

SPEAKER PROFILES

Keynote Speakers



Cynthia Fierro Harvey serves as bishop of the Texas Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, having been assigned there in November of 2022. The Texas Annual Conference is composed of 304 congregations and represents a region encompassing Galveston, Houston, College Station, Beaumont Texarkana, Longview, Tyler and towns in between.

Under Bishop Harvey's leadership, the Texas Annual Conference follows a mission to equip congregations to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world to the glory of God and holds a vision of vibrant, growing congregations changing lives and reshaping futures for Jesus Christ. The Conference is driven by the core values of radical hospitality, passionate worship, faith-forming relationships, risk-taking mission, extravagant generosity, connectional ministry, fervent prayer and diligent study of scripture. Bishop Harvey challenges faith

communities to look beyond themselves and to keep an eye focused on the edge where God is at work. She also has a passion for young people as they lead the church into a future filled with possibilities.

She previously served as bishop of the Louisiana Annual Conference for 10 years beginning in 2012. She served on the Board of Trustees for Centenary College, the Louisiana United Methodist Foundation, and the Louisiana Interchurch Conference as part of her episcopal assignment to Louisiana. She currently serves on The Board of Directors of Houston Methodist Hospital, Wiley College Board of Trustees, Southwestern University Board of Trustees, The Board of Directors of Lydia Patterson Institute. She also serves as the President of The General Commission of Archives and History of The United Methodist Church. Previously she served as the President of the Council of Bishops 2020-2022, President-designate 2018-2020 and as the Secretary of the Council of Bishops 2014-2018.

After graduating from the University of Texas in Austin in 1980, Bishop Harvey spent 12 years in the corporate world as a regional director of marketing for The Rouse Company, a shopping center developer with properties throughout the United States. She focused on properties in Texas, Colorado, Arkansas, and Louisiana.

Harvey went on to serve as associate pastor of The Foundry United Methodist Church in Houston from 1992-1996 and as executive pastor for Memorial Drive UMC in Houston from 1996-2008. She then moved to the position of Director of Missional Excellence for the Texas Annual Conference, serving from February of 2008-May 1, 2010. Just prior to her election as a United Methodist bishop in 2012, Harvey served as Deputy General Secretary for United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). She is a graduate of Southern Methodist University, Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, where she earned a Master of Divinity and The University of Texas at Austin, where she earned her undergraduate degree in Journalism.

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey was born on May 5, 1959, in Big Spring, Texas. She and her husband, Dean Alan Harvey, were married in 1981. Dean is a financial advisor and owns his own firm. Their daughter Elizabeth Grace Harvey is a design specialist and makes her home in Dallas. Dean and Cynthia love good food. They love to cook but can also give you recommendations for the best restaurants from Houston to Baton Rouge, and wherever their travels have taken them. Dean is an excellent chef while Cynthia is at his side as his sous chef (aka clean-up duty!)



Amanda Tyler is executive director of BJC (Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty), leading the organization as it upholds the historic Baptist principle of religious liberty: defending the free exercise of religion and protecting against its establishment by government. She is the lead organizer of BJC’s Christians Against Christian Nationalism campaign and co-host of BJC’s Respecting Religion podcast.

Tyler is the author of ***How to End Christian Nationalism***, published by Broadleaf Books on October 22, 2024. Tyler’s constitutional law analysis and advocacy for faith freedom for all have been featured by major news outlets, including The New York Times, The Washington Post, CBS

News, ABC News, CNN, and MSNBC. Religion News Service named Tyler one of “2022’s rising stars in religion,” and she regularly preaches in churches, speaks at denominational gatherings, and leads sessions on college campuses and with community groups of all sizes.

A member of the Texas and U.S. Supreme Court Bar, Tyler has experience working in Congress, in a private legal practice, and serving as a law clerk for a federal judge. She testified before Congress in 2023 on the threats of Christian nationalism to religious liberty, and her 2022 testimony before Congress discussed the ways Christian nationalism proves cover for white supremacy. In 2018, she appeared before a U.S. Senate Committee to testify about threats to religious liberty around the world.

