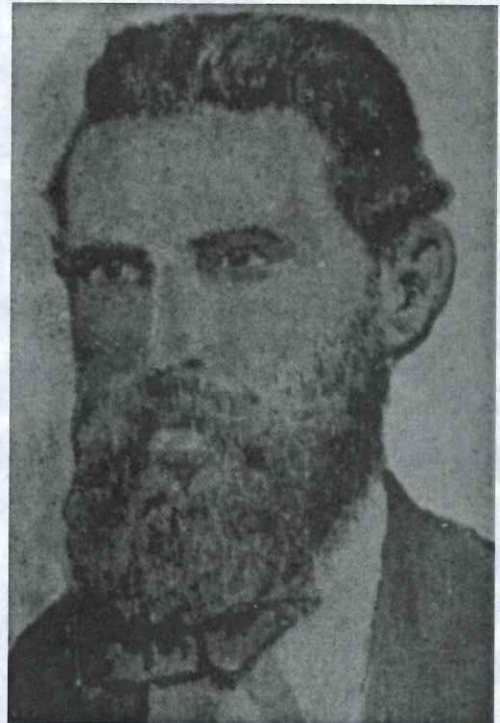


135<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
Celebration  
*of the*  
Ordination  
*of*  
Alejo Hernandez



**IN MEMORIAM**

**Rev. Alejo Hernández**

**At the 13th Session of the West Texas Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church South, held at Leesburg, TX, Alejo Hernández was ordained Deacon by Bishop Enoch Marvin on December 24, 1871. He was the first person of Mexican descent ordained by the Methodists.**

**His first appointment was to the Mexican Mission in Corpus Christi. Rev. John Wesley DeVilbiss was the presiding Elder.**

**In 1873, with Bishop John C. Keener, Alejo organized the first Methodist congregation in Mexico City. He is father to Methodism in Texas and Mexico.**

**On the night of September 27, 1875 he died in Corpus Christi and is buried there. Bishop Keener said of Alejo: "How full must have been the flood of the holy passion in the soul of this young man to diffuse itself throughout our church in such a short time."**

**Marker dedicated on December 16, 2006  
by the people of the Río Grande and Southwest Texas Conferences  
Bishop Joel N. Martinez, Resident Bishop  
San Antonio Episcopal Area  
The United Methodist Church**

Saturday, December 16, 2006  
Leesville, TX



**Celebration of Ordination of**

**Rev. Alejo Hernández**

## WHY WE CELEBRATE TODAY

Dr. Alfredo Náñez, one of the most distinguished pastors of the Río Grande Conference, delivered several lectures during the 1971 Annual Conference in Corpus Christi. It was the centennial year of Rev. Alejo Hernández's Ordination. A number of those present today were privileged to be present on that occasion.

Dr. Náñez begins his lectures with the question: Why have we come to this place? He answers the question with four responses:

1. We are gathered to remember and give thanks for our spiritual heritage and for those who bequeathed it to us.
2. Secondly, we gather to celebrate.
3. Thirdly, we gather to exercise our faith.
4. Finally, we have come to this place to offer ourselves unconditionally and totally to our Lord.

We could not improve on Dr. Náñez's reasons for our gathering in this place 135 years after Alejo Hernández's ordination.

This is holy, consecrated ground. It is the site of a new beginning in the church's mission. It is where a young man unconditionally and fully offered his life to the service of Christ. Here the church voted, the bishop laid hands and the Holy Spirit ordained Alejo into itinerant service in God's universal church through the Methodist Episcopal Church South.

I invite you to remember and give thanks; to sing with joy and pray with open hearts. Finally, give yourself anew to the service of God in Jesus Christ.

Alejo Hernández wrote about his experience of the Spirit during a service in a small church in Brownsville:

*I was seated where I could see the congregation but few could see me.  
I felt that God's Spirit was there. Although I could not understand a  
word that was being said, I felt my heart strangely warmed. Never did  
I hear an organ play so sweetly, never did human voices sound so  
lovely to me, never did people look so beautiful as on that occasion.  
I went away weeping for joy.*

May we leave here today "weeping for joy" at the mighty work of grace in Alejo and in us!

