Seizing the Momentum

Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

TCADP Celebrates Houston's Champions of Justice

An evening of Houston blues, a keg of beer, homemade lemonade, and food trucks serving fusion tacos and frozen sweets were the backdrop for what turned into an especially-charged gathering of the anti-death penalty community in Houston. The Station Museum of Contemporary Art generously hosted an evening where 125 people came together to celebrate some of the victories in the past year on our journey to repeal the death penalty in Texas.

On September 15, 2011, TCADP honored three Houstonians whose work is key to helping us continue a powerful public conversation about the death penalty.

Imagine the joy and solidarity in the room when, gathered to honor State Representative Jessica Farrar, Professor David Dow and Professor Nicole Casarez as "Champions of Justice", we learned that the U.S. Supreme Court had stayed Duane Buck's execution! If timing is everything, this announcement laid the foundation for a true celebration.

Three strong abolitionists shared how our Champions inspired them along their way.

Bob Van Steenburg, TCADP Board President and retired Army Colonel, told us about his admiration of our legislative champion, Representative Jessica Farrar. He spoke of the courage required, as an elected official, to carry a bill forward in Texas that calls for the end of the death penalty. Her work is essential to our cause.

Paul Nugent, a criminal defense attorney who has also represented men on death row, shared what he admires about the plain-speaking, outspoken Distinguished Professor at the University of Houston Law Center, David Dow. As it turns out, the respect is mutual, and our guests witnessed a touching exchange of admiration between two colleagues committed to abolition and inspired by each other's work.

Adding a great deal of depth to the program, exoneree and activist Anthony Graves shared how the work of University of St. Thomas Professor Nicole Casarez and her students gave him hope on his journey and, literally, saved his life. It doesn't get any better Casarez, Professor David Dow, and Rep. Jessica Farrar than hearing firsthand from this amazing man, who survived the unthinkable – 18 years of wrongful incarceration. Equally humbling was Nicole's gracious acceptance of her award for her extraordinary

role in his fight for justice. For two hours, lawyers, professors, activists, lawmakers, students and community

supporters came together to encourage one another's work against the death penalty. It was indeed food for the soul. (See more pictures on page 6.)

In this issue:

Voices of Texas: Freddi Jensen

Pictures from Seizing the Momentum: Honoring Houston's Champions

News From the Field

Thank You, Members, Donors, and Partners for Justice! Religious Leaders Dialogue on the Death Penalty—San Antonio



The honorees were presented with a beautiful hand-molded and painted ceramic tile designed by Cornelia Gates of Aloe Ceramics in Corpus Christi.



2011 Houston Champions of Justice: Professor Nicole

Scheduled Executions

October

27 Frank Garcia

November

9 Henry (Hank) Skinner

16 Guadalupe Esparza

Execution Vigils: tcadp.org under "Get Involved - Stop Executions"

From the Executive Director

Dear TCADP Members and Supporters,

I recently came across an article that profoundly moved me... it was about the family of James Anderson, an African American man who was brutally killed this past June in Jackson, Mississippi after being beaten by a group of white teenagers and then run over by a truck driven by 19-year-old Deryl Dedmon. As reported by ABC News ("Death Penalty 'Unlikely' for White Teen Accused of Running Over Black Man," September 21, 2011), the family of James Anderson unequivocally opposed pursuit of the death penalty for the offenders. In a letter to Hinds County District Attorney Robert Smith, "Anderson's sister Barbara Anderson Young said she spoke on behalf of their mother, and her



two brothers, in asking prosecutors not to seek capital punishment, saying the family's opposition to the death penalty is 'deeply rooted in our religious faith, a faith that was central in James' life as well."

The letter went on to say that "Executing James' killers will not help balance the scales. But sparing them may help to spark a dialogue that one day will lead to the elimination of capital punishment."

The power of this last statement truly took my breath away – a family calling for dialogue in the wake of such a horrible crime and tragic loss. Yet recent events seem to have led us to the very place envisioned by the Anderson family, as we find ourselves in the midst of an unprecedented national conversation about the death penalty. This dialogue, which groups like TCADP and many others have been advocating for decades, has been infused with new energy and urgency by these (and many other) developments:

- Shock and disgust over audience applause during a presidential primary debate for the 235 executions that have taken place during the administration of Texas Governor Rick Perry;
- Outrage that Duane Buck faced imminent execution in Texas despite the introduction of blatant, racially-based testimony from a psychologist during his original sentencing hearing;
- Disbelief that the State of Georgia executed Troy Davis in the face of significant and troubling doubt about the reliability of his conviction.

