

My *Peace*

I give unto you

Let not your *Heart*

be troubled,

neither let it be afraid.



John 14:27

Central Texas Conference Journal 2017

CONFERENCE CORE TEAM

BISHOP MIKE LOWRY, CHAIRPERSON

The Conference Core Team is charged with ensuring that the work of the conference aligns with its mission, vision, values and core strategies. From a broad perspective, the Core Team reviews the conference budget, the deployment of resources, major policy issues and direction, and the outcomes produced by the three conference centers, the Smith Center for Evangelism & Church Growth, the Roberts Center for Leadership and the Center for Mission Support. In addition, the Core Team leads long-range planning. The team creates a culture of accountability against the outcomes and directions laid out by the Annual Conference and the Exodus Project: A Transformational Roadmap for a Church in Transition, and makes sure we are faithful to the Book of Discipline and the guiding principles of the Central Texas Annual Conference. It reviews and gives feedback to the Bishop and executive directors about any matters they wish to process with the group.

The Core Team met four times since Annual Conference 2016:

- ✚ September 17, 2016
- ✚ November 19, 2016
- ✚ February 26, 2017
- ✚ May 8, 2017

At the first meeting, we reviewed the current situation in the Conference, including a review of church metrics over time as well as the age of our clergy and the expectation of a significant number of our clergy retiring in the next five years. We then set the stage for the next two meetings, which were primarily focused on setting goals for our Conference. As a resource, we used the book, *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*, by Chris McChesney, Sean Covey and Jim Huling. The book notes that most organizations have too many goals, which leads to poor execution from loss of focus. The Core Team took that message to heart and created two goals for the Conference, with measures at 2020 (end of the current quadrennium) and 2026 (10-year goal):

Measure	As of 2016	2020 Goal	2026 Goal
Market Share	1.07%	1.10%	1.25%
Professions of Faith	1,845		3,500

- ✚ Market share is defined as Average Weekly Worship Attendance divided by total population. For the conference goal, Average Weekly Worship Attendance is derived from the year-end EZRA reporting when churches “check out.” Population is taken from the Mission Insite report. For 2016, our Average Weekly Worship Attendance was approximately 42,670, and our total population was approximately 4 million. By 2026, the conference

Central Texas Conference Journal 2017

area total population is expected to grow to just over 4.5 million. In order to achieve 1.25% market share, we will need to grow total Average Weekly Worship Attendance to approximately 56,725 by 2026.

- ✚ Professions of Faith include confirmation, adult professions of faith and faith restored by affirmation (people who have left the Church for several years and have returned). Growing Professions of Faith will take intentional discipleship and reaching out to unchurched people.

The Core Team discussed the concept of market share. While not normal “church terminology,” the Core Team felt that the use of market share helps the Conference and the local churches focus on the market outside the Church. For the local church, this data can be found in Mission Insite reports, which are free to churches in our Conference.

The Core Team recognizes that both of these goals appear daunting and, perhaps to some, unachievable. To be sure, they are a significant reversal of our current Worship Attendance and Professions of Faith trend lines. We cannot do this without strong commitment and, most of all, prayer. To quote Maxie Dunnam, “When is the last time you attempted something so great, so outside your ability to achieve it, that you knew you would fail without the power of the Holy Spirit?”

Other Core Team business:

- ✚ Bishop Lowry and the Core Team express their deep appreciation for Ed Komandosky’s service as Central Texas Conference parliamentarian from 2009-2017. Bishop Lowry will name Karen Marcucci as the new conference parliamentarian effective 2018.
- ✚ The Core Team reviewed the 2016 year-end financial reports.
- ✚ The Core Team reviewed the 2018 budget prior to its approval by the Council on Finance and Administration.
- ✚ The Core Team discussed the need for a vote on the delegation to the anticipated 2019 special called General Conference. By simple majority, the Core Team recommended that the 2018 Annual Conference vote on the delegation which will attend both the 2019 special called General Conference and the 2020 General Conference.
- ✚ The Core Team heard and affirmed a proposal from the Smith Center for Evangelism and Church Growth on establishing 100 new Faith Communities by Dec. 31, 2020, with the endeavor beginning Jan. 1, 2018 (more details to be provided during the Smith Center report).
- ✚ The Core Team voted to support the Conference Trustees’ recommendation to sell Still Water Lodge and Retreat Center in Glen Rose, Texas.