Originally from Austin, Texas, Tyler grew up hearing about the cherished Baptist principles of religious liberty and the separation of church and state as a member of Highland Park Baptist Church. Tyler graduated from the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University with a bachelor’s degree in foreign service, magna cum laude. She was hired by BJC to serve as assistant to the general counsel, working closely with Brent Walker, James Dunn, Melissa Rogers and Holly Hollman. During this time, she wrote columns for Report from the Capital, drafted statements on religious liberty issues, presented educational programs, and coordinated the broad coalition in support of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act.

Tyler left BJC to enroll in The University of Texas School of Law, where she received her J.D. with honors. In 2019, the school named her their “Outstanding Young Alumna.” Following law school, Tyler worked in private practice and served as a law clerk for a U.S. district court judge in Dallas, Texas. She later joined the staff of U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett in Austin and Washington, D.C.

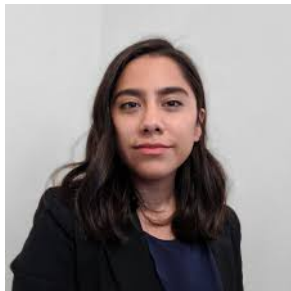
She lives in Dallas with her husband, Robert Behrendt, and their son. You can follow her on BlueSky @amandatylerbjc.bsky.social and on X @AmandaTylerBJC.



Charles E. L. Brown, MD, MBA, FACOG, is the Legislative Chair of District XI of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). He is a 1980 graduate of the Tulane University School of Medicine. He completed his internship and residency training in obstetrics and gynecology (OB/GYN) at the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) in Galveston in 1984. He followed that training with a Fellowship in Maternal-Fetal Medicine (1984-1986) in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at UT Southwestern.

In 1986, Dr. Brown joined the UT Southwestern OB/GYN Department's Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine (MFM). While at UT Southwestern, he completed a Masters of Business Administration at the University of Texas Graduate School of Business (1991-1993). In 1994, he moved to Austin to become Medical Director of Perinatology at Seton/ Ascension Medical Center and Brackenridge Hospital. From 1999-2005 he was the Program Director for the Austin Medical Education Programs' Fellowship in Obstetrics for Family Medicine physicians. In 2004, he became the Program Director for UTMB's OB/GYN residency program in Austin. He was on the Board of Directors and served as Chief of Obstetrics at the Austin Women's Hospital, a teaching facility for the UTMB residency program. In 2016, Dr. Brown returned to UT Southwestern and served as the Associate Program Director of the MFM Fellowship Program until April of 2022. He is currently a Clinical Professor in the Department of Medical Education at Texas A&M School of Medicine.

Plenary Speakers



Giovanna Oaxaca is Program Director for Migration Policy in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Her background in politics, government and economics, and her linguistic proficiency in both English and Spanish, empower her to apply an intersectional lens to her advocacy. She works on dispelling myths surrounding migration, pushing back on restrictions that negatively impact migrating people, and building networks for community-based action. She joined the ELCA in 2020, and in addition to working for the advocacy staff, she leads advocacy for the ELCA AMMPARO strategy (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and

Opportunities). She is a self-proclaimed foodie who enjoys not just trying new foods but re-creating them herself.



Beaman Floyd is a consultant and lobbyist with more than 30 years of experience in public affairs. He owns his own lobby firm, and has worked on behalf of a variety of clients, among them property and casualty insurance companies and trade associations, public education associations, parents' rights groups, local government subdivisions, higher education groups, and religious groups. His activities include legislative strategy and direct lobbying, media relations, grass roots strategy, and academic research.

Mr. Floyd has been highly involved in several major policy issues in Texas, including property and casualty insurance reform, catastrophe policy, workers' compensation reform, healthcare, public school finance, and higher education policy. He frequently represents clients in both the print and electronic media, both in Texas and nationally. He is also a regular guest lecturer to college

faculty groups, in college classrooms, policy forums, and other political and educational settings.

Mr. Floyd works with several organizations to advance the understanding of public affairs advocacy, and is currently working with international officials in emerging democracies to establish ethical lobbying practices. He is a Charter Member of the Professional Advocacy Association of Texas.

Workshop Speakers



Amanda Brownson is Deputy Executive Director of the Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO.) She has worked in public education for more than years and in Texas school finance for more than 15 years.