The day after the executions of Davis in Georgia and Lawrence Brewer in Texas, "Letters from Texas" blogger Harold Cook wrote that "This is a debate which is long-overdue in America. Your own answer to the central moral question rests on whether you believe government belongs in the death business at all." (Read more at http://www.lettersfromtexas.com/2011/09/two-deaths-in-america.html.)

With your continued support, TCADP is exposing the flaws and failures of the death penalty system and engaging the citizens of Texas in a critical conversation about this arbitrary, discriminatory, and irreversible punishment. There are many opportunities for you to participate. Please attend the events highlighted in this newsletter, particularly the Religious Leaders Dialogue on the Death Penalty in San Antonio, or contact us to learn how you can organize an event in your community.

Together, let us seize the momentum as we turn outrage into action and fulfill the wishes of the Anderson family that this renewed dialogue will lead to the end of the death penalty, once and for all.

With gratitude,



TCADP Seizing the Momentum

TCADP Seizing the Momentum is published quarterly by the Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, the only statewide grassroots organization working to end the death penalty in Texas through education, outreach and advocacy.

Subscription Information: TCADP Seizing the Momentum is distributed to TCADP members and allies. To find out more about the organization and become a member, visit our website at www.tcadp.org.

Issue #34, Fall 2011 (Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall)

Editor: Vicki McCuistion Contributors: Kristin Houlé, Chris Castillo, Anita Grabowski, Mary Heartlein

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Volunteers

Thanks so much to the following individuals who have volunteered in the TCADP Office or provided administrative support in recent months: Tom and Jean Egan, Susan Yates, and Margot Cromack. We are immensely grateful for your assistance!

Calendar of Events

October



- 2 Odessa Chapter Meeting, 4:00pm odessa@tcadp.org
- 6 Death Penalty Panel Discussion, St Mary's University, San Antonio
- 8 TCADP Table at Oktoberfest, Lancaster
- 9 World Day Against the Death Penalty event Houston Chapter; TCADP Table at Fiesta Latinoamericana!, Dallas
- 11 TCADP Presentation to TIFA, San Antonio
- 15 TCADP Presentation to Texas State University Bobcats for Life Conference; Witness to Innocence Presentation, Unitarian Universalist Church—Corpus Christi Chapter
- 17 El Paso Chapter Meeting, 7:00pm, elpaso@tcadp.ora
- 18 Witness to Innocence Presentation, First UMC, Austin; TCADP presentation to UT School of Social Work and UT-Amnesty International
- 20 View 48 Hours Mystery: "Grave Injustice" at St Albert the Great, Seminar Room of the Palermo Center, 7:00 p.m. Kristin Houlé will be available for questions.
- 24 Religious Leaders Dialogue on the Death Penalty, Laurie Auditorium, Trinity University, 7:00pm, San Antonio
- 27 Scheduled Execution Frank Garcia
- 28-29 TCADP Table at Catholic Formation and Leadership Conference, San Antonio
- 28-29 TCADP Table at University of Dallas Ministry Conference, Dallas

November

- 5 Interfaith Prayer Service, Huntsville
- 6 Odessa Chapter Meeting, 4:00pm odessa@tcadp.org
- 9 Scheduled Execution Henry (Hank) Skinner
- 16 Scheduled Execution Guadalupe Esparza
- 17 TCADP Presentation to Houston Metro ELCA Ministerium
- 21 El Paso Chapter Meeting, 7:00pm, elpaso@tcadp.org

December

- 1 TCADP Table at Dallas Peace Center Annual Dinner
- 7 Release of TCADP Annual Report

Full event descriptions and monthly chapter meeting dates with active links can be found at www.tcadp.org under "Get Involved - Attend Events".

Recent Death Penalty Developments

(as of October 3, 2011)

- The State of Texas has executed 11 people to date this year, out of 37 executions nationwide.
- There have been seven new death sentences in Texas and at least one resentence.