Bishop Joel N. Martínez  
for the Planning Committee

## CELEBRACIÓN DE ORDENACIÓN

In Remembrance and Thanksgiving of the 135<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
of the Ordination of  
**Rev. Alejo Hernández**  
1871 – 2006

December 16, 2006

Leesville, Texas

1:30 P.M.

### ORDER OF WORSHIP

GATHERING MUSIC

Mrs. Raquel M. Martínez

GREETING / SALUDO

Bishop Joel N. Martínez

HIMNO *Cantemos al Creador / Creator God, We Sing*

Mr. Rudy Herrera, Song Leader

ORACION / PRAYER

Rev. Terrence Hayes

God of grace and God of glory, we rejoice today in your presence and praise your Name. Our hearts are full of thanksgiving for your call to serve in Jesus Christ.

Renew in us the gracious call you made to your servant, Rev. Alejo Hernández. We are blessed by the remembrance of your faithfulness in his journey of Ordained Ministry.

Grant us the courage to follow where you lead, and be torchbearers of your eternal light until the fullness of your Shalom comes among us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, we pray. Amen.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON

*Isaiah 6:1-8*

Mrs. Alma Navarro  
Walter Rosales

RESPONSE

Aleluya, Aleluya! ¡Cantemos al Creador: Aleluya!

GOSPEL LESSON

*Matthew 5: 14-16*

Rev. Gloria Salazar  
Mr. Jay Brim

GREETINGS FROM THE UNITED METHODIST CONNECTION

GREETING FROM THE METHODIST CHURCH OF MEXICO Obispo Raul García de Ochoa

READINGS FROM THE MINUTES, 1871 SESSION, W. TX CONF.

Rev. Oscar F. Garza

CANTO

*En una víspera navideña / On Christmas Eve*

REFLEXIÓN / REFLECTION

Dr. Paul Barton

LETANÍA DE CONMEMORACIÓN / REMEMBRANCE

Dr. Roberto L. Gomez  
Mr. James Heredia

Alabamos al Dios de todas las generaciones por su fidelidad y amor para con su pueblo.

**¡El nombre de Dios sea alabado!**

From among God's people, God called Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Miriam, the judges and the prophets, and Mary and Joseph to be his servants.

**The name of the Lord be praised!**

Dios envió a su Hijo Jesucristo para revelar su amor y salvar a su pueblo del pecado y de la muerte.

**¡El nombre de Dios sea alabado!**

Today we rejoice that God called his servant, Alejo Hernández, to be a torch bearer of the gospel in the midst of spiritual darkness.

**The name of the Lord be praised!**

Alabamos a Dios por su siervo Alejo que se ofreció incondicionalmente al servicio de Jesucristo.

**¡El nombre de Dios sea alabado!**

May God renew in us the evangelistic passion that Alejo experienced on that Christmas eve of 1871 as he was ordained a deacon in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

**The name of the Lord be praised!**

Que Dios, mediante su Espíritu Santo, toque nuestros corazones y transforme nuestras vidas en antorchas vivas que brillen con la luz verdadera de Jesucristo.

**¡El nombre de Dios sea alabado!**

HIMNO / HYMN

*Heme aquí / Here I am, Lord*

CLOSING PRAYER

### Cantemos al Creador / Creator God, We Sing

Cantemos al Creador un himno de alegría,  
de agradecido amor al nacer el nuevo día  
pues hizo el cielo, el mar, el sol y las estrellas,  
y en ellos vio bondad, pues sus obras eran bellas.  
¡Aleluya, Aleluya! ¡Cantemos al Creador: Aleluya!

Cantemos al Creador un himno de alabanza  
que exprese admiración, maravilla y esperanza,  
pues toda la creación pregona su grandeza:  
así nuestro cantar va anunciando su belleza.  
¡Aleluya, Aleluya! ¡Cantemos al Creador: Aleluya!