Core Team recommendations requiring a vote:

1. The Core Team recommended that the 2017 Annual Conference approve a vote to be held at the 2018 Annual Conference to elect a delegation from the Central Texas Conference to the 2019 special General Conference and the 2020 General Conference.

Central Texas Conference Journal 2017

2. The AC Planning Team recommends to the Core Team and annual conference the following dates and locations: 2018 annual conference held at the Waco Convention Center, host church Austin Avenue UMC; 2019 annual conference held at the Arlington Convention Center, host church FUMC Hurst; 2020 annual conference held at White's Chapel UMC, host church White's Chapel UMC.

CONFERENCE LAY LEADER REPORT

MIKE FORD, CONFERENCE LAY LEADER

As your new conference lay leader (as of July 2016), I have spent much of this first year familiarizing myself with the structure of the Central Texas Conference, the leadership (both lay and clergy), and the various ministries that are a part of the conference. The Conference Laity Team is a mix of veteran and rookie District Lay Leaders (DLL's), all of whom are dedicated to their roles within the conference structure. And Lay Servant Ministries continue to offer excellent educational opportunities on an ever-widening variety of topics, all of which are intended to lead to the forward movement of the Kingdom.

I want to thank each of these leaders as they have graciously been patient with my leadership style and have been so helpful in bringing me up to speed. I also want to thank Bishop Lowry and the members of the Cabinet for their inclusive and welcoming spirit as I have joined the Cabinet. To my knowledge, there is only one other United Methodist conference in the United States that seats a lay member on the appointive cabinet. This Cabinet and Bishop have voiced the conviction that laity are the foundation of our Conference. I can attest to you that they not only talk the talk, but they, indeed, walk the walk – they value the input they receive from the laity point of view. And I believe it is absolutely vital that laity be a part of the conversation at every level of the United Methodist Church.

Finally, it has been my observation that many of the advances in lay leadership within the Central Texas Conference have been shepherded by Dr. Kevin Walters, CTC director of the Roberts Center for Leadership. Kevin has been incredibly helpful in guiding the Conference Laity Team and me, making sure all the pieces are in place and in a timely fashion. The Conference Laity Team, Kevin Walters and so many others who have contributed time and expertise are responsible for:

- ✚ The second class of about 30 lay participants in the **Vital Leadership Academy**, helping prepare them to vision and implement effective service in their local churches and beyond. I would stress that this training is designed to identify emerging leaders in our local congregations and to inspire, train and support those emerging leaders to be in partnership with their local pastors.
- ✚ Feris -- North District, Barbara Hunsberger – South District, Kathy Pelton – West District, Carolyn Sims -- New Church Start District) have worked closely with their corresponding district superintendents, accompanying the DS to clergy district meetings and church visitations. Each DS and

Central Texas Conference Journal 2017

DLL is committed to standing shoulder to shoulder as they lead the districts. And many thanks to Associate Conference Lay Leader Darlene Alfred and past Conference Lay Leader Kim Simpson for their invaluable help in orienting me to the job and acting as a sounding board.

- ✦ Eight persons are approved for the new classification of Pulpit Supply: Pat Broadstreet, Pam Dieckert, Bruce Hennie, Darold Hobbs, Bonita Horton, Pam Phinney, Carol Robinson and Sholonda Stone. Certification for pulpit supply will be a focus over the next few years as we foresee a greater need for this classification.
- ✦ The conference website laity section (www.ctcumc.org/laity) contains up-to-date information on the many opportunities available for training, resources for educational needs and contact information.

Our goal is to partner with clergy in virtually every area of endeavor in order to make disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world. We continue to seek quality, innovative and relevant means of obtaining that goal. May God bless our endeavors!

