

TEXAS UNITED METHODIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Editor's Letter by Wm. C. Hardt

Although disease has been a constant throughout history, not all diseases have had the same social impact. Consider the Old Testament's numerous references to leprosy or the 19th century's fascination with consumption. In our own lifetimes the polio scare of the 1950's, and the AIDS crisis of the 1980's both had social importance beyond the medical sphere. The "signature" disease of era seems to be Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia and memory loss. These conditions have touched the lives of us all. One of the most common sympathetic remarks about a patient suffering from memory loss is "She's not herself anymore." or "He's not himself anymore." The sympathetic remark reminds us that our identity consists in large part of our memory. When we lose our memory, we quite literally are different people.

What is true for the individual is also true for the church. When the church loses its memory, it's "not itself anymore." For the individual, it's called "memory loss." For the church it's called "ahistoricism," or perhaps "chronocentrism," the belief that the tiny slice of eternity in which we live is somehow privileged over all other eras. A proper sense of history shows us that we are temporary stewards of the church rather than owners. Why do some people treat the church as if there were no tomorrow---or no yesterday?

The most common adjective used to describe dementia patients is "confused." I recently attended a conference event with our newly assigned bishop. Conference leaders were encouraged in two areas—that of clarity of our objectives and alignment with our denominational and conference mission statement. Since you are reading this *Newsletter*, you already know that historical vision can be a powerful tool in bringing clarity out of confusion.

Combating ahistoricism takes more than vision. The most concrete step most of us can take is by working to strengthen our institutions. Certainly we humans are each given a tiny slice of eternity, but institutions can last through several lifetimes. Commitment to our churches, schools, care giving homes, --and yes—even our historical societies such as the TUMHS---that's how we witness to truths beyond ourselves and beyond our own age.

I have adopted a mantra that encourages me when faced with an egregious example of ahistoricism. It's from the order of reception of new members. It reminds me to concentrate on the long term, rather than the immediate situation.

The Church is of God, and will be preserved until the end of time. . .

It's why we work as we do in the ministry of memory, to provide that long term perspective, because when the church loses its memory, it's not itself anymore.

Save the Date

We are pleased to announce that Frances Long, SCJ and NTC Archivist has arranged for the 2017 Annual Meeting of the TUMHS to be held at First United Methodist Church of Richardson on April 28 and 29. Schedule and registration details will be printed in the Feb. 1 issue of the *Newsletter*, but you should put the date on your calendar now.

Many of you are already familiar with FUMC Richardson as one of the outstanding churches of the North Texas Conference. Its ministry began in 1886 with 15 charter members. It has had several buildings and now has about 6000 members. Frances Long is the local church archivist. You will want to see the history page on the church web site that has highlights of those archives including full membership records since 1886--a remarkable achievement.

http://www.fumcr.com/history_timeline

Marker Dedication at San Felipe UMC, November 12.

You have an opportunity to attend an important Texas Historical Commission marker dedication at San Felipe UMC on November 12. The marker text gives a good overview of the importance of the site.

SAN FELIPE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

In 1837 the town of San Felipe de Austin was incorporated and the two council built a multi-purpose building to be used as town hall, school, and church on land known as "Constitution Square." The one story building was constructed out of cypress, an extremely long lasting and rot-resistant wood, that allowed the structure to exist today, over 175 years later.

The Methodist group in San Felipe used this building for evening worship even though the building was secularly owned by the town. By 1847, a new town hall was constructed, leaving this building to serve as a church and school only. In this same year the town also added the second floor to the building.

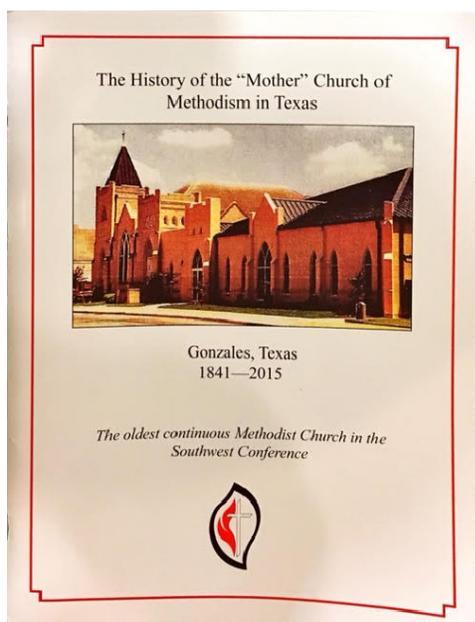
A new Masonic Lodge formed in San Felipe in 1859 and met on the newly-built second floor. Today the ceiling still exhibits a painting of a blue sky with five-pointed stars and on the eastern wall, an "eye of God" painting. In 1880 a new school building was constructed for the town, allowing the first floor of this building to be used solely as a church.

In 1883 a steeple was added and a bell was donated to the church. This building became the Methodists official church and the congregation still meets here today. Up until the 1940s when the building got electricity, the church used oil lamps hung on the walls of the sanctuary for indoor worship. These lamps are still hanging today and are lit every Christmas Eve in honor of the church's history.

A lunch at 11:00 will precede the dedication. For more information contact the editor.

2016 AWARDS

The Texas United Methodist Historical Society sponsors two awards. The Kate Warnick Award is for the best local church history published during the preceding year. We are proud to recognize Gonzales UMC in the Rio Texas Conference for this year's award



Warnick Awards Chair, the Rev. Dr. William J. Bryan related interesting episodes for the Methodist heritage of Gonzales and challenged members to encourage churches in their area to write their histories.