*Creator God, we sing, a hymn of joy we're making;  
our grateful love we bring, as the new day's light is breaking.  
God made the sea and land; the sun the stars came rolling  
from God's own loving hand, their Creator's love extolling.  
Alleluia, Alleluia! Creator God we sing: Alleluia!*

*Creator God, we sing, your power and wisdom blessing;  
our hope and wonder bring, admiration now expressing.  
The universe maintains that God in might is dwelling;  
and we, in humble strains, of God's beauty here are telling.  
Alleluia, Alleluia! Creator God we sing: Alleluia!*

Carlos Rosas, 1976, alt. Transl. Dimas Planas-Belfort, alt.

### Heme aquí / Here I Am, Lord

Yo, el Dios del cielo y mar oigo a mi pueblo clamar.  
Del pecado y del mal, les salvaré.  
Yo, Creador de luna y sol, Dios de vida y resplandor.  
¿Quién mi antorcha llevará? Oh, ¿quién irá?

#### *Coro*

Heme aquí, Dios, ¿Tú me llamas? En la noche escuché tu voz.  
Con tu guía y tu apoyo sostendré a tu pueblo con amor.

Yo, Creador de lluvia y flor, por mi pueblo en su aflicción  
He llorado su amargor. Lejos están.  
La dureza de su ser, en amor convertiré.  
Mi Palabra lo hará. Oh, ¿quién irá?

*I, The Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin, my hand will save.  
I who made the stars of night, I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send*

*Refrain*

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.*

*I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my people's pain.  
I have wept for love of them. They turn away.  
I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love alone.  
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?*

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**Representing our United Methodist Connection**

Council of Bishops – Bishop Janice R. Huie, President (letter)  
South Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops – Bishop Robert Schnase, President  
General Commission on Archives & History – Dr. Robert Williams, General Secretary  
General Board of Global Ministries – Rev. Edgar Avitia  
General Commission on Religion and Race – Rev. Eliezer Valentín Castañón  
General Council on Finance & Administration – Mr. Byrd Bonner  
General Board of Higher Education & Ministries – Rev. Saul Espino  
MARCHA – Mr. Oscar O. Garza IV  
Perkins School of Theology – Rev. Jeannie Treviño Teddlie  
Southwestern University – Mr. Aaron Rohre, Chaplain Intern  
Texas Conference Commission on Archives & History – William C. Hardt, Chairperson  
Texas Tejano – Mr. Rudi Rodriguez, President

# En una víspera navideña

en la ocasión del  
Centésimo Trigésimo Quinto Aniversario  
de la Ordenación de Alejo Hernández



1. En u - na vís - pe - ra na - vi - de - ña en sue - lo san - to de es - te lu -  
2. Luz del pe - se - bre es - plen - do - ro - sa, a - ún bri - llan - do en nues - tro



gar, A - le - jo Her - nán - dez fue or - de - na - do, co - mo o - fren - da so - bre el al -  
ser; con re - go - ci - jo te da - mos gra - cias por el le - ga - do de nues - tra



tar. La mis - ma luz que bri - lló en pe - se - bre, so - bre el sier - vo res - plan - de -  
fe. Dios de los pue - blos, Dios de la his - to - ria, tu luz de - be - mos de o - fre -



ció; y cual an - tor - cha trans - for - ma - do - ra el E - van - ge - lio se es - par - ció.  
cer; nues - tra an - tor - cha en al - to bri - lle has - ta el E - ter - no A - ma - ne - cer.



Oh, Luz di - vi - na, Fue - go e - ter - nal, nos o - fre - ce - mos so - bre tu al -  
Light from the man - ger, bright shin - ing Star, be - gin dis - pel - ling the gloom of



tar. Nues - tras an - tor - chas en - cien - de hoy, pa - ra tu luz al mun - do lle - var.  
night. O, Flam - ing Spir - it, your Church in - spire, and let our torch - es car - ry your light.