CABINET REPORT

DR. BOB HOLLOWAY, DEAN OF THE CTC CABINET

This Annual Conference will complete a major change in the Cabinet of the conference. Dr. Clifton Howard and Dr. Randy Wild remain on the Cabinet, being joined by seven new members. In 2016 we have welcomed Conference Lay Leader Mike Ford, Dr. Lisa Neslony, Dr. Leah Hidde-Gregory and Rev. Mike Ramsdell. This year we have welcomed Rev. Ben Disney, Rev. Travis Franklin and Rev. Brad Brittain. They are deeply committed to Christ and to the mission of The United Methodist Church. They are persons of prayer, of experience, of integrity and vision. Each is also gifted in ways that will give leadership as the Exodus Project continues to unfold in ways that equip and energize the local church.

While the cabinet members have changed, there is one element that has not changed. We still use the Daily Office of worship in the morning, mid-day and evening. In our worship, we have prayers of thanksgiving as well as prayers of intercession for our clergy and laity, our church, our conference, nation and world. As a team we stop at difficult times to pray (especially during appointment season,) and individually we pray for our work together.

Since 2011 when the Exodus Project was approved, there have been structural changes in district alignments and in efforts to align personnel and resources for greater mission engagement. The results include an increase of “hands-on mission,” clergy and lay leadership development, evangelism, stewardship and the strategic resources of Healthy Church Initiative, Vital Signs and Mission Insight, which prepare local churches to “know and to serve” the mission field just outside the doors of the church.

Central Texas Conference Journal 2017

This past year, among the many issues that have had our attention, two are worth noting. The first is the decision to begin working with clergy for the purpose of creating individual development plans. In our calling as clergy, a part of our opportunity is to continue to surrender to the work of the Holy Spirit . . . Along with the transformation of the heart is the holy enlightenment of the mind, which was in Christ Jesus. The heart and mind, having the willingness and agility to learn, to grow and to engage people where they are (cultural competency), is a part of living into God's present and future kingdom as we seek to live out the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

The second opportunity is a major focus of Annual Conference learning sessions. *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*, by Chris McChesney, Sean Covey and Jim Huling, has tapped into a real life dilemma for pastors, laity and churches. The issues are how to take aspirations and turn them into action and how can visions become reality. We will discover that having Wildly Important Goals (WIG), is a part of our seeking God's appointed mission for every congregation.

In this year we have also worked with an awareness of an undercurrent of anxiety, often expressed as anger and/or grief or confusion, about the divisions within the United Methodist Church. There are various scenarios that are being posited as to the future of the Church, which at this point are just speculation. As a cabinet team, we have differing views as well. With that being the case, we have chosen to focus on the ministry to which Christ calls us as God grants us grace to see it. That grace can be shared with all with whom we have contact and with all who look to the Church as a place, in the words of the late Dr. Robert Mulholland, where "we are being transformed into the likeness of Jesus for the sake of others." We have chosen to focus on the need for developing leaders and on equipping the local church for that ministry.

At every turn Bishop Lowry and the Council of Bishops are inviting us to pray for each other and for the Commission on the Way Forward. That invitation is not just to pray for what I want but also to pray with a heart open to the changes God is seeking to make in me. This call to pray is a reminder that the Church is in God's hands and ultimately moves beyond our limited visions to the more expansive vision of Christ reconciling the world to himself. God's redeeming grace through Christ cannot be silenced or stilled. In the *Upper Room Worshipbook*, which the Cabinet uses for worship, there is a Zimbabwean song with a tune by John Bell. It sings:

*If you believe and I believe
And we together pray
The Holy Spirit shall come down
And set God's people free*

Grace and Peace in Jesus Christ

Central Texas Conference Journal 2017

CONFERENCE CONNECTIONAL TABLE

DR. RANDY WILD, CFMS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The creation of the Conference Connectional Table was a key piece of the Exodus Project approved by the special session of the Central Texas Annual Conference in November 2010. The purpose of the Connectional Table is to make sure that all voices are represented around the table and are heard in the conversation about the mission and ministry of the church. The group is inclusive in nature, collaborative in style, and while being efficient in the stewardship of resources it is also transparent, accessible and accountable in all relationships. It is a place for listening, learning, and coordination of Central Texas Conference ministries around the mission of 'making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.' It is organized as a forum for understanding and communication between/among the General Conference representatives, task forces, centers, annual conference, agencies, and other representational ministries.

