

# WEST DISTRICT OFFICE RIO TEXAS CONFERENCE THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

---

October 3, 2023

Dear Friends in the West District,

Over the past year, we have witnessed unprecedented changes in the United Methodist Church. Many colleagues, friends and churches discerned that God was calling them to go in a different direction away from ministry together as United Methodists. We in our beloved West District have felt these departures more sharply than perhaps others in the Rio Texas Annual Conference.

Paul's letter to the fledging Philippian church has been on my heart. Paul wrote, "Most important, live together in a manner worthy of Christ's gospel." (1:27) That word "together" stands out for me. United Methodists have always been about together. We do ministry together. We live out our faith journey together. We need to be together.

It is in this spirit of togetherness I say it's time to look forward, not back. In the midst of our sadness and grief, God is providing new opportunities for us to share the gospel with a hurting world starting right in our own communities. This is something we do together.

This is not a time for business as usual. This is not a time to keep doing what we've done in the past and expect more fruitful Kingdom results. In the spirit of togetherness, let's gather together for worship, fellowship and to take care of the needed business of our church.

**I'm calling us together for one district wide charge conference on Saturday, January 6 at St. Luke UMC in San Angelo.** This will serve as the annual charge conference which is usually held in the fall. We will provide more specifics of how to prepare the charge conference forms to prepare for a consent agenda vote on January 6.

More details will be forthcoming, but we will gather for fellowship at 10:30am. Worship with Holy Communion will be at 11am. Worship will be followed by a brief district conference to accomplish the needed business outlined by the Discipline. Lunch will follow. Mark your calendars! Set aside this day to worship and fellowship together with other United Methodists across the West District.

Thank you for your faithfulness to the gospel and to our life together in Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace,



Rev. Dr. Ricky Sanderford  
DS West and Hill Country Districts