## DEDICATION OF MEMORIAL MARKER

### Declaration

Bishop Joel N. Martínez

Today, the 16<sup>th</sup> of December in the year of our Lord 2006, we gather as people of the Wesleyan Heritage to remember the Ordination of Rev. Alejo Hernández as a deacon in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.

This year, the 135<sup>th</sup> since Alejo Hernández's ordination at the 13<sup>th</sup> session of the West Texas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, on December 24, 1871, we return to Leesville at the very site where the Leesburg Methodist Church hosted the 1871 Annual Conference.

In memory and with thanksgiving for the life and ministry of the Rev. Alejo Hernández, we present this memorial marker to be dedicated to the glory of God. This marker will remind us, and future generations, of the beginnings of the Methodist witness among the Mexican and Mexican-American communities of Texas, as well as Mexico, through the preaching and teaching of the gospel in the Spanish language.

### Scripture Reading

I Samuel 16: 1, 7, 10-13

### Act of Dedication

Dear servants in Christ, let us dedicate this marker to the glory of God, who has called us by grace; to the honor of Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave himself for us; to the praise of the Holy Spirit, who illumines and sanctifies us;  
**We dedicate this memorial marker.**

Para recordar la fidelidad del siervo de Dios, Alejo Hernández, al ofrecerse para el ministerio ordenado,  
**Dedicamos esta placa memorial.**

In recognition of our common ministry in Jesus Christ to all of God's people in Mexico and the United States,  
**We dedicate this memorial marker.**

En la esperanza de que Dios enviará nuevos obreros y obreras a su mies para Seguir en los senderos que el Rev. Alejo Hernández trazó,  
**Dedicamos esta placa memorial.**

### Uncion con Aceite / Anointing with Oil

**Al dedicar este memorial, nos dedicamos de nuevo a su servicio en El nombre del Padre, del Hijo y del Espíritu Santo. Amén.**

## Gloria Patri

Gloria demos al Padre, al Hijo y al Santo Espíritu.  
Como era al principio, es hoy y habrá de ser eternamente. Amén.

## Prayer

## Sending Forth

\*\*\*\*\*

Otros obispos participando en el Acto de Dedicación:

Obispo Raul García de Ochoa

Bishop Robert Schnase

Rev. Joel Mora P. (anteriormente Obispo de la Iglesia Metodista de Mexico)

## RECOGNITIONS

### The Planning Committee

Bishop Joel N. Martínez, Chair  
Mrs. Raquel M. Martínez  
Rev. Oscar F. Garza  
Mrs. Minerva N. Garza  
Dr. Paul Barton  
Mr. Abel Vega

### In Deep Appreciation:

The Leesville Cemetery Association for their gracious hospitality and support of this historic gathering. Special thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Donald Lott for their time and energy in working with the Planning Committee

Additional thanks to:

Mr. Louie Gorena - video and photography  
Mr. Eddie Trejo - sound equipment and engineer  
Mrs. Raquel M. Martínez - Celebration song  
Refreshments - Leesville Cemetery Association  
Mailings - Mrs. Suzanne Delamain, Mrs. Evelí Rodríguez  
Printing - Terry Schoenert, Southwest Texas Conference Copy Center  
Installation of Historical Marker - Mr. Abel Vega

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OF GIFTS

The following made financial gifts to enable the Celebration:

Dr. Paul Barton  
Dr. Roy and Mrs. Rosa Marina Barton  
Rev. Oscar F. and Mrs. Minerva Garza  
Mr. Trinidad and Mrs. Benilde Garza  
Rev. Eutimio and Mrs. Gloria Gonzalez  
Rev. Richard and Mrs. Elsa Leggett  
Rev. Jo Ann Leifeste  
Bishop Joel and Mrs. Raquel M. Martínez  
Rio Grande Annual Conference  
Rev. Conrado and Rev. Ana Soltero  
Mr. Luis and Mrs. Minerva Soto  
Southwest Texas Annual Conference  
Mrs. Margie Trafton  
Bishop Janice R. Huie

## STATEMENT ON MEMORIAL MARKER

### IN MEMORIAM

Rev. Alejo Hernández

At the 13<sup>th</sup> Session of the West Texas Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church South, held at Leesburg, TX, Alejo Hernández was ordained Deacon by Bishop Enoch Marvin on December 24, 1871. He was the first person of Mexican descent ordained by the Methodists.

