – Panel Discussions
3. p.m.	Benediction

[Register](#)

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

The Enote today is a little different. Bishop Lowry, the Executive Team, and the Cabinet has researched and worked on how best to count worship attendance in the Central Texas Conference. This is in response to many questions on the subject. The following is the result. Please use this as the future template for this important metric. This will also be on the CTC website. If you have any questions, please call, 817.477.5222 or email me.

Thank you ~ Mike

Counting Worship Attendance in The Central Texas Conference

The purpose of counting worship attendance is to help measure the strength, health and effectiveness of a local church. In the making of disciples for the transformation of the world, numbers have value. They are not the only measure, but it is one important metric and one the CTC pays close attention to. It is the basic number we use to qualify our market share in each community. The purpose of the following information is to help provide consistency across all the CTC churches as well as a consistent measure for the local church to compare themselves to year by year. When worship attendance goes down it is helpful to explore the reasons why and when it goes up it is helpful to celebrate.

We ask that at the very least, local churches (a) remain consistent in what they do every week, (b) provide the most honest assessment of the church's strength, health, and effectiveness as possible, and place these metrics in VitalSigns weekly.

Who To count?

The People Present

Count every single person present physically attending a worship service. This is also any New Faith Community, any time of the week the service is held, and anything that qualifies as worship (preaching, scripture reading, communion, creeds, worship songs yes, we all know what worship is and what it isn't). This includes counting adults' youth, children, and even infants. This includes children in the nursery but not Sunday School. Also include ushers, greeters, welcome people, coffee servers, choirs, praise teams, anyone participating in worship or serving in the worship experience. Even count the preacher!

Online Worshipers

Count those worshipping online; either on a web-based platform or Facebook live. We want to qualify worship by participation, so the key requirement is not just viewing on Facebook or an IP address that shows up on another platform, the key is "**Registration**" of some sort. The registration can be either official as some churches can do, by registering their participation in the comments section of Facebook, messaging on Facebook, or another way the church might choose to do

this. Some churches may have an online worship experience that includes interaction with an online pastor, offering prayer requests, or even giving an offering. Encourage Facebook viewers to register their participation in the worship service they are viewing. This participation can be live or later in the day or week. The key is **registering** their presence by name or family in a clear way. We believe the act of registering is a key component of participating in the worship experience with the church community.

Count children's worship, count youth worship, count confirmation worship

If your church has weekly children's worship, weekly youth worship, or an annual Confirmation worship, add this into your total weekend worship.

If your Confirmation, youth, and children's programs do not include worship, do not count them.

Count Easter sunrise services

Count Christmas Eve candlelight services - all of them if you have more than one

Count Holy Week

Yes, it's OK if people are counted twice that week, or if a music person is counted in more than one service. Remember we are qualifying the health, strength, and effectiveness of our church and seeking to do so with consistency within the local church and in comparison to other churches.

Add the special services such as Christmas Eve or Holy week to the overall count for the week, meaning add Christmas Eve and Holy Week into the weekend total. Remember, we are qualifying the health, strength, and effectiveness of our church. This is not about numbers even though it is!

Count nursing home worship services and assisted living services, etc. if they include the elements of worship. Add this into the following weekend worship numbers.

What if it snows, sleets, ices, floods, hails or a tornado hits the town. Count, but don't add into the years average worship attendance if it ices one weekend, average 51 weeks leaving that one out.

We want a clear indication of the health, strength, and effectiveness of a church.

Who not to count?

Don't add 5% to the total to account for people in the bathroom or talking in the hallways.

Don't count weekly fellowship dinners if they do not include the full worship qualification.

Don't count Preschool worship.

If your church hosts a weekly preschool for children that the community enrolls their children in and pays for and it has a worship experience connected with it, do not count as a church worship experience.

Don't, don't, don't count funerals or weddings.

Rev. Mike Ramsdell, Executive Director

Center for Evangelism, Missions & Church Growth



MARCH 7, 2019

DISTRICT CLERGY MEETING

AUSTIN AVENUE UMC

9:30 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

9:30 - Gathering

9:45-10:45 - Ben Simpson will lead on how
to keep Christ at the Center in the midst of
the storm

11:00-12:00 - New Faith Community
Panel/How to get a grant



Save the Date!

