



2017 Journal

**Texas Annual Conference
of the United Methodist Church**

A

Texas Annual Conference

SECTION A

JOURNAL of THE

Texas Annual Conference

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

South Central Jurisdiction

Forty-eighth Session since Merger of the Gulf Coast and
Texas Annual Conferences
One Hundred and Seventy-Fourth since Organization

May 28 – 31, 2017

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Texas Annual Conference 2017



BISHOP SCOTT J. JONES

**Bishop of the Houston Area
South Central Jurisdiction
The United Methodist Church**

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TEXAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE HISTORICAL SUMMARY

The earliest Methodist activity within the bounds of present day Texas occurred in northeastern Texas in the settlements of immigrants along the Red and Sulfur Rivers and their tributaries. William Stevenson was the most prominent early preacher who was appointed to Hot Springs, Arkansas, and ministered to Methodists in northeastern Texas from that post. Appointments were made to Texas charges even before the organization of the Arkansas Annual Conference in 1836.

Although adherence to Roman Catholicism was a precondition of receiving a land grant in Mexican Texas, Mexican authorities tended to be tolerant of Protestant activity in eastern Texas. In the early 1830s two groups of Methodists were particularly active. One group was in extreme eastern Texas near Gaines' Crossing of the Sabine River. James Porter Stevenson, son of William Stevenson, organized a religious society at Samuel Doak McMahon's in 1833. In 1834 Henry Stephenson, a member of the Mississippi Conference, was instructed to travel in Texas. He preached in settlements near San Augustine and Nacogdoches and continued westward to settlements in Stephen F. Austin's Colony in present day Washington and Austin Counties. He found there a concentration of Methodists—local preachers, class leaders, and devout laity—who had organized for regular religious observances. Stephenson consulted with local preachers John Wesley Kenney, William Medford, and others in the area. As a result of the consultation, they held revivals in the fall of 1834 and 1835. The revival of 1835 resulted in an appeal for missionaries from the United States.

The call for missionaries arrived at the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1836. News of the Texian victory at San Jacinto also made its way to the General Conference. In 1837 a Texas mission was authorized, and four missionaries were sent to Texas. Martin Ruter, Littleton Fowler, Robert Alexander, and Lewellen Campbell began their work in Texas in 1837/1838. In May, 1838, the Texas Mission was attached to the Mississippi Annual Conference. Bishop Morris, who presided over the 1838 session of the Mississippi Annual Conference, was forced to assign Campbell to New Orleans instead of Texas. In consoling Fowler upon the loss of Campbell to the Mission, Morris wrote, "But be of good cheer. The day is not distant when Texas will be able to sustain itself as a Conference." (Morris to Fowler, June 11, 1839).

Bishop Morris was prophetic. On December 25, 1840, Bishop Beverly Waugh organized the Texas Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Rutersville in Fayette County. Its boundaries consisted of all the charges in the Republic of Texas with the exception of those charges north of Cypress Bayou in northeastern Texas which were part of the Arkansas Annual Conference. Eighteen members of the newly formed Texas Annual Conference were appointed to charges in the San Augustine, Rutersville, and Galveston Districts.

Church growth in the new Texas Conference was so rapid that the General Conference of 1844 authorized the division into two new conferences. Accordingly, the Texas Conference was divided at the Trinity River, and Texas now had two new conferences, the Eastern Texas and Western Texas Conferences. The northeastern charges, formerly in the Arkansas Conference, became part of the Eastern Texas Conference. Neither name was used very long. The Western Texas Conference took back the name "Texas Conference," and the Eastern Texas Conference shortened its name to East Texas Conference. Those two conferences remained divided for the next fifty-eight years.

The territory of the Texas Conference was further decreased by the establishment of the Rio Grande Mission Conference in 1858. The Rio Grande Mission Conference eventually became the Southwest Texas Annual conference.

The Civil War and its aftermath initiated massive changes in the Texas Annual Conference and the East Texas Annual Conference. The division of both conferences was authorized at the 1866 General Conference. Such division was accomplished by creating new conferences from the northern portions of the Texas and East Texas Annual Conferences. The Trinity Conference, which later was renamed the North Texas Conference was created from the East Texas Conference and the Northwest Texas Conference, which later was divided into the Central Texas and Northwest Texas Conference was created from the Texas Conference.