His first appointment was to the Mexican Mission in Laredo. Rev. John Wesley DeVilbiss was the presiding Elder.

In 1873, with Bishop John C. Keener, Alejo organized the first Methodist congregation in Mexico City. He is the father to Methodism in Texas and Mexico.

On the night of September 27, 1875 he died in Corpus Christi and is buried there. Bishop Keener said of Alejo: "How full must have been the flood of the holy passion in the soul of this young man to diffuse itself throughout our

Marker dedicated on December 16, 2006

by the people of the Río Grande and Southwest Texas Conferences.

Bishop Joel N. Martínez, Resident Bishop

San Antonio Episcopal Area

The United Methodist Church

**NOTES FROM THE MINUTES OF THE 13<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE WEST TEXAS  
CONFERENCE, METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH, BISHOP E. M.  
MARVIN, PRESIDING. LEESBURG, TEXAS**

First Day of the Conference, Wednesday, December 20, 1871

"QUES.-ADMISSIONS-Who are admitted on trial?"

Alejo Hernandez is listed with five others. They "were presented, and after consideration they were admitted."

Second Day of the Conference, Thursday, December 21

"QUES 10--What Local Preachers are elected Deacons?"

"HERNANDEZ--The bishop announced to the Conference that he had selected Alejo Hernandez for the Missionary work among the Mexicans; whereupon, in view of the necessities of the work he was elected to Deacon's orders."

Fourth Day of the Conference, Saturday, December 23

"BIBLE CAUSE--The committee on Sunday Schools made their report which was adopted as (C) follows:--

"See Sp. Doc. D. A resolution, requesting of the American Bible Society, grant of Sunday School Bibles & Testaments in the Spanish language, for the use of the mission under the pastoral charge of Alejo Hernandez, was read and adopted."

Fourth Day of the Conference, Sunday, December 24

"ORDINATION OF DEACONS AND ELDERS--After the services on Sabbath morning and afternoon the following persons were ordained:--

"Deacons: Jno. B. Denton; Mark A. Black; P. P. Jones, and Alejo Hernandez."

"Elders: Marshall G. Jenkins and James E. Nernor."

Fifth Day of the Conference, Monday, December 25

"Fifth Day--Monday Decr. 25, 9 O'clock A. M."

"FAST DAYS--The 1st Friday in April next was appointed by the Conference, as a day of fasting and prayer for the success of the Mexican Mission of which our Brother Alejo Hernandez is pastor." p. 118

Appointments for the year following this session of the annual conference:

"QUES. 31--Where are the preachers stationed this year?" p. 119

Alejo Hernandez is listed in the appointments under the Corpus Christi District, under the appointment of "Mexican Mission."

### Alejo Hernández: A Life of Journeying

Alejo Hernández' life was filled with journeys, both physical and spiritual. In his journeys, he crossed the Mexico-U.S. border many times, crossings which evinced his spiritual journeys. Born into a wealthy family in Aguas Calientes, Mexico, on July 17, 1842, Alejo Hernandez was sent by his parents to school in preparation for the Roman Catholic priesthood. During his first year of studies in college in Aguas Calientes, he rejected his faith and decided against the priesthood. That same year, 1862, the French had invaded Mexico. Without informing his family, he left college to join the Mexican forces in their effort to repel Maximilian and his French army.