Voices of Texas

"Mother's Day, May 11, 2008 was a wonderful day spent with my children....My youngest son, Noel, was murdered five days later."
- Freddi Jensen

September 25, 2011 was the National Day of Remembrance for Murder Victims. The day was set aside not only to remember loved ones taken by violence, but also to remind us that murder impacts each and every one of us, and every community nationwide. This Day calls us to work diligently to prevent the violence that destroys lives and devastates families.

I have often heard people say that parents should die before their children. After all, it's the natural cycle of life and I always assumed it would be true for me. Unfortunately, it wasn't. My three children have always been the loves of my life and I made a point to frequently tell each of them that I love them. I wanted to reassure them in case something happened to me and I was no longer around to tell them. I never dreamed that it would be one of them who would not be here.

Mother's Day, May 11, 2008 was a wonderful day spent with my children. We laughed, reminisced and shared plans for the future. When the day came to an end we hugged, said our goodbyes and said how much we love each other. My youngest son, Noel, was murdered five days later in Houston.

Noel was a beautiful person who wanted to help other people from the time he was a young boy. When I had surgery, he made sure I had everything I needed. We talked almost every day, even if it was just him calling to check on me. Our relationship wasn't always easy. In fact, we were estranged for years after he told me that he was gay. I thought it was a phase he was going through or that he was making the wrong choice for his life. I realized nine years later that it was neither a phase nor a choice. We had another 12 years together before he was ripped from my life.

I will never forget how my world forever shifted the day I got the call about a body having been found in Noel's apartment. I prayed that it was not Noel, but soon after I learned it was. I was emotionally destroyed. I was even more devastated when I heard he had been brutally murdered, stabbed 46 times and shoved into his bedroom closet. His lifeless body was left there alone for days before he was found.

On September 20, 2008 the police arrested James Andrew Black for Noel's murder. Simply getting Black to trial was drawn out and gut-wrenching, but after going through many continuances and six district attorneys, our case was called for trial on June 21, 2010. I knew a trial would be very hard to attend, but my need as a mother to know why this happened overrode any fear that I had. Noel had opened his home up to a friend, whose repayment for his kindness was to take his life. Why? Was it because he was gay? Unfortunately those questions were not answered because Black pled guilty before the whole truth came out. I am now left with no son and no answers why.

Noel had suffered abuse from other people throughout his life. He was called names for being gay and was often demeaned. He battled addictions as a result, but in the end he conquered those and became even stronger. Noel had just completed the necessary education to become a non-destructive technician. He had just gotten his passport and was so excited to travel and work in Paris and other cities. People were calling him about jobs in his new career, but he couldn't answer his phone; he had already died.

Despite Noel's murder, and the many unanswered questions related to it, I am not full of hatred or bitterness. Noel wouldn't want me to live an angry and bitter life. He would want me to be happy. I remember him and his giving spirit on this Day of Remembrance and ask each of you to remember him and the other victims and families across Texas and the impact of murder on our community.

Frederina (Freddi) Jensen, of Houston, spent over 25 years developing her talents as an international technical trainer, webinar and courseware developer. Freddi's energy and skills are now being taken in a new direction with the growth of Healing Out Loud, an organization she founded in memory of her youngest son, Noel, who was brutally murdered in 2008. Healing Out Loud is dedicated to making a difference on behalf of the LGBT commu-

nity. In addition to speaking to groups across the country in venues ranging from churches to LGBT groups, she also spends time with parents who are struggling to accept their children.

Submitted by Chris Castillo, the National Outreach Coordinator for Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation, ccastillo@mvfr.org.









Save the Date! TCADP 2012 Annual Conference

Seizing the Momentum... Creating the Climate for Change

Save the Date: February 18, 2012, 8:00am to 5:30pm University of Incarnate Word Sky Room, San Antonio, Texas

Highlights

- Panel Discussion & Skill Building Workshops
- Annual Awards Luncheon
- Networking

Conference Hotel: Hyatt Place San Antonio Airport 7615 Jones Maltsberger Road San Antonio 210-930-2333

King and Double Beds available, \$99 a night Friday, February 17 and/or Saturday, February 18

Book by phone at 210-930-2333 and ask for the "Texas Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty Group Rate" or go online to www.hyatt.com and use the code "G-TXCL" in the Corporate/Group# field to get the group rate.