She served as the director of State Funding at TEA, where she oversaw the distribution of the state's nearly \$20 billion Foundation School Program. Prior to that, she worked as a consultant at Moak, Casey & Associates, where she assisted school districts with revenue projection, conducted research, and provided legislative support. Amanda holds a

Ph.D. in Education Policy and Planning.



Luis Figueroa joined Every Texan in 2018 as the first Legislative and Policy Director. In his important new role as Chief of Legislative Affairs, Luis oversees Every Texan's comprehensive legislative strategy. He was previously General Counsel for Texas State Senator José Rodríguez and Executive Director of the Texas Senate Hispanic Caucus. Previously, he served as the Legislative Attorney for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), where he worked from 2004 to 2013. A proud Texan from El Paso, Luis received the 2013 MALDEF Award for services performed on behalf of the Latino community in pursuit of social justice, the 2011 Champion of

Equality and Justice Award from LULAC, and the 2009 Spirit of Change Award by State Rep. Joaquin Castro, among other honors. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Speech Communications with a concentration in American Politics and Law from Trinity University in San Antonio, and his Juris Doctorate from the University Of Texas School Of Law. He is licensed to practice law in the State of Texas.



Diana Forester joined Texans Care for Children as the Director of Health Policy in 2022. In that role, she spearheads our work with the Texas Legislature, state agencies, and stakeholders to support health equity, improve access to health care for moms and kids, and more. Diana is frequently quoted in the media on maternal health care policy, the health insurance implications of the Public Health Emergency, children's health coverage, and more.

Before joining Texans Care for Children, Diana spent over a decade with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), worked for Chair Lois Kolkhorst on the Texas House Public Health

Committee in 2013, served as a case manager at Foundation Communities, and worked in the legislative war room at AT&T headquarters.

During her time as HHSC, Diana served in a number of senior roles. Most recently, as a Maternal Health Research Analyst, she was the maternal health lead for Medicaid quality initiatives. In previous positions at HHSC, Diana worked on ACA implementation projects, monitored the Medicaid and CHIP state plan amendments that deal with eligibility, and oversaw the Forms process for all of Access & Eligibility Services, among other responsibilities.

Diana has a Masters of Public Health from the Texas A&M University School of Rural Public Health and a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from the University of Texas at Austin.

Diana loves registering people to vote, paddle boarding, and taking her pop-up trailer to state and national parks with her husband and two young kids.

Texas Impact Staff



Bee Moorhead has been Executive Director of Texas Impact and its sister organization, the Texas Impact Foundation, since 2000. Under Bee's leadership, Texas Impact and the Texas Impact Foundation are among the most respected interfaith networks in the country. Bee's policy expertise includes a wide range of issues including health and human services, climate, migration, public budgets, and civic engagement. She has served on numerous state agency working groups and task forces on topics ranging from nursing homes to hurricane response. She is a credentialed observer to the United Nations climate policy negotiations process.

Bee holds a Bachelor of Arts in Costume Design from the University of Texas at Austin, and a Master of Public Affairs from the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. She is an adjunct faculty member at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary where she co-leads a senior-level course in Faith and Public Policy. She is a sought-after lecturer and presenter at conferences, religious gatherings, and in a variety of educational settings. Her writing has appeared in major Texas newspapers and denominational publications. Bee is married to Robert Moorhead, a longtime staff member for the PBS series *Austin City Limits*, the longest-running music program in television history. The Moorheads have three grown children and one grandchild.



Scott Atnip rejoined the Texas Impact staff as Director of Public Witness in 2012 after a stint as a Texas Impact intern in 2002-2003. Scott connects Texans of faith with opportunities to engage in the policy process through Texas Impact programs like *Weekly Witness*, *Rapid Response*, *Legislative Engagement Groups* and *Faith in Democracy*. He received his B.A. in Political Science from Sam Houston State University and an M.A. of Public Affairs from the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas and is a Certified Lay Servant in the United Methodist Church. In his free time, Scott coaches his daughter and son's youth soccer teams.