DEEP ROOTS, WILD BRANCHES

RE-MISSIONING CHURCH
FROM THE OUTSIDE IN

MAY 16TH - 9AM-3PM
FIRST FORT WORTH UMC- WESLEY HALL
800 W 5TH ST, FORT WORTH, TX 76102

\$25 FOR CENTRAL TEXAS CONFERENCE UMC AFFILIATES
\$40 GENERAL ADMISSION

TICKETS INCLUDE LUNCH AND MICHAEL'S NEW BOOK: "DEEP ROOTS, WILD BRANCHES"

\$20 LIVESTREAM FROM HOME

LIVESTREAM TICKETS INCLUDE MICHAEL'S NEW BOOK, "DEEP ROOTS, WILD BRANCHES"
THAT WILL BE SHIPPED TO YOUR HOME FOR FREE

[FRESHEXPRESSIONSUS.ORG/EVENT/DEEPROOTSWILDBRANCHES](https://fresheexpressionsus.org/event/deeprootswildbranches)



CENTRAL TEXAS CONFERENCE
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH





MICHAEL BECK

Rev. Michael Beck is Director of Re-Missioning for Fresh Expressions US, Cultivator of Fresh Expressions for the North Central District, and a Cultivator of Fresh Expressions for the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church. Michael serves as co-pastor of Wildwood UMC with his wife Jill, where they direct addiction recovery programs, a jail ministry, a food pantry, and a network of thirteen fresh expressions that gather in tattoo parlors, dog parks, salons, running tracks, community centers, and burrito joints. Michael earned a Master of Divinity from Asbury Theological Seminary and is concluding a Doctorate in Semiotics and Future Studies at Portland Seminary with his mentor Dr. Leonard Sweet. Jill and Michael currently live in Wildwood with their blended family of eight children, three grandchildren, and a pug named Vader.



JORGE ACEVEDO

Jorge Acevedo loves Jesus Christ and his Church. He is the Lead Pastor at Grace Church, a multi-site, United Methodist congregation in Southwest Florida with five campuses (Cape Coral, Fort Myers Shores, Fort Myers Central, Fort Myers Trinity, and Sarasota in Southwest Florida). Grace Church is recognized for its innovation and experimentation around recovery ministries, fresh expressions and other missional ministries. Jorge is a graduate of Asbury College and Asbury Theological Seminary and has authored or co-authored five books. He is married to Cheryl, has two adult sons, Daniel and Nathan, a daughter-in-law Courtney and four grandchildren, Mia, Levi, Seth and Zoe.

Have you turned in your Five Star Mission Award Application?

The deadline for the Five Star Mission Award application is
March 15, 2019.

The Five Star Award for Missional Involvement is a Central Texas Conference initiative designed to serve as a starting point for risk-taking mission and service by recognizing United Methodist churches that achieve a foundational level of engagement with the needs of the world during a calendar year.

For a church to qualify, they must fill out an application online with documentation of the following:

- 100% of Connectional Mission Giving Paid from your Church End Year Statement
- Share a narrative describing ongoing programs of mission education at your church.
- Share a narrative describing how your church has served their local community and the world through outreach. Tell the story of your involvement.

- Provide documentation showing your contribution to a conference, national or UMCOR Advance Special.
- Provide documentation showing that you have made a financial contribution of any size to a United Methodist missionary or a church-to-church partnership through the United Methodist Church.

Applications are available [HERE](#)

Please email [Katherine Hunter](#) with any questions.



GOSHINE MISSION CAMP

SUMMER 2019

Join First Methodist Waco being the
hands and feet of Christ!

***JUNE 2-7 FIRST METHODIST
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS
COST \$250/PERSON***

Register below!

Contact Hayley House if you're
interested or have any questions:

hhouse@fumcwaco.org

254-776-5630

[Register](#)

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

Churches have much to offer; community, friendships, programs, support, maybe even interesting messages, good music, comfortable seats, and secure places for the children. These are the good things that great churches make available. Things that all types of institutions in the world also supply.