After being taken prisoner by the French military, and after much adversity, Hernandez rejoined the Mexican army in northern Mexico. The army retreated to the area of Mier, Tamaulipas, where Hernandez found a book that would lead him in a new journey of faith. The book, *Noches con los Romanistas* (Evenings with the Romanists), by the Reverend M. Hobart Seymour, translated by Reverend H. B. Pratt, and published by the American Tract Society had most likely been left there by U.S. soldiers when the U.S. army had entered northern Mexico under General Zachary Taylor in 1846. Hernández first expected it would confirm his atheistic and anti-Catholic views. However, with its anti-Catholic rhetoric and frequent scriptural references, the book made him curious about biblically-based Protestant claims. His interest piqued, Hernández crossed the Rio Grande at Camargo, Mexico, near present-day Rio Grande City, in search of a Spanish-language Bible. After he found a Spanish-language Bible and read it, he yearned to learn more about the Protestant faith. A few weeks after reading the Bible for the first time, he arrived at Brownsville, Texas, and entered into a small chapel where a Protestant worship service was underway. Although the worship was in English, the Spanish-speaking Hernández was able to intuit the spirit of the gathering. Reflecting on that conversion experience, he observed:

I was seated where I could see the congregation but few could see me. I felt that God's Spirit was there, although I could not understand a word that was being said, I felt my heart strangely warmed... Never did I hear an organ play so sweetly, never did human voices sound so lovely to me, never did people look so beautiful as on that occasion. I went away weeping for joy.

Shortly after this spiritual awakening, Hernández decided to testify about this new understanding of God in Mexico. Seeing so much evangelistic zeal, a friend from the United States encouraged him to return to Texas and join the Protestant church there. With the church's support, he could then continue his evangelistic work.

Hernández made an important connection with Methodists in Corpus Christi, Texas in the summer of 1870. He met William Headon, a prominent member of First Methodist Church, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and the church's pastor, the Reverend J. W. Brown. The two were very supportive of him and his ministry; Rev. Brown even opened his home to Hernández for two months in 1871. Hernández obtained a license to preach and then spent four months preaching and teaching among the Spanish-speaking in the

Medina river area, all the while living with the Reverend John W. DeVilbiss, Presiding Elder of the Corpus Christi district. Having his ministerial vocation confirmed through various preaching missions, Hernández felt the call to ordained ministry. To this end, he accompanied his Methodist friends to the West Texas annual conference in Leesburg, Texas, December 20-25, 1871, with Bishop Enoch M. Marvin presiding.

On the first day of the gathering, Wednesday, December 20, 1871, the annual conference admitted Alejo Hernández and with five others on trial as local preachers. On the second day, the conference took the extraordinary step of electing Hernández to deacon's orders only one day after he had been admitted on trial as a local preacher. The conference minutes state: "The bishop announced to the Conference that he had selected Alejo Hernández for the Missionary work among the Mexicans; whereupon, in view of the necessities of the work he was elected to deacon's orders." To aid Hernández in his work, the conference passed a resolution on Saturday, December 23, requesting that the American Bible Society provide Hernández with Sunday School Bibles and Testaments in Spanish. The conference continued to manifest its enthusiasm for this newly ordained minister on day five of the gathering; it passed a resolution declaring that the first Friday of of April 1872 be observed "as a day of fasting and prayer for the success of the Mexican Mission of which our Brother Alejo Hernández is pastor." On the last day of the conference, the appointments for the conference were distributed. Alejo Hernández was appointed to the new Mexican Mission, located in Laredo. The bishop and the conference had provided Hernández with extraordinary attention during the conference: placing him on the fast track for deacon's ordination, requesting religious literature for his new work among the Spanish-speaking, declaring a fast day to beseech God for Hernández' success, and appointing him to the new Mexican Mission.

Hernández' time in Laredo was short. He left for Monterrey to get married and was delayed for several months, one reason being due to illness in his family and another due to revolution in that region. During that time, he worked closely with a Congregational Mission there. While still in Mexico, he was appointed by the bishop at the session of the West Texas Conference in December, 1872, to the Corpus Christi Mexican Mission.

