

## 2011 UMC Annual Conference in Corpus Christi, Texas

Nancy and I attended Annual Conference this year as your representatives. More than 1300 lay and clergy delegates gathered in Corpus to conduct business and elect delegates to the quadrennial General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference.

We received the attached report from David Seilheimer detailing the decline in Methodist Church membership in the Southwest Texas Conference over the past ten years. These numbers are disturbing in light of the fact that Texas has had a significant increase in population over the same ten year period.

Bishop Dorff addressed the conference and told us that "The time is now". Bishop Dorff explained that we must begin to make major changes in our conference organization and staffing to better serve the needs of our local areas. The delegates were told to watch for upcoming changes in the relationship between the SW Texas Conference and the Rio Grande Conference.

Jay Brim, our conference Lay Leader, addressed the conference and told us that it was time to "step it up" in our efforts as church leaders. He reminded us that in 1860 Methodism was only a movement and not even a denomination, but at that time we were starting two new churches **EVERY DAY!** In 1968 we began to make compromises during our merger with the United Brethren that led to excessive regulatory growth and excessive administrative growth at the top of our denomination. As an example, Brim showed us a 1902 Book of Discipline and Worship that would easily fit in a shirt pocket. Today's two large books are massive. The SW Texas Conference will be taking resolutions forward to General and Jurisdictional Conference to begin the process of streamlining our denominational governance.

We received a report from the Methodist Healthcare System stating that they would no longer charge retired SW Texas Conference Clergy for deductible or co-pay expenses for hospitalization stays within the Methodist Hospital Systems. This good news was the result of a recent partnership between the Methodist Healthcare System and the SW Texas Conference.

Due to the growth of the worldwide Methodist Church relative to the Methodist Church in America, or number of representatives to General and Jurisdictional Conference have been reduced. The SW Texas Conference delegations were reduced from six members to four. We elected the following persons to fill those positions and represent us:

### **General Conference Delegates**

#### **Lay**

Jay Brim  
Teresa Keese  
Ralph Thompson  
Byrd Bonner

#### **Clergy**

Laura Merrill  
Eradio Valverde  
Carl Rohlf  
Virgilio Vasquez Garza

### **Jurisdictional Conference Delegates**

#### **Lay**

Sara Howell  
Terry Schoenert  
Bill Ault  
Mark Nerio

#### **Clergy**

Terrence Hayes  
Russell Miller  
Austin Frederick  
Tom Deviney

### **Alternate Delegates**

#### **Lay**

Rick Mantooth  
Don Hand  
Rachel Wright  
Joe Vasquez

#### **Clergy**

Michael Mumme  
Karen Horan  
John Elford  
Steve Purdy

The conference voted 384 to 325 to send a resolution to General Conference to change the wording of the Inclusiveness statement in the Doctrine to include the underlined words: All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, and economic condition, sexual orientation, or gender identity and expression shall be eligible to attend worship services, participate...receive sacraments...

This wording may or may not be adopted by the General Conference.

Next year our Annual Conference will meet from Thursday through Sunday in an attempt to allow greater participation among young people and employed individuals with limited vacation time.

For more complete information on these and other actions of your Annual Conference, I urge you to visit the Southwest Texas Conference website at <http://www.umcswtx.org/> and click on the individual articles about our conference meeting.

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Michael H. McDougall

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Date