

## Conference Profile

### Desert Southwest Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

2008

#### A. Geographical Location & Description:

Desert Southwest – Arizona, Southern Nevada, Colorado River border cities in California. Includes desert, mountains, canyons with ranching, farming, tourism, and miscellaneous industries.

#### B. Demographics:

- a. Three large metro areas: Phoenix, Tucson, Las Vegas; rapidly growing population (two fastest growing counties in the nation)
- b. Significant growth in Hispanic population
- c. Large senior adult population
- d. Large number of high school dropouts
- e. Large areas of Native American reservation land

#### C. Conference Vision, Mission Statement:

We believe God's vision is a transformed world through Jesus Christ, thus Our Mission is to make Disciples of Christ for the transformation of the world – One with Christ, One with Each Other, One in Ministry to All the World.

#### D. Political/Social makeup:

Political makeup:

Historically, area has been politically conservative, though changing as area grows e.g. Arizona has Democratic Governor, Republican legislature

Political issues:

- a. Funding for quality education
- b. Growing poverty segment
- c. Immigrant issues
- d. Need to develop broader high tech, higher education base for future
- e. Water and land preservation
- f. Child welfare

Church trends:

- a. Mega-church influence in cities
- b. Large Mormon and Roman Catholic influence
- c. Declining church membership despite high population growth in area

Social environment:

- a. Multi-cultural influence very strong
- b. Large population of retirees and winter visitors
- c. Wide variation between very rich and very poor: i.e. much wealth within boundaries but much deep poverty

Ecumenical environment:

- a. Arizona Ecumenical Council influential in Phoenix area with growing influence in Tucson
- b. Nevada has the Religious Alliance in Nevada (RAIN) which focuses primarily on social issues
- c. Some communities have active interfaith councils
- d. Despite being major presence in area, LDS church does not participate in many ecumenical endeavors

**E. Financial status:**

- a. Generally good
- b. Major Campaign in process (Forward in Their Footsteps) to raise endowment funds for church starts
- c. Long history of building industry boom but currently in slump
- d. General Church apportionments paid at 100%
- e. Annual Conference apportionments usually received at 90% plus

**F. Issues:**

Clergy Issues:

- a. Lacking strong church start leadership
- b. Not enough strong leaders
- c. Isolation
- d. Need to provide counseling to assist in exiting ministry
- e. Personal health resulting from stress not cared for properly
- f. Clergy's role in the church not well understood by congregations
- g. Young clergy drawn to other professions are forms of service

Lay Issues:

- a. Need strengthening of lay leadership
- b. Better communication to laity
- c. Need stronger biblical and theological foundation
- d. No local seminary of opportunity for educational advancement, e.g. certification, though we are working on some possibilities for addressing this in partnership with Claremont School of Theology

Conference strengths:

- a. Conference mission partnership with the Methodist Church of Mexico
- b. Support of ethnic congregations

- c. Commitment to growth
- d. Financial giving
- e. Strong staffing at Conference Center-good for providing resources and enabling churches
- f. Sidewalk Sunday School
- g. Social involvement
- h. Strong Communications Office

Areas for Improvement:

- a. Development of effective leadership
- b. Understanding and acceptance of United Methodist beliefs and practices
- c. Commitment to spiritual growth
- d. Strengthen youth, young adults
- e. More ethnic churches, pastors
- f. Increase pace of new church starts to meet population growth

**G. Conference Episcopal Leader Expectations:**

- a. Strong leadership skills
- b. Use “team” approach
- c. Spiritual leader
- d. Pastor’s heart
- e. Passion and knowledge for ethnic ministries
- f. Acceptance of strong laity involvement
- g. Ecumenical Participation
- h. Good sense of humor

**H. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1=mastered; 2=doing much of the time; 3=mixed results; 4=needs work; 5=no work begun;) what is your conference level of Accomplishment in fulfilling the “9 Elements of the Jurisdictional Vision Statement”?**

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|--|---|
| 1. A multicultural, inclusive church         | 3 |
| 2. Churches engaged in life of the community | 2 |
| 3. Confident, effective leadership           | 3 |
| 4. Congregations forming disciples           | 4 |
| 5. Diverse Ministry settings                 | 3 |
| 6. Congregations living as global citizens   | 3 |
| 7. A church that thinks and acts regionally  | 3 |
| 8. Fully accessible churches                 | 3 |
| 9. Ministry enhanced by technology           | 3 |