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We continue to collaborate and offer input as to the direction of the annual conference along with a continued emphasis on the inclusiveness of the leadership and ministry of our conference. We are heartened by the great strides we have made in our inclusiveness and diversity while at the same time acknowledging that we still have a long way to go. The changes that we have been making in regards to new ways of monitoring, collaboration and conversation are making a difference.

The Connectional table is where the representative areas required by the *Book of Discipline* reside. The membership of the Connectional Table includes:

- i. Conference lay leader
- ii. Associate conference lay leader
- iii. Archives and history representative
- iv. Conference board of pension and health benefits representative
- v. Conference board of trustees representative
- vi. Center executive leadership teams and boards
- vii. President of Conference United Methodist Women
- viii. President of Conference United Methodist Men
- ix. Conference council on youth ministry representative, age 12 – 18
- x. Council on finance and administration representative
- xi. Representative of Disaster Response/UMVIM
- xii. Division of Ministry with Young People Representative, age 12 – 30
- xiii. Emmaus board of director's representative
- xiv. Inclusiveness Umbrella Team representing:
 - a. Church and society
 - b. Christian unity and interreligious concerns
 - c. Disability concerns
 - d. Native American
 - e. Religion and Race
 - f. Status & Role of Women
 - g. Health and welfare

Central Texas Conference Journal 2017

- h. Hispanic ministry
- i. Ethnic Local Church concerns
- xv. Conference lay ministry team
- xvi. New Church Starts representative
- xvii. Renewal of Eastern Mexico Covenant representative
- xviii. Members of general and jurisdictional bodies who reside in the annual conference
- xix. Strategic groups invited by bishop or executive directors
- xx. Ex officio: assistant to the bishop and executive directors of the three centers

The Connectional Table held its latest meeting in March, 2017. Our discussion centered around a review of the CTC direction and culture, including the Big 3 and a review of the strategic direction that the Core Team has been refining. We looked at the strides we have made in inclusiveness over the last several years. We heard a report about new church starts and some exciting new goals regarding faith communities coming beginning in 2018. We also heard the results of our Disaster Recovery efforts this past year and reviewed our 2016 end of year financials and a preliminary review of our 2018 budget.

We realize there is still much work to do, but are confident we have made a strong beginning. The development of the three conference centers, appointment of new leaders and realignment of resources has enabled the progress.

CONFERENCE NOMINATIONS & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

DR. GEORGIA ADAMSON, SECRETARY

Each person is called to ministry by virtue of his or her baptism, and that ministry takes place in all aspects of daily life, both in and outside of the church. The vitality of the Church as a whole depends upon the faith, abilities and actions of all who work together for the glory of God. As Bishop Robert Schnase reminds us in his book, *Seven Levers: Missional Strategies for Conferences*, the conference nominations process plays a critical role, particularly at the beginning of each quadrennium. Each of us is called to be a faithful participant in the *mission of the church*, which is to partner with God **to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.**

Filling boards, committees, teams and task forces was a big job in 2016 – the beginning of a new quadrennium. The conference nominations team considered it a prime opportunity to identify and live into some adaptive changes around the issue of new and emerging leaders.

In 2017, the scope of work is much more limited. This year at annual conference, there is only a vote on board-nominated slates.

Central Texas Conference Journal 2017

COMMITTEE ON EPISCOPACY

STEVE MCIVER, CHAIRPERSON

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Reports – Conference

It is not jealous
it does not seek its own interests
endures all things
1 Corinthians 13
It bears all things
is not pompous
Love is patient
believes all things
it does not brood over injury
but rejoices with the truth
Love is kind
hopes all things
rejoice
endures
truth
bears
it is not quick tempered
hopes
Love never fails
it does not rejoice over wrongdoing
it is not inflated