To register and keep up to date on conference developments; go to: http://www.tcadp.org/what-we-do/annual-conference/

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□ I want to be a Partner for Justice* (learn more on Page 11)! Make my donation of(minimum \$10) recur on a □ monthly □ quarterly □ annual basis.	be mailed to: TCADP; 2709 S. Lamar; Suite 109; Austin, TX 78704. A secure online donation can be made through the TCADP website: www.tcadp.org (click on
*Credit/Debit Cards only	"Donate"). THANK YOU!
Credit/Debit Card Number	Expiration Date
Credit Card - USA	•

YES, I want to help TCADP continue the momentum toward abolition!



Pictures from Seizing the Momentum: Honoring Houston's Champions of Justice

See videos of the remarks from our Champions of Justice and more pictures at www.tcadp.org/champions-of-justice/.



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Look for TCADP on Facebook and "Like" today! See photos of activities and links to important news developments.

facebook.

News from the Field

Austin

In August, Austin-area members and community allies gathered for a strategy meeting to discuss opportunities for deeper community engagement. As a result of this meeting, TCADP will be working with local members on a religious outreach campaign to reach new supporters through educational programming at their places of worship.

In September, members and staff tabled at the Austin Pride Festival.

Please consider attending these two upcoming events:

- On October 18 at 7pm, there will be a panel discussion with Witness to Innocence death row exonerees at the First United Methodist Church (1201 Lavaca).
- St Albert the Great will host a pro-life event in the Seminar Room of the Palermo Center on October 20 7:00p.m, 12041 Bittern Hollow. Come view the story of Texas exoneree, Anthony Graves-48 Hours Mystery: "Grave Injustice". Kristin Houlé will also be on hand to dialogue with parishioners about the death penalty in Texas.

Corpus Christi

On Saturday, October 15, TCADP's Corpus Christi Chapter will host a presentation by members of Witness to Innocence at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 6901 Holly Road, at 4 p.m. Witness to Innocence is the nation's only organization composed of, by and for exonerated death row survivors and their loved ones. For more information about this event, please contact Emilie Olivares at 361-853-6389 or equipments-action-regions-series

Dallas

The civic and religious outreach committees of TCADP in Dallas have been busy reaching out to their friends, neighbors and new allies at various community festivals and religious outreach events. In September they participated in the SMU Human Rights Fair and the Dallas Pride Festival. In October, they will attend Oktoberfest in Lancaster, Fiesta Latinoamericana! in Dallas, and the University of Dallas Ministry Conference.

On September 21, Dallas-area members stood vigil for the executions of Lawrence Brewer and Troy Anthony Davis. Earlier in the month, local TCADP members and Executive Director, Kristin Houlé, met with representatives of the Catholic Pro-Life Committee of North Texas to discuss opportunities for collaboration.

If you are interested in getting involved in the Dallas area, contact Lauren Zielinski (<u>laurenlz@hotmail.com</u>) regarding civic outreach opportunities or Laura Seipp (ljseipp@yahoo.com) regarding religious outreach opportunities.

El Paso

In July and August, El Pasoans Against the Death Penalty (EPADP) concluded their summer film festival with screenings of "At the Death House Door" and "Inside Death Row." Each of these screenings attracted about 30 people.

At their regular monthly meeting in September, Charlie Doyle gave a presentation on crime statistics and Leticia ("Lety") Moreno officially took over as the new coordinator of EPADP. Welcome, Lety! We are deeply indebted to Karen Peissinger-Venhaus for her incredible leadership of the chapter for the past year and a half, and wish her and her husband Matthew as they pursue new professional opportunities.

In October, EPADP will host a visit by TCADP Executive Director Kristin Houlé.

Cont. Page 8



News from the Field cont.

