



"And are we yet alive?": A History of the Northwest Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church

David J. Murrah

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The Northwest Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church has a complicated and fascinating history. Its story parallels that of the settlement of the frontier of Northwest Texas. Methodist circuit riders rode in advance of the railroads, and homesteaders in dugouts were often surprised to have a Methodist preacher to be the first to welcome them to the new country. There have been two Northwest Texas conferences: the first was created in 1866 and stretched 600 miles from Georgetown in central Texas northwestward across the vast high plains. By 1910, it had grown to be the largest conference numerically in Texas. As a result, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, approved a division into two smaller conferences, the Central Texas, and a new Northwest Texas Conference. In 2010, the present Northwest Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church celebrated its 100th anniversary. At its birth, the conference began with nearly two hundred strong churches and another two hundred part-time "school house" churches within its charge. During its first forty years, it grew at a rapid pace; but, in the mid-1960s, began to experience a gradual decline which continues to this day. This study explores the conference's reasons for growth, the challenge of conflict and decline, and its efforts to find renewal and revival. At the same time, it celebrates the tremendous achievements of the Northwest Texas Conference in bringing salvation, civility, and institutional services to its vast territory.

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