



**Senior Pastor - The Rev. Sylvester E. Chase, Jr.
Wesley United Methodist Church, Austin, Texas**

The Rev. Sylvester E. Chase, Jr. is a native Texan and was born in Columbus, Texas in Colorado County. He is the oldest son of the late Rev. and Mrs. Sylvester E. (Lucille) Chase, Sr. Upon his high school graduation, he attended Southwest Texas State University – San Marcos, Texas (now Texas State University) and received a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration. When he received his call to the ministry, he continued his education at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas and received a Master of Divinity degree.

After seminary, he participated in internships at First United Methodist Church in Austin, Texas and in Liberia, Africa. In the summer of 2007, he, along with Sister Bettye Washington and members of First United Methodist Church (San Marcos, Texas) participated in a medical mission trip to Mozambique, Africa.

In June 1994, he was appointed by the former Southwest Texas Conference United Methodist Church (now Rio Texas Conference for the United Methodist Church) to serve as senior pastor of Wesley United Methodist Church in Austin, Texas. His first sermon was “Stay Focused on Jesus.”

Under his leadership in the year 2000, a third renovation campaign to enhance the church edifice was initiated and completed ahead of schedule due to the commitment of giving by the congregation. The slogan for the campaign was “*We Can, We Must, We Will – Not Equal Gifts but Equal Sacrifice*”

Other church ministries were created such as the Prayer Shawl Ministry, 55 Plus Senior Ministry, Praise Dance Ministry, Wesley Theatre Arts program led by the children/youth ministries, Homeless Men's Clothing Project led by the United Methodist Men, LoveWorks (support to children whose parents are incarcerated), a revival of the local Emmaus community, and active responses to requests for support and financial giving to the survivors of Hurricanes Katrina, Ike, and Harvey. Benefactors include: The American Red Cross, UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief, a Global Ministry), Central Texas Food Bank, the Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation, and the Austin Disaster Relief Network with financial donations and care kits to help those who were displaced by Hurricane Harvey. A new program introduced was the Thanksgiving Outreach Lunch program in November 2017 serving church family members, senior citizens, and the homeless.

In March 2015, the church had a year-long celebration in preparation for its 150th celebration of Christian Service. The church continues to be a music/cultural arts center with the Wesley Music Ministry's choir annual and programs such as An Evening of Classics and Jazz, Jazz on the Lawn, and the East Side Festival. These annual events are demonstrated efforts of reaching out to the community-at-large and to our neighbors during influx of gentrification of East Austin. The church also serves as a meeting place for community forums and continues to maintain its long time relationship with Huston-Tillotson University (formerly College) through the giving of scholarships from the Endowment Fund and the Austin Area Urban League begun under previous leadership by the former Rev. Freddie B. Dixon, Sr., a mentor to Rev. Chase while in seminary.

Due to the 2020 COVID-19 epidemic, the church enhanced its online worship service which began a year earlier. Rev. Chase, along with the support of Music Ministry Director Ms. LaMonica M. Lewis, Ms. Janice Jean, and Mrs. Sondra D. Johnson; conducted online worship services and Music for the Soul (formerly featured on Thursday) for church members and friends to maintain their worship experiences while at home.

In January 2022, the doors of the church were re-opened. Worship services are now conducted in person and online for church family members and for online congregation. In addition to the Sunday worship service, Rev. Chase added the MidWeek Tune-up (featured on Wednesdays), an online mini sermon for friends and members who need an extra spiritual uplift for the week.

During the pandemic, the sanctuary received a multi-media upgrade which enhanced the quality of the worship experience with new wiring, cameras, and audio improvements, led by Ms. Fran Lehman of the Media Ministry Team.

Rev. Chase has received the following honors: February 2025 – He was selected as a member of the John Wesley Society of the United Methodist Church and in 2019 - Rev. Chase and Wesley UMC were recognized for Community Service by the Austin Area Urban League

After 31 years of service at Wesley UMC, he will complete his pastorate with his retirement in June 2025. His other pastorates include: St. Mark United Methodist Church – Lockhart, Texas, St. Peter's United Methodist Church – Austin, Texas, and Jacobs Chapel United Methodist Church – San Antonio, Texas.