



Pre-Conference Journal Report
Submitted by: Rev. Dr. Tanya Campen

It has been another year full of hard and holy work for the Office of Intergenerational Discipleship. I remain committed to journeying alongside faith formation leaders as we all discovered ways to equip and support disciples of Jesus Christ in our constantly changing ethos. Four tasks continue to shape the work of this office: Relationships, Research, Resources, and Leadership Development. Leaning into these four areas of ministry we all continue to discover creative pathways for reaching people of all ages in the many communities within our conference. I am inspired by the creativity, courage, and commitment of our faith formation leaders. It is a joy and an honor to serve alongside each of you as we discover ways to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Listed below are the many ministries created and offered in response to consistent and intentional research and discernment. I am grateful for the teams of hardworking individuals who make these ministries possible. I do not do this work alone and I give thanks for all the leaders God has gifted who come alongside me and our conference in these efforts.

Connect

Connect was created out of an expressed need for connection, support, prayer, and accountability. This ministry continues to change and thrive as ministry leaders seek connection, support, and resources. In 2022 I met with leaders across the connection to connect, listen, and learn as ministry leaders across our conference shared their celebrations, their struggles, and their hopes. My call was renewed as I listened to stories of courage, vulnerability, and faithfulness. The Connect ministry provides monthly opportunities for leaders in faith formation to gather to connect, discuss, share best practices, and pray with and for one another. In 2022 we hosted six guest speakers who spoke on topics requested by members of the Connect community including: Sabbath, Faith Formation, Community Outreach, Family Faith Formation, and seasonal ministry preparation and planning. Connect distributes a monthly newsletter to ministry leaders with resources and training opportunities to support them in their ministry. All recordings and resources along with upcoming meetings and offerings can be found at: riotexas.org/igconnect.

Faith Formation Leadership Academy

Faith Formation Leadership Academy equips faith formation leaders in United Methodist Churches as they guide and support Christ's disciples in the work of loving God and loving neighbor. This digital learning space offers online courses, continuing education units, and a three-year faith formation certification. I am grateful for Rev. Jessica Petersen's leadership on the FFLA ministry team. In the last Annual Conference year, we offered: *Discipleship pathways and Playlists*, *Approaches to Congregational Learning*, *Intergenerational Ministry*, and *Teaching the Bible*. We also offer a 24-hour spiritual renewal retreat and monthly cohorts led by experienced ministry leaders within our conference. Special thanks to Rev. Janet Larson, Rev. Leigh Lloyd, and Rev. Candice Parry for their leadership as mentors. The rest of 2023 will bring our 3rd spiritual renewal retreat, two summer courses, *Children's Ministry Elective* and *UMC Theology and Doctrine*, and two fall courses, *Ministry for all learning abilities* and *Faith Formation in a Rural Context*. Funded by the Sam Taylor Grant (Discipleship Ministries), FFLA

seeks to intentionally connect, train, and support faith formation leaders in the Rio Texas Conference and greater United Methodist connection. The certification includes virtual courses, monthly cohort groups, and annual spiritual retreat and renewal opportunities. This ministry offers development opportunities for new staff and volunteers as well as those seeking to continue their education. More courses including electives in various ministry areas to be offered in coming sessions. More information can be found at rtfaithacademy.com.

Family Faith Formation Initiative

2022 brought the beginning of a 5.5 year initiative funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. This grant creates an opportunity for the Rio Texas Conference to partner with other leaders in faith formation as we listen to and learn from parents and caregivers with young children (Ages 0-3yrs). As we listen, we plan to respond by creating resources and experiences for families as they grow in their faith together. We will also share our findings and train ministry leaders so that they can support parents and caregivers of young children in their ministry contexts. Subscribe for updates on this initiative at: <http://eepurl.com/h5EcK1> (new website coming soon).

Launch

Launch! faith formation is a series of short videos, podcasts, and curated resources to support and equip ministry leaders for the important work that God calls us to - the work of growing in love of God and neighbor for the transformation of today's world. In a time of uncertainty and change, the church needs adaptive and strategic ministry leaders who will lead with clarity and purpose as they shepherd their communities in the important work of discipleship. I am grateful to work alongside Rev. Christine Hides (UMC Deacon, Northern Illinois Conference) and Rev. Kathy Pittenger (UMC Deacon, Michigan Conference). Together we create and curate these resources to equip and support ministry leaders as a guide for the important work of growing in love of God and neighbor for the transformation of the world. Each playlist has four components: watch, explore, create, and learn more. Your time is valuable! Most of the playlist content takes less than 10 minutes to watch, create, or explore. The playlists are designed to be completed on their own, yet also can build on one another. Find us at launchfaith.com.