I can find community in a motorcycle group, friendships on a softball team, helpful programs offered by cities and hospitals, advice for my spiritual life in books, movies, sometimes signs on the highway. Comfortable seats are almost everywhere (movie theaters now have recliners, amazing). Institutions centered in my wants and interest are everywhere too. Yes, churches should do these things as good as we can, but there is another key component, maybe the most important for a Church, a component just about guaranteed to grow a church and reach new people. Maybe the main point of the church's existence is revealed at its beginning in the book of Acts. We all know the story; 120 gathered in Jerusalem as Jesus had commanded, they waited 40 days, the Holy Spirit filled that place, and Peter preached the first sermon to the church about to be born. After Peter proclaimed the Good News of Jesus Christ, many who heard asked, "**what should we do?**"

The answer:

"Change your hearts and lives. Each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you, your children, and for all who are far away---as many as the Lord our God invites. (Acts 2:38-39 CEB) 3,000 were reached the first day of the churches amazing existence

The Church born at Pentecost had the best church growth tool ever:

- A central focus that everyone needs Jesus, can change, find a new path, recover from addictions, be delivered from patterns of brokenness, experience grace, move from despair to hope, helplessness to faith, emptiness to a relationship with God, and from a sinful life to an abundant one.
- That the Church has more than just a great lifestyle to offer (and it does). Yes, one that Jesus taught and lived, but also that the church offers a supernatural component of life change, heart change, even soul change. @aol.com

I experienced this vividly years ago when I invited people to come to the altar to remember their baptism or be baptized for the first time in the light of God's willingness to save, change, heal, give recovery, grant a new beginning even a new life. Over 800 people came and knelt at the altar that

Sunday morning. They weren't coming to commit to live a new life, they were coming to accept the new life that God was offering them in the good news of Jesus Christ.

The Church that offers this kind of hope is going to grow because the number of people who are looking for this kind of hope is uncountable.

Some have gone to church all their life, some have never been to church, some are young, and some are old. Those looking for hope are people in every ethnic, economic, and social group. If we are looking for our market share it's here where we can find it; doing exactly what Jesus said He came to do, "to seek and to save that which was lost".

Rev. Mike Ramsdell, Executive Director

Center for Evangelism, Missions & Church Growth



Wake Up!

How about something different for Ash Wednesday this year? Open it with *Wake-Up*

Call, a One Man Show monologue featuring John the Baptist as a contemporary backwoodsman. Rev. Jeffrey Miller of FUMC Belton wrote, “A wake-up call is what we got at our Ash Wednesday service! During the scripture reading, Mark marched in thundering a message of repentance. He urged our people to truly change and not just walk around with dirty foreheads, making ‘ashes’ out of themselves. *Wake-Up Call* is an inspiring message –highly recommended.”

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.

UMCOR SUNDAY

With UMCOR Sunday (formerly One Great Hour of Sharing) just a month away, now is the perfect time to begin preparing your congregation to give generously.

If you don't already have [offering envelopes](#) for UMCOR Sunday, please order them today.

Include a message in your church newsletter or pastor's blog using and adapting [this](#) text.


This is also a good time to begin scheduling [graphics](#) on your **social media** platforms. Particularly if your community has firsthand experience with UMCOR's work, either as a recipient or a volunteer, personalize your message with an accompanying message and hashtag that reflects your church's context.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) **depends on contributions from offerings like UMCOR Sunday to keep operations strong** so that they can respond as soon as a disaster strikes. And because the offering received on UMCOR Sunday supports

overhead costs, when a disaster occurs, **100% of donations can go where they are most needed.**

The generosity of United Methodists makes it possible for UMCOR to save lives and offer hope around the world in the midst of calamity. **Thank you for encouraging your congregation to give generously on March 31.**

Sincerely,

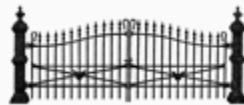


Thomas Kemper
General Secretary
General Board of Global Ministries
UMCgiving.org/UMCOR



Russell Pierce
Executive Director Mission Engagement / Advance Director
General Board of Global Ministries
UMCgiving.org/UMCOR

*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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