The winner's name is inscribed on a plaque at Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology. A copy of the history is now available for readers and researchers at Bridwell and at Drew University, home of the General Commission on Archives and History.

For more information, contact the Warnick Award Chair, Dr. William J. Bryan at the address below..

The Walter Vernon Student Essay winner for 2016 is the Rev. Mark Grafenreed, who wrote his essay under the direction of Dr. Ted Campbell of Perkins.

The Rev. Grafenreed, who is currently serving in the chaplaincy at Methodist Hospital, Sugarland, wrote on the process of desegregating the Houston Methodist Hospital.

The essay highlights the contribution of both lay and clergy members of the Texas Annual Conference in the 1960s, and makes use of both archival and interview research.

Rev. Grafenreed presented his paper to the annual meeting of the TUMHS in Lubbock on Oct. 7. Here is President Garry Nall congratulating the winner.



For more information about the Vernon Essay Award, contact Dr. Bob Monk at the address below.

News From SMU

Tim Binkley, Archivist at Bridwell Library, has shared one of the most exciting developments in Methodist history in years. He and other archivists including Chris Brown at Centenary and Calvin Scott at the Central Texas Conference have been engaged in digitizing conference journals and General Minutes.

Tim has compiled a list of digitized conference journals from the conferences that make up the South Central Jurisdiction.

The list also includes digitized General Minutes.

It may be found at

<http://www.smu.edu/-/media/Site/Bridwell/Find/Annual-Conference-Journals-Available-Online-10,-d-,31,-d-,16.ashx?la=en>

Historic Church Pictures

Each issue contains the picture of some historic church and asks readers to identify it.

The Summer 2016 issue contained the image below. It is the Methodist Church building in Thalia, Foard County.



Thalia is one of the many Texas places that reflects the optimism of the settlers who streamed into western Texas in the late 19th century. The removal of the Comanche and Kiowa, the original inhabitants, and the construction of the Fort Worth and Denver City Railway made it possible for farmers to stream into fertile lands. Towns sprang up like mushrooms after a rain all along the route.

About 20 miles southwest of Vernon, developers laid a town. Their chosen name of “Paradise” was rejected by the Post Office so the name was changed to Thalia, Greek for “blooming” or “luxuriant.”

Oil discoveries in the area in the 1920s resulted in enough population for incorporation in 1926, but by 1943 population decline led to the closing of the school.

Thalia’s main claim to fame is in the works of Larry McMurtry who used the name in some of his most famous novels. That’s certainly appropriate since Thalia was also one of the nine Muses of the ancient Greeks. She was the Muse of comedy. (photo credit: Beryl Waddell)

Here is the next historic church for you to identify:



MANY THANKS

The South Central Jurisdictional Convocation of Archivists and Annual Meeting of the TUMHS took place in Lubbock the first week of October.

Once again our friends in the Northwest Texas Conference demonstrated how they got their reputation for hospitality.

Beryl Waddell, Archivist for the NWT Conference, and her committee attended to every detail so that attendees enjoyed entertainment and education in true West Texas style.

Beryl has shared the names of the hosts so that we can thank them.

Bishop Earl Bledsoe who provided enthusiastic support

Vi Zeeck, FUMC-LBK Historian & A&H Commission Member

Pam Allison, FUMC-LBK Historian

Martha Webster, FUMC-LBK Historian & A&H Commission Member

Zandra Luttrell, A&H Commission Chairperson & Lubbock District Historian

Annette Nall, POLK Street UMC member

Dr. Garry Nall, A&H Commission member President Of TUMHS

Troy Ann Dennis, a former colleague

Wanda White, FUMC-LBK member

Supported by A&H Commission members of the NWTX Conference: **Alwyn Barr, Mary Brownlow, Rev. Rusty Dickerson, Sara Dunnam, Pauline Gwyn, Dr. Robert Monk, Rev. Bob Sawyer, and Judy Sherrod**

Leia Williams, Director of Discipleship and Communication at the NWTX CSC

Levi McKay, Video Production Specialist & Photographer

The Nurture, Equip, and Conference Leadership Teams of the NWTX Conference

Bishop Jimmy Nunn, Oklahoma Conference

Rev. Wendell Horn, NWTX Conference

Rosemary Prumer, NWTX CSC Office manager

We also would like to thank the **TUMHS officers** who completed their term of office at the annual meeting.

Garry Nall, President
(Garry was honored on Oct. 27 by the West Texas Historical Association with the endowed Garry L. Nall Lectures Western History. Congratulations on this great honor.)

Dan Flores, Vice-President
Barbara Huggins, Secretary

The newly elected officers are named in the Directory, below.

Good News!

The Texas Conference Archival Building is on schedule. Watch this space for an invitation to the consecration service----we hope in January---I'll send a special invitation to the *Newsletter* email list.

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Membership/Registration Information

We do not send annual membership renewal statements. Our not doing so means that many of us neglect to send our annual dues. If you can't remember the last time you sent dues, it's probably time to send them again. Please print this page and send your dues and gifts to

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Name(s) _____

Address _____

Email _____ telephone _____

Annual dues

\$20 _____

(If you wish, you may join at the lifetime dues rate of \$300)