



MINUTES

Center for Cultural Engagement Committee Meeting

Hardin-Simmons University
2200 Hickory St,
Abilene, TX 79601
Johnson Building, Classroom 200

May 19, 2025
2:30- 4:00 PM

Commission Members

Elmo Johnson
Dillard Fischer
Carol Boren
Rick Mackey
Jamie Silguero
Jason Lee
Lazaro Diaz
Fanny Young
Fred Hobbs
Alyce Bell
Micahael Jones
Felicia Omoni
Vickie Dennis
Antonio Herrera
Craig Carlton

Staff

Katie Frugé
Rebecca Treviño
David Sanchez
Shantell Welch
Mark Heavener
Linda Howell
Leonida Quarles
Darrell Fielder Jr.
Arianna Bailey
Rolando Rodriguez
Armando Solis
Josue Cedillo
Todd Combee
John Litzler

Guests

Jessica King
Sherry Vincent
Jen Slaven

OPENING

Elmo Johnson welcomed everyone to the committee meeting and shared insights on Christian sacrifice, drawing from Matthew 26:39 where Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, surrendering His will to the Father. He emphasized the importance of submitting to God's purpose, even in moments of deep struggle, setting a thoughtful tone for the meeting.

MOTION

A motion to approve the Center for Cultural Engagement Committee (CCEC) May minutes was made by Michael Jones. The motion was seconded by Carol Boren and all voted in favor.

TASKFORCE UPDATE

The Affinity Ministry Council (AMC) originally planned to launch a dedicated task force to elevate diverse voices within ministry and leadership. However, with a similar effort already emerging through the GC2 Strong Initiative, the Council has chosen to integrate the proposed task force into the GC2 framework. This decision reflects a shared vision and the value of unified strategy. Ray Malone, Associate Director of the GC2 Initiative, shared updates with the Council, reinforcing the alignment between GC2 Strong and the Council's goals. The Council affirmed their continued support and engagement with the GC2 Strong Initiative, particularly in advancing representation.

Ministries within the Center for Cultural Engagement are actively working to ensure alignment with the GC2 Strong vision and Cooperative Program (CP). Katie Frugé recognized Mark Heavener's contributions to the GC2 Strong design process, noting his valuable input on the task force.

INTERCULTURAL MINISTRIES

Mark Heavener and Linda Howell expressed their continued enthusiasm for serving Intercultural Ministries (ICM) churches. As part of their leadership development efforts, they recently led a group of ICM female pastors to attend the Truett Preaching Conference, demonstrating a strong investment in supporting women in ministry.

The recent Intercultural Advisory Council Retreat offered a meaningful opportunity for mutual learning and listening. Participants identified key areas of need and expressed encouragement at the growth of leadership within ICM churches.

In terms of global mission engagement, ICM churches remain deeply connected to communities abroad. Many are supporting regions recently affected by earthquakes, reflecting their ongoing commitment to international missions.

There is also strong excitement among ICM leaders and churches about contributing to what Mark Heavener calls "GC2 Live", which is the current ongoing alignment of Intercultural Ministries with the GC2 Strong Initiative.

CHAPLAINCY

Craig Carlton reported that five new chaplains have been endorsed and approved, bringing the total number of endorsed chaplains to approximately 1,200 worldwide. Discussions are ongoing around aligning the Chaplaincy Ministry more closely with the GC2 Initiative. While some natural alignment already exists, additional work is being done to refine the language used in communications and documentation, as well as to explore new ways chaplaincy can support GC2 goals more actively.



In the area of federal chaplaincy advocacy, there are currently 10 endorsed federal prison chaplains serving across the system. A formal letter has been submitted to the Department of Corrections requesting that chaplains be exempt from certain ministerial classifications. The goal is to ensure chaplains are officially recognized as spiritual care providers, allowing them to focus fully on their pastoral responsibilities.

TEXAS BAPTISTS EN ESPANOL AND HISPANIC EDUCATION INITIATIVE

Gabriel Cortes provided an update on an ongoing strategic collaboration between Texas Baptists en Español, and Hispanic Education Initiative (HEI) with Convencion to develop a dedicated student track for HEI. This effort is focused on equipping and guiding Hispanic students who feel called to ministry. As part of this initiative, a two-day ministry training event is scheduled in San Antonio, TX, designed specifically for these students. The event will feature two distinct cohorts: one for men and women with doctoral degrees (Ph.D. or equivalent), and another for those holding a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) degree. Both tracks aim to foster strong academic and spiritual communities among emerging Hispanic leaders.

During the summer, HEI awarded ten \$1,000 scholarships during a banquet. The banquet featured testimonies from past HEI recipients highlighting the significant impact on students pursuing education.

Gabriel Cortes also announced an upcoming organizational transition: beginning in September, HEI will move from the Center for Cultural Engagement Committee (CCEC) to the Theological Education Council. Despite the shift, regular updates will continue to be provided to the CCEC, as the initiative's mission remains closely aligned.

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION

Josue Cedillo was introduced as the new Public Policy Intern, joining the CLC team to assist in legislative and policy engagement efforts.

Lucy Floyd, the Immigration Service And Aid Center (ISAAC) Director, shared a brief history on the legacy ministry and her ministry background that has prepared her for the current role.

Currently, Lucy is pursuing her licensure and certification, with the final exam scheduled for the first week of June.

In the Spring, Lucy visited Azle Baptist Church, and their Immigration Service ministry to gather insight into their day to day work.

An upcoming training session is scheduled for June 7 at the El Paso Baptist Association (EPBA). Lucy also referenced a recent document review regarding shifts in immigration policy, emphasizing the importance of staying up to date with current regulations.



During the public policy report, John Litzler shared key legislative updates including legislation that was supported and passed:

- SB 3070
 - Abolishes the Texas Lottery Commission, with functions
 - Transfers its functions to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR).
 - Status: Passed in the Senate
- HB 37
 - Establishes Cuddle Cots as part of a perinatal palliative care grant
 - Targets hospitals currently lacking this technology
 - Status: Passed and sent to the Governor
- HB 3006
 - Mandates the installation of air conditioning units in Texas Department of Criminal Justice facilities
 - This legislation aligns with the CLC's Human Flourishing policy priority

Craig Carlton raised a question about the percentage of Texas prisons with inadequate AC in living quarters. He noted the need to confirm this figure with John.

Lazaro Diaz asked about heat-related deaths among inmates, but it was reported by John Litzler that prisons no longer list heat as a cause of death most likely to wrongful death litigation, making data difficult to verify.

Steve Bezner inquired about public school funding under House Bill 2 (HB2), noting the original proposed increase of \$395 per student was ultimately reduced significantly.

Todd Combee was recognized for his collaboration with the CLC in co-authoring a support letter for the AC bill, reflecting a strong partnership in ministry advocacy.

CLOSING

With no additional business, Katie Frugé concluded the meeting and thanked the Center for Cultural Engagement Committee.