



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, June 8, 2023

Rio Texas Holds Opening Session of Annual Conference at the American Bank Center in Corpus Christi, TX to Release 34 Churches

CORPUS CHRISTI – The Rio Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church (UMC) held its opening plenary session of Annual Conference in Corpus Christi to vote on the Board of Trustees’ recommendation of the following United Methodist churches to disaffiliate from the conference and UMC.

Art UMC	Marble Falls UMC
Belmont UMC	Menard: First UMC
Bracken UMC	Mercedes: El Buen Pastor UMC
Bronte: First UMC	Monthalia UMC
Bulverde UMC	Nixon UMC
Center Point UMC	Pettus UMC
Christine UMC	Pleasanton: First UMC
Falfurrias: First UMC	Rio Grande City: St. John UMC
Fannin UMC	SAng: First UMC
Fashing UMC	SAnt: Coker UMC
Goliad: First UMC	SAnt: Harlandale UMC
Gonzales: First UMC	SAnt: Korean UMC
Hondo UMC	SAnt: Oak Island UMC
Industry UMC	SAnt: University UMC
Junction: First UMC	Seguin: First UMC
London UMC	Somerset UMC
Lytle UMC	Weslaco: La Santisima Trinidad UMC

Like the previously held special session May 6, 2023, the recommendation comes after Rio Texas implemented the Discerning Pathways Guidelines for Disaffiliation in Fall 2022 for churches to formally exit the denomination. This exodus of churches comes after several decades of conversation and ultimately impasse regarding the inclusion of and ministry with LGBTQIA+ people.

Robert Schnase is the current episcopal leader of the Rio Texas and New Mexico Conferences. Bishop Schnase commented, “During this season of transition, some have decided to walk a different path than the United Methodist Church. We are reminded and inspired by the promise of God that we are never alone. God is close and creating a path that is being formed even as we walk it. May God guide our future, one that is hopeful and filled with possibilities seen and unseen. We release the churches leaving with blessing.”

The Discerning Pathways Guidelines for Rio Texas churches to separate from The UMC are in accordance with ¶ 2553 of the Book of Discipline, which allows for a local church to disaffiliate from the denomination “over issues related to human sexuality.” Rio Texas requires churches to go through a discernment period of six months, contact their local District Superintendent, hold listening sessions, and consider practical concerns (incorporation, resolution of unpaid loans, employee health insurance, property & liability insurance, etc.). After the church’s congregation approves disaffiliation with a 2/3 vote, the church must fulfill financial commitments:

- The previous years’ 12 months of apportionments and the next year’s 12 months of apportionments
- Full unfunded pension liability, as calculated by the Rio Texas Board of Pensions and Wespath Board of Pensions and Health Benefits

The last step in the process is the vote of the annual conference. The churches listed above completed these required steps and the vote of the conference that took place today at the convention center in Corpus Christi.

About Rio Texas Conference:

The Mission of United Methodists of The Rio Texas Conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation about the world. We seek to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to reach out, in the name of God, to the people of Texas and beyond. Some of our churches are in some of the fastest-growing areas of the country, others are in areas where people struggle with poverty, lack of affordable housing, and a loss of hope. We are committed to providing vital missions, vital congregations, and strong leaders to connect our churches to all people.

The Rio Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church is made up of 310+ worshipping communities in South, Central, and West Texas. The conference is divided into seven districts: Las Misiones, with its office in San Antonio; Hill Country, located in Kerrville; Capital, in Austin; West, in San Angelo; Coastal Bend, in Corpus Christi; El Valle in Harlingen; and Crossroads in Victoria. There are roughly 700 clergy under appointment by the bishop.

The Rio Texas Annual Conference a part of the South-Central Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Church has approximately 30,000 congregations in the US and abroad. For more information on the history and governance of the denomination, visit umc.org.

Representatives from each church in The Rio Texas Annual Conference meet annually usually in Corpus Christi to conduct the business of the conference, celebrate the ministry of the church and commission and ordain clergy.

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