Becca Edwards joins Texas Impact after completing a Masters in Divinity at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. She is chair of the Mercy and Justice committee at First United Methodist Church of Austin. Rev. Dr. Edwards was commissioned as a Provisional Deacon in the Capital District of the Rio Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Becca earned a PhD in Wind Science and Engineering at Texas Tech University in 2009. Her research led her to set up wind instruments ahead of landfalling hurricanes along the Gulf coast. She served as a visiting assistant professor of physics at Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas for ten years, teaching climate science, earth science, and engineering courses and conducting research in the areas of hydroclimate extremes and air quality. Her current interests include liberation theology, climate justice, hydroclimate extremes, interfaith understanding, and worship. Becca lives in Round Rock with her husband and four children and is always searching for the best day hike/taco combo in Austin. So far it's hard to beat the Taco Deli at the Spyglass trailhead of the Barton Creek Greenbelt.



Bobby Watson graduated Cum Laude from Trinity University class of 2021 with a B.A. in Political Science and minors in Spanish and Russian.

Bobby has more than 6 years of non-profit experience. He has been with Texas Impact for nearly 3 years first as a Human Rights Fellow and later as a full-time Policy Advocate. With Texas Impact, Bobby works as a policy analyst focusing on violence prevention, immigration, and climate change. Bobby also manages the Texas Impact project, *Vidas Robadas*, a gun violence prevention campaign that addresses the various aspects of gun violence through memorial installations and community mobilization.



Kyle Riley is a graduate of the University of Texas with a B.A. in History. Kyle completed his Master of Divinity at Iliff School of Theology in Denver and will officially graduate in May. He will be ordained in the United Church of Christ in February. Kyle works for Texas Impact as a Public Witness Mobilizer, where he advocates for reproductive health care and LGBTQ+ rights across Texas. Kyle frequently preaches at congregations of varying denominations across the state. He lives in Houston, Texas with his fiancée Scout and their two dogs. When he is not working or in school, Kyle loves to take up new hobbies like woodworking, puzzling, crochet, and reading.



Grace Bonilla is an alumna of Southwestern University and a recent graduate of UT Austin's Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies, where she earned a Masters of Latin American Studies with a focus on the Texas Chicano Movement. Specializing in Latino populations, Grace has experience working with Austin nonprofits such as the St. David's Foundation and United Way of Greater Austin. She is excited to be a part of the Texas Impact team and work to facilitate meaningful connections between the members and the faith community.



Kat Karbach joined Texas Impact in October 2022, as the Membership Manager. She brings with her 10 years of experience engaging the community, working with major donors, coordinating volunteers, and planning fundraising events. As Membership Manager, Kat equips and mobilizes Texas Impact members, both individuals and organizations, to live their faith in the public square.

Kat holds a B.S in Psychology from Virginia Tech – Go HOKIES. In her free time, Kat enjoys reading and exploring the food and music scene in Austin.



Rebecca McIlwain serves as manager of Texas Impact’s project Houston Faith Votes. For over a decade, Rebecca served in parish ministry in the Ft. Worth and San Angelo Dioceses, focusing on social justice initiatives, adult and youth religious education, and campus ministry. Then, she turned to community organizing where she worked with congregations and schools across West Texas and later Austin to engage members in nonpartisan civic engagement. She holds a B.S. in Secondary Education – history and political science teaching certification, and an M.A. in Christian Community Development from Regis University in Denver, CO.

After raising her three children, Rebecca relocated to Northern California, where she lived and worked at the Zen Monastery Retreat Center. There, she facilitated retreats and provided individual and group coaching on such topics as Mindful Citizenship, Compassionate Parenting, and Joyful Eating. Rebecca loves vegetarian cooking and took on the task of revising and compiling the latest edition of The Zen Monastery Cookbook. She loves being outdoors, preferably playing with her two grandkids or volunteering with the Gulf Coast Master Naturalists, of which she is a member.



David Vassallo joined Texas Impact full time in January 2022 after having worked alongside the team during live events for years. David heads up digital communications including, but not limited to, Texas Impact’s social media pages and YouTube channels. Prior to working with Texas Impact, David managed live event production for several companies in and around the Austin area. Now he brings his production prowess and passion for policy to the table in service of expanding the reach of Texas Impact’s works.

David is a long-time Austin resident and father of three. Both he and his wife, Colleen, are active in their community and participate in organizing for social justice and mutual aid. David is a musician and producer with a deep passion for experimental composition and synthesizers.