Such divisions were not the only significant changes during the period. Before the Civil War the Texas and East Texas Conferences had significant percentages of enslaved African American members. After emancipation, thousands of African Americans chose to exercise their freedom by leaving the M.E.C.S. which had firmly

defended slavery. Many became Baptists, but others preferred to remain Methodist, as African Methodist Episcopal, Colored Methodist Episcopal, or Methodist Episcopal. The end of the Civil War meant that the Methodist Episcopal Church could freely operate in Texas again. In January 1867 Bishop Matthew Simpson organized the Texas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Trinity Church in Houston. Its charter members included sixty-seven African American preachers and three German immigrant preachers. This new Texas Conference of the M.E.C. included all of the state of Texas.

Racial and linguistic tensions resulted in the split of the Texas Conference of the M.E.C. after such splits were authorized in the General Conference of 1872. African American Texans continued in two conferences, the Texas and West Texas. German speakers were organized in the Southern German Conference, and English speaking European Americans were organized in the Austin (later Gulf Mission) Conference. In response to the formation of the Southern German Conference, the M.E.C.S. created the German Mission Conference with several charges including Bering Memorial and Ludtke Memorial in Houston.

Meanwhile the Methodist Protestant Church was also organizing churches in Texas. Through most of the latter part of the 19th century the Texas Conference of the M. P. Church consisted of charges east of the Trinity River. The territory between the Trinity and Brazos constituted another conference. Many M. P. churches were rural with part time pastors. Traveling long distances to meet in conferences strained the resources of the Methodist Protestant East Texas, and German Mission); four M.E.C (Texas, West Texas, Austin, and Gulf Mission). There was also at least one Evangelical Association (a predecessor of the E.U.B.) church within the boundaries.

As the 19th century had been a century of division, the 20th was one of reuniting. In 1902 the Texas and East Texas Conferences of the M.E.C.S. combined and retained the name "Texas Annual Conference." As part of the reorganization, the Texas Conference ceded the Austin Port Arthur, Addicks, Marshall, LaPorte, Pearland, and Texas City, came into the Texas Conference from the M.E.C. The unification was far from complete, however. Most M. E. C. members in Texas in 1939 were African American. Houston alone had thirteen M.E.C. churches ministering to African Americans including Trinity, Trinity East, Sloan, Boynton, and Ebenezer. Marshall, Beaumont, and Galveston also had more than one M.E.C. church. They, and the other African American conferences created by the M.E.C., continued in a racially defined Central Jurisdiction.

In 1968 the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church united to form the United Methodist Church. The Texas Annual Conference added churches in Houston and Lissie as a result of the unification. Pursuant to action of the 1968 General Conference the Central Jurisdiction was abolished. A service of uniting was held in Houston in May, 1970, in which African American and European American Methodists came together in one conference.

The Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist church thus celebrates a diverse heritage stemming from Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Episcopal South, Methodist Protestant, and Evangelical United Brethren, roots. Through its more than century and one-half it has provided ministries to farm communities, saw mill towns, port cities, oil boom towns, newcomers to the Sun Belt, suburbanites, retirement communities, inner city residents, and immigrant communities from all over the world. From its origins as a foreign mission to its present status as one of the leading conferences of the UMC, it has been marked by its boldness in seeking new opportunities for witness and service.



EXTENDED CABINET 2017-2018

Front Row (Left to Right): Alicia Coltzer Besser, Andy Noel, Gail Ford Smith, Bishop Scott Jones, Jesse Brannen, B.T. Williamson and Dick White

Back Row (Left to Right): Kip Gilts, Wanda Bess, Morris Matthis, Vincent Harris, Tony Vinson, Chuck Huffman and Marlin Fenn

Not Pictured: Artie Cadar, Scott Moore and Elijah Stansell



**ELDERS AND DEACONS ORDAINED AT THE 2017 SESSION
OF THE TEXAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

Front Row (Left to Right): William Lucas, Andrew Wolfe, Heather Velez, Thomas ‘Trey Comstock III, Bishop Jones, Stephanie McFall Snyder, Raegan Seaton, Heather Gates, Debbie Tipps, Cindy Riddick and Tammy Heinrich

Second Row (Left to Right): Daniel Childs, Jacob Breeze, Roger Clayton, Lindsay Smith, Stacy Auld and Brent Parker

Third Row (Left to Right): Paul Richards-Kuan, Danny Yang, Trisha Woodruff, Todd Cooper and Thomas Harper



**ELDERS AND DEACONS COMMISSIONED AT THE 2017 SESSION
OF THE TEXAS ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

Front Row (Left to Right): Carla Price, Michael McVey, Patricia Lund, Bishop Jones, David W. Johnson, Stephen Goldsmith and Johnnie Simpson

Second Row (Left to Right): John Wayne McMann, Michael Gienger, Joel McKinnon, Josef Klam, Daniel Lumpee and Russell LaGrone

Third Row (Left to Right): Frederick 'Trey' Burns, Steven Newcomb and Andrew Hook