Houston

TCADP member Nancy Bailey staffed information tables at two recent college events:

- Helping Hands Education, Government, and Non-Profit Job and Volunteer Fair at the University of St. Thomas on September 20
- International Day of Peace at Houston Community College on September 21

Along with Amnesty International Chapter 23, TCADP's Houston Chapter will host a special event on Sunday, October 9 to commemorate World Day Against the Death Penalty (designated as October 10). The program will feature remarks by SMU Professor Rick Halperin, the former Chairperson of Amnesty International USA and past TCADP President, and the personal testimonies of exonorees Anthony Graves and Clarence Brandley.

Odessa

The Odessa Chapter held its regular monthly meeting on October 2, 2011. Fr. Joseph Uecker gave a short presentation on the text "An Eye for an Eye." He explained that this was a way of limiting revenge, rather than exacting a "similar amount" when one is injured. Members of the St. Joseph Youth Group took time from their own meeting to attend.

The chapter plans to hold a fundraiser on October 23. It will be an "all-you-can-eat" healthy meal at the cost of \$10 per person. Proceeds will benefit TCADP.

San Antonio

The Bexar County Campaign continues to make connections with community partners committed to ending the death penalty in Texas. In August, Chris Castillo from Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation held talks at St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church, St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, and at the monthly meeting of Texas Inmate Families Association. On Labor Day, TCADP members tabled at the North East Democrats of Bexar County annual picnic.

On October 6 the St. Mary's University Chapter of Amnesty International hosted a panel on the death penalty with Br. Brian Halderman, Sam Millsap, Prof. Roger Barnes, and Prof. Milo Colton.

We are in the final stages of preparing for the Religious Leaders Dialogue on the Death Penalty at Trinity University at Laurie Auditorium on October 24 at 7pm. The event is free and open to the public. To RSVP for FREE tickets, go to www.tcadp.org/religious-leaders-dialogue-on-the-death-penalty/ If you are interested in helping to distribute publicity materials to your faith community, organization or other group, please contact us at info@tcadp.org.

Vigil Locations tcadp.org under "Get Involved"

Huntsville (Location of Executions) Corner of 12th and Ave. I (in front of Walls Unit) at 5:15 pm

Austin (Site 1) - On Congress at 11 St., 5:30 - 6:30 pm, (Site 2) - Prayer vigil at St. Ignatius Martyr Catholic Church on Oltorf and Congress at 6:00pm (approx 20 minutes)

Beaumont Diocese of Beaumont, Diocesan Pastoral Office, 703 Archie St.@ 4:00 pm on the day of an execution

Brownsville 802 and Paredes Lane from 4:30 -5:30pm

College Station 5:30 to 6 pm, east of Texas A&M campus at the corner of Walton and Texas Ave. across the street from the main entrance

Corpus Christi Sisters Of Incarnate Word Convent, 2930 Alameda, 6:00 pm

Cuero At Gazebo on Main Street , next to Library, 5:45 pm. Public Invited. For information call 361-676-2921

Dallas SMU Catholic Center at the corner of University Blvd. and Airline Rd., starting at 6 pm

El Paso 6:00 pm Saint Patrick Cathedral, 1118 N Mesa St

Ganado At Assumption Catholic Church Pro-Life Monument, 5:45 pm Public invited. For information call 361-771-3325

Houston Rotating Locations... July-September 5:30 to 6:20 at the *Dominican Sisters Community*, corner of Almeda Rd. and Holcombe Blvd. Parking is available on the grounds, with access from Almeda Rd.

Lubbock St. John's United Methodist Church, 1501 University Ave., 5:30 to 6:30 pm

McAllen In front of The Monitor, corner of Nolana and Jackson at 5:30 pm

McKinney St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Community located at 110 St. Gabriel Way, the last Sunday of the month, following the 11:00 mass to remember those scheduled for execution in the following month, as well as the victims of their crimes and family members on both sides

Odessa Public vigil takes place from 5:00 to 5:30 pm in front of St. Joseph Catholic Parish, 907 S. Dixie, Odessa 79761. Prayer takes place inside the church from 5:30 to 6:00 PM. All are welcome. The church phone number is 432-337-2213