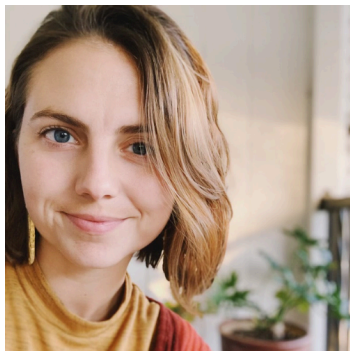


Heather Malkawi joined Texas Impact in 2021, as a seminary intern, then served a year as the Unitarian Universalist Justice Fellow focusing on LGBTQIA2S+, Immigration, and Health & Human Service issues. She served as the liaison between Texas Impact and member organization Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry. She brings over 20+ years in the non-profit social work and insurance industries.

Heather is a graduate of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary (2024) with a Master of Divinity (MDiv), and her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Michigan (2002). She received the Charles L. King Preaching Award & The Ethel W. Lance Human and Civil Rights Award. Heather is a candidate for fellowshiping with

the Unitarian Universalist Association and a Live Oak Unitarian Universalist church member in Cedar Park, TX.

Her current interests include interfaith understanding of religious trauma and its effects on individual spirituality, theatre, and large choral works of music. Heather was raised in Flint, Michigan (yes that one). She has lived in Chicago and now Austin, Texas, with her two teenage boys.



Katie Wang rejoined the Texas Impact staff in 2023 as Community Mobilization Manager in Greater Houston after a stint as an Associate Policy Analyst at Texas Impact in 2015-2016. Katie mobilizes and equips communities of faith in the Greater Houston region to engage with critical state-level policy issues, helping to build knowledge and advocacy skills through policy-focused programming.

Prior to her role at Texas Impact, Katie was the Associate Director of Community Engagement at Rice University's Kinder Institute for Urban Research where she managed community engagement efforts through a partnership based experiential learning program,

a public-facing neighborhood-level data program, and other special projects.

Katie earned Bachelors of Arts in Latin American Studies and Plan II Honors from the University of Texas at Austin and a Master of Public Affairs from the Lyndon Baines Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin.



Daniel Castillo is a Communications Consultant with Texas Impact. Daniel graduated from Bowling Green State University in Ohio where he completed a Bachelor's degree in Media Studies and graphic design. He is a newer staff member to the Texas Impact team and is passionate about design, infographics, and media production. His goal within Texas Impact is using design and media to align our communication with our organization's mission.

Daniel spent 10 years at Texas Department of State Health Services as a data analyst and financial planner within the Laboratory & Infectious Disease Services division.



The Rev. Keats Miles-Wallace is a graduate of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary (M.Div, 2018) in Berkeley, California and Texas Lutheran University (B.B.A., 2014) in Seguin, Texas. They serve as Pastor with Technicolor Ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), a ministry centering the experience and faith of LGBTQIA2S+ people and those who love them. They are also co-founder of Realize, LLC, advocating for the maximal use of real estate as a ministry.

Keats is an accomplished speaker, teacher, theologian, and ghost writer, having spoken as a mainstage speaker at the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering, written for the Bishop of the Southwestern Texas Synod (ELCA) among others, and having contributed to Texas Impact publications and legislative testimony during the 2023 Texas Legislative Session. Keats has also served as a judicatory liaison between the Texas Impact Board and the Southwestern Texas Synod as well as many other odd jobs that have resulted in a “jack of all trades” skillset. Keats is a Marvel movie but DC comics fan, a descendant of the Coahuiltecan Nation, and a devoted spouse.



Boomie Ludwick is an intern with Texas Impact. She is a recent graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, where she received her Bachelor’s in Government. She possesses a special interest in the evolution of American social movements and their impact on the government, and the history of American populism and political machines. As a transgender woman, Boomie’s personal life and struggles have been inextricably tied to the waves of anti-trans legislation that have taken hold of both within the State of Texas and the United States as a whole. Boomie joined Texas Impact in December 2024 as an intern, and has worked behind the scenes to

facilitate engagement with its membership and to ensure Texas Impact has the resources it needs to meet its many challenges ahead.

When not engaging with politics, Boomie enjoys playing strategy games, going on runs, and honing her musical skills. She loves spending time with friends, interacting with animals, and learning about the history of American political movements.