#pictureadvent and #picturelent

Intergenerational, spirit-filled, invitational, and reflective, #picture invites individuals, families, and faith communities to encounter God daily through Scripture, images, and reflection during the holy season of Advent and Lent. With over 3,200 subscribers, we continue to grow as we reach people across our conference, denomination, and world. I am grateful for the many individuals in our conference who have contributed to these daily devotionals with their words, images, and prayers. Join us next time as we pictureadvent.com and picturelent.com together. #Picture is a joint ministry between the Rio Texas and the Michigan annual conferences.

Thriving Congregations

The Rio Texas Conference has three churches participating in a 4-year thriving congregations project through a Lilly Grant awarded to Vibrant Faith. These churches include: Colonial Hills United Methodist Church in San Antonio, Floresville United Methodist Church, and First United Methodist Church, Victoria. Each church works with their team and joins a monthly Rio Texas Cohort meeting. These churches are coached by Rev. Dr. Campen and resourced by the staff at Vibrant Faith. This last year, teams continued to lead ministry experiments in their community as

they ask: “What does it mean to thrive?” I’m excited to see how God continues to work in these communities as they continue to thrive.

Trusted con Confianza

The Rio Texas Conference is still hard at work creating safe spaces for children, youth, and vulnerable adults as we celebrate 6 years of *Trusted* ministry. We currently have over 4,000 certified adults engaged in fruitful ministry across our conference. Our facilitator team includes 14 facilitators trained to lead certification sessions across our conference. You can find information about our facilitators at: riotexas.org/safefacilitators.

The Trusted Coalition’s training work team continues to receive and review all evaluations, working to update and strengthen the training curriculum. The report of the training work team, chaired by Emily Buchanan (FUMC, Austin), is included at the end of this report. We are grateful for the work of these ministry leaders and their commitment to the safety of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults in their care. Together we are keeping all of God’s children safe.

Other ministry this year

In addition to all these projects, I continue to curate resources and provide training and coaching for faith formation leaders. In the past year, I offered webinars and workshops on Children’s spirituality, Family Faith Formation, Effective Volunteer Ministry, and Faith formation in today’s world. I partnered with Vibrant Faith and Lifelong Faith, two organizations providing resources and trainings to local church leaders. I also continue to visit with churches, conferences, and other faith communities about my book, *Holy Work with Children: Making meaning together*, as they design effective ministries with children in their contexts. Finally, I curate resources for important conversations in our churches and homes alongside playlists for holy seasons including Advent and Lent. All resources can be found at the intergenerational discipleship webpage: riotexas.org/ig

I continue to enjoy my work with faith formation leaders throughout our conference. It is humbling and inspiring to see all that God is doing in and through intergenerational discipleship in our conference. I am grateful to serve alongside each and every member of the conference and look forward to more conversations, collaboration, and fruitful ministry in the next twelve months.

Prayerfully submitted by,
Rev. Dr. Tanya Campen
April 19, 2023

Report from Trusted con Confianza Training Team

Amid concerns raised during Annual Conference 2022 the Trusted training team was asked to review the current Trusted con Confianza three-step process. In response, the team hired research consultants from EffectX to design and implement an in-depth evaluation of the process. The evaluation combined quantitative and qualitative data from interviews and surveys of three groups of stakeholders: Trusted administrators, volunteers, and church employees. The Safety Policy and Step 1 of the Trusted process received high overall average ratings from the

respondents. However, the ratings showed a clear decline for steps 2 and 3, suggesting some dissatisfaction or difficulty with these stages. In general, there is a perception that steps 2 and 3 exacerbate volunteer shortages in post-Covid ministry settings. The team is currently evaluating what adjustments can be made to the training process to address concerns from the research, while still adhering to Texas state requirements and the current RTC policy, and plans to make a full report with recommendations to the Annual Conference in June.

Prayerfully submitted by,
Trusted con Confianza Training Team
April 19, 2023