
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | Thursday, October 29, 2026

Bishop Saenz Appoints Rev. Andy Lewis to Highland Park UMC

Rev. Matt Tuggle reappointed; worship for Highland Park United Methodists to begin Nov. 1 at University Park UMC

DALLAS, Texas — Bishop Ruben Saenz, Jr., of the Horizon Texas Conference has appointed the Rev. Andy Lewis as senior pastor of Highland Park United Methodist Church, ensuring that United Methodist members have pastoral leadership and a place to worship together following recent actions by Highland Park's lay leadership.

In accordance with his responsibilities as bishop, Saenz has reappointed Rev. Matt Tuggle and Rev. Paul Rasmussen from all positions at Highland Park United Methodist Church and appointed Lewis as its senior pastor, effective Oct. 29, 2026. Bishop Saenz said Lewis's appointment will provide steady pastoral leadership and help restore order as Highland Park United Methodist Church moves forward.

In a letter to Highland Park's lay leadership, Saenz affirmed that while individuals remain free to make their own decisions about religious affiliation and worship, the congregation remains part of The United Methodist Church.

"A congregational vote or action of the Church Council cannot, by itself, terminate the congregation's connection to the denomination," he wrote.

The former disaffiliation process that would have allowed Highland Park United Methodist to sever its denominational connection under paragraph 2553 of the Book of Discipline expired December 31, 2023.

In a separate pastoral letter to Highland Park UMC's United Methodist members, Saenz emphasized his immediate concern that they continue worshipping together without missing a Sunday with their community of faith. Lewis will provide pastoral care, preach, administer the sacraments and guide the congregation's continuing United Methodist ministry.

"In the midst of a hard season, I look forward to providing pastoral care that will help the congregation find healing and leadership that will restore trust and hope," Lewis said.

Worship will begin Sunday, Nov. 1, at 10 a.m. at University Park United Methodist Church, 4024 Caruth Boulevard in Dallas.

Bishop Saenz said University Park United Methodist Church has graciously offered to host Highland Park United Methodist Church during this time. He said the decision to worship at a temporary location reflects a desire to respect everyone involved and avoid unnecessary conflict as the Conference continues to address questions surrounding Highland Park UMC's governance and property.

In his pastoral letter, Saenz wrote: "We will not walk away from you. Our goal remains a vibrant United Methodist church at the corner of Hillcrest and Mockingbird: a congregation governed as a United Methodist church, connected to the wider church and open to all. We will keep pursuing that goal faithfully, patiently and through every proper path available to us. This is not the end of the story."

The Conference continues to seek restoration of Highland Park United Methodist Church's corporate governing documents. Legal proceedings concerning amendments to those documents made in 2022 remain ongoing.

More: [HTC Highland Park information page](#) | [Ecclesiastical Determination/Lay Leadership Letter](#) | [Congregational Letter](#)

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ABOUT THE HORIZON TEXAS CONFERENCE

The Horizon Texas Conference is an annual conference of The United Methodist Church, connecting local congregations with the denomination's wider mission and ministries. The Conference supports and oversees ministry across its geographic area, including clergy leadership and accountability, congregational vitality, leadership development and mission work. Its mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Bishop Ruben Saenz Jr. leads the Conference and also serves as president of The United Methodist Church's Council of Bishops. Learn more at htcumc.org.