Hernández returned to Corpus Christi in May 1873 and quickly began his ministry among the Spanish-speaking in Corpus Christi and nearby Rockport. This ministry lasted only about three weeks, as Bishop C. Keener had him reassigned to lead a new congregation in Mexico City. He travelled with Bishop Keener to Mexico City to start the Methodist mission there. While there together, Bishop Keener ordained Hernández an elder in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Mexico City on February 8, 1874. Hernández' tenure in Mexico City was short, only 18 months, because of a stroke that left him incapacitated. His stroke eventually left him paralyzed, able to move only his hands and head. Lacking the strength to continue his ministry there, he made the long journey back to Corpus Christi by stagecoach and wagon. He was detained in Matamoros for months due to lack of funds and also to be treated by a doctor. He remained there until the last few weeks of his life. He was able to return to Corpus Christi to spend the last

few weeks with his wife and two small children and friends until his death on September 27, 1875.

Even though his ministerial career was short, Alejo Hernández laid a foundation for Methodist ministry among Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. Alfredo Náñez reflects on the significance of Alejo Hernández' ministry: "The ministry of Alejo Hernández was very brief. In Texas it consisted of a few months at best and in Mexico a little over a year; yet it was of great significance because it dramatized in a very clear way both to the West Texas Conference and to the Church in general the spiritual needs of the Spanish-speaking people in Texas and the needs of the Spanish-speaking world south of the border." Additionally, Hernández' zealotry for the Gospel inspired others he met to follow in his footsteps. Hernández' evangelistic passion was recognized on his grave marker in Corpus Christi with the following: "The Rev. Alejo Hernandez, zealot buried here, was the founder of Methodist Mission Work among the Mexicans."

Upon his death, church leaders recognized the importance of Hernández' ministry; notices of his death appeared in the Nashville Christian Advocate, the New Orleans Christian Advocate, and the Texas Christian Advocate. Writing in the Texas Christian Advocate, William Headon stated, "The church should erect a monument to mark the spot where now rests the body of the first Mexican missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South." Bishop Keener, who sent Hernández to Mexico, wrote in New Orleans Christian Advocate of Hernández' desire to serve God:

I shall never forget how I was impressed on our first entrance to the conference room, three years ago. His well-knit manly frame, pleasant countenance and brilliant eye, indicated his character. Ingenious as a child, singularly [beginning of page 46] spiritual, and of unusual energy, he was ready for any enterprise in the Master's service to go alone and at an hour's notice, if need be, to the ends of the earth. His conversion had satisfied every early desire, and it only remained for him to spend his life at the feet and in the work of his gracious Saviour. He became in an instant a missionary then and for ever. How full must have been the flood of holy passion in the soul of this young man to diffuse itself, as it has, throughout our church!

These tributes to Alejo Hernández, as well as the support he received from his local church, bishops, and annual conference, demonstrate the trust and appreciation that was given to this pioneer in Methodism. His ministry entailed many travels and many hardships, all of which he faced with confidence in God's power and grace. His conversion to the Protestant faith was coupled with a call to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ. Such faith was admired by his Methodist colleagues and the among the Mexicans and Mexican-Americans who received his message. Hernández' ministry laid a foundation for future ministers, lay and ordained, who would brave the hardships of carrying the Protestant faith into Spanish-speaking communities in the U.S. Southwest and Mexico. His life serves as a shining example of a person who journeyed throughout his life, all the while responding faithfully to God's call.



Paul Barton  
December 7, 2006

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Bernard Brister. "The Rev. Alejo Hernandez, Zealot Buried Here, was the Founder of Methodist Mission Work among the Mexicans." Corpus Christi Caller Times. May 3, 1942.

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Minutes of the 13th Session of the West Texas Conference, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, held in Leesburg, Texas, beginning December 20th, 1871, Bishop Enoch M. Marvin, presiding. Official Minutes of the Southwest Texas Annual Conference. The Methodist Church. [Mathis, TX], 1943.

West Texas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. "Minutes of the West Texas Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South." held in San Antonio, TX, 20-25 October 1875.

John G. McEllhenney. "Alejo Hernandez: A Mexican Soldier Who Became a Methodist Missionary 1845-1875. Bulletin Insert. General Commission on Archives and History. No date. [http://www.gcah.org/BulletinInserts/BI\\_Hernandez.htm](http://www.gcah.org/BulletinInserts/BI_Hernandez.htm)

The following is