San Antonio (Site 1) - Archdiocese of San Antonio, in the St. Joseph Chapel at the Chancery, 2718 W. Woodlawn Ave. (1 mile east of Bandera Rd.) at 11:30 am on the day of execution. Broadcast on Catholic Television of San Antonio (Time-Warner cable channel 15) at 12:30 pm and 6:30 pm on the day of execution. (Site 2) - Main Plaza across from Bexar County Courthouse and San Fernando Cathedral - Noon (Site 3) - Join the Sisters of Divine Providence and friends in vigil and prayer from 6:00 - 6:30 pm on Texas execution days in front of Our Lady of the Lake Convent by the large crucifix. 515 S.W. 24th Street

Spring Prayer Vigil at 6 pm on evenings of executions at St Edward Catholic Community, 2601 Spring Stuebner Rd, Spring, TX 77389 for the murder victim, for family and friends of the murder victim, the prison guards and correctional officers, for the family of the condemned man/woman, for the man/woman to be executed and to an end to the death penalty

Thank You for Your Generous Support

TCADP thanks the following individuals & organizations for their generous contributions in the past quarter (June 25 – September 30, 2011). Your financial assistance is critical to all of the activities and events described in this newsletter! Please let us know if we have inadvertently left you (or your spouse) off of this list. We apologize in advance if we missed anyone.

Angelle Adams*

Virginia Billeaud Anderson

Tiffany Armstrong Tina Arredondo* Dave Atwood* Nancy Bailey

Keith and Mary Beth Bardin Roger and Karin Barnes

Niki Bergin*

Carolyn Burford Brady and James

Shy

Marian Breen
Rev. Chloe Breyer
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Martha Eberle* Kelly Epstein* Shirley Farrell*

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Chris Flood Eliseo Garcia Don Glendenning Susan Gries Clayton Hall

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Betsy L. Siegel
Jennifer Simmons*
Sarah Slamen
Robert Sosa
Annette Spanhel*
Sharon Starnes
Jennifer Taylor
Nathan Taylor

New Intern! - Margot

Anne Cromack was raised in San Antonio and attended college at St. Edwards' University in Austin, Texas, where she graduated with a degree in Environmental Science & Policy in May 2010. While in school,



Margot had several close friends who interned with TCADP. After hearing about their experiences, when Margot finished working at the Texas Capitol last spring she began volunteering with TCADP. Currently she is researching a variety of legislative issues and also helping to update many of TCADP's databases. Welcome and thank you, Margot!

Burnham and Joan Terrell
Georgina Tezer
Edward and Barbara Triem
Karen Tuel
Bob and Jean Van Steenburg*
James Vandergriff
Mark Vozar
Lynn Walters*
Crystal Washington
Linda White*
Gerhard and Christel Wieding
Richard Woodward*

Congregation of the Sisters of
Charity of the Incarnate Word,
San Antonio
St. Mary's University
Temple Beth-El, San Antonio
Texas Baptist Christian Life
Commission

*Signifies Partner for Justice (TCADP's recurring donation program; go online for details!)



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Religious Leaders Dialogue on the Death Penalty

October 24, 7:00-9:00pm

Laurie Auditorium, Trinity University - 1 Stadium Drive, San Antonio, 78212

RSVP for Free Tickets—

<u>www.tcadp.org/religious-leaders-dialogue-on-the-death-penalty/</u> (link also on the home page)



The Religious Leaders Dialogue on the Death Penalty at Trinity University's Laurie Auditorium on October 24 at 7:00pm is an unprecedented event for San Antonio. Moderated by Karen Clifton of the Catholic Mobilizing Network, the evening brings together seven of San Antonio's religious leaders to explore perspectives on the death penalty in a city with deep religious roots. The program will also include time for questions from the audience. Contact info@tcadp.org or 512-441-1808 for info.



Rev. Malvyn Ahmad Rashad Berry - Canaan Missionary First Baptist Church



Rev. Virgilio Vázquez-Garza -Southwest Texas Conference United Methodist Church



Father Larry Christian – St. Francis of Assisi, Archdiocese of San Antonio



Elder Hilary N.
Shuford –
Exec. Presbyter Mission
Presbytery



Bishop Ray Tiemann
- Southwestern
Texas Synod, ELCA



Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl — Rabbi Emeritus -Temple Beth-Fl



Bishop Robert Hibbs - Retired Bishop Suffragan of the Episcopal Diocese West Texas