



West District News

April, 2020



Nobody told me there'd be days like these. Strange days indeed.

John Lennon got it right – **strange days indeed!**

Friends, I don't have all the wisdom or the answers we need in this strange time of the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. I know that it has greatly shifted the ways we try to do church for the foreseeable future. We now have worship virtually via Facebook Live, YouTube and other online platforms. Most of us are actually experiencing a surge in worship attendance as more and more folks are viewing from home.

We're adjusting to a new normal of holding meetings, classes and Bible studies by Zoom or Microsoft Teams. I've had two or three Zoom meetings per day this week, and I think that number is about to increase dramatically. (In fact, I will be hosting my own weekly Zoom meetings for district pastors beginning next week – see the announcement below.)

I know that right now you're just trying to figure out how to do Holy Week and Easter online. But I think we all need to prepare for the very real possibility that we may be in for a months-long season of Isolation and Uncertainty. And people – all people – are going to need the healing, redeeming and sustaining presence and power of God more than ever. The good news is that we who follow and serve Jesus have exactly what people need.

Jesus says, "Come to me, you are weighed down with heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Also, "I am the Resurrection and I am Life." These are words of life from my Savior that I need to hear right now. I'm praying for each and all of you as you hold people close to the heart of Christ in these days.

Blessings and Peace,

Andy

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Tuesday morning Coffee and Prayer with Andy

Pastors are invited to a voluntary, weekly chat and prayer time with our District Superintendent, Andy Smith.

West District: Tuesday, 8:30AM on Zoom.us 921 496 953

Hill Country District: Tuesday, 9:30AM on Zoom.us 610 775 239

VIRTUAL CHURCH and COVID-19 RESOURCES

There are myriad resources online for ideas, information and precautions in this new reality of the Covid-19 quarantine. Here are some resources for you.

www.RioTexas.org and the Rio Texas of the United Methodist Church FaceBook page.

Discipleship Ministries of the UMC at www.umcdiscipleship.org

Texas Methodist Foundation at www.tmf-fdn.org

Horizons Stewardship at www.horizons.net

Candidacy Summit – Deadline extended to Apr. 8th!

By nature of our baptism, we are all called into ministry. We are incorporated into the Body of Christ, where we are to utilize our God given gifts and talents for the furtherance of the Gospel and God's kingdom. It is within the community of faith that persons are identified as having gifts for set apart ministry to lead and provide spiritual nurture to the Body of Christ and be bridge builders between the church and the world. A call to set apart ministry involves a discernment process in which a person not only senses a call from God, but is also affirmed in that call by the Body of Christ.

If you are sensing God calling you to the set apart ministries of Elder, Deacon or Licensed Local Pastor within the Rio Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church, begin by taking these next steps in your discernment process:

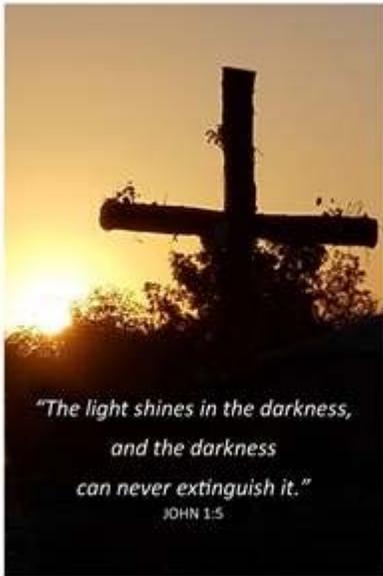
- 1) Contact your pastor or campus minister and discuss with them your sense of calling.
- 2) Order the following resource to read and discuss with your pastor: The Christian as Minister available at www.cokesbury.com.
- 3) [Download the Candidate Formation Checklist](https://riotexas.org/candidacy-summit) at <https://riotexas.org/candidacy-summit> and begin working through the steps outlined there. Candidacy is the first formal step toward ordination as a deacon or an elder or licensing in The United Methodist Church.
- 4) Prepare to attend a Candidacy Summit.

The next Candidacy Summit is scheduled May 1-2, 2020. The **deadline to register is April 8, 2020.**



RING THOSE BELLS

A great idea we've heard about comes from San Marcos First UMC. A number of churches in the San Marcos and New Braunfels area are ringing their church bells for a full two minutes at noon each day as a call to prayer and a sign of hope.



LIGHT THE DARKNESS

We are inviting everyone to join First United Methodist Church in Mason on the Saturday night before Easter, April 11, as we prepare for the resurrection of the Savior of the World. Since we are unable to worship in our various sanctuaries this year, we are planning to worship as Christians together - as one community – not bound by denominations or church buildings. Our plan is to go outside at 9:00 P.M. – wherever we live – and shine our flashlights toward the heavens as we say a prayer of welcome and hope. We are inviting all people who await the resurrection of Jesus to join us. We are also asking anyone who sees this invitation to share it with others who would like to participate with us. We hope you will join us as we “LIGHT the DARKNESS”

Sharing Our Stories:

Calling all churches! Everyone is stepping up right now to a different kind of Church. Teachings and Worship services are all being completed through different avenues.

If you have special stories to share with the District, please send the stories and any pictures to Amy, westdistrict@riotexas.org. (This is a new email, but the other is still working as well!) I don't see this as bragging, I see it as sharing ideas so we can “Bridge the Distance” during this time of separation. Thank you!

Calendar

Apr. 1	District Committee on Ordained Ministry Annual Interviews
7	Coffee & Prayer with Andy
8	Deadline to register for Candidacy Summit
8-9	Cabinet
10	District Office Closed (Good Friday)
13	District Office Closed (Monday after Easter)
14	Coffee & Prayer with Andy
14-17	Amy—Vacation
15-16	Cabinet
20	District Strategy Team Meeting
21	Coffee & Prayer with Andy
22-23	Cabinet
27	Clergy Convocation
28	Coffee & Prayer with Andy

At this time there are many changes occurring daily. I am listing April dates right now, and will send out changes to our churches as they are known. Thank you.

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Rio Texas Conference
United Methodist Church**

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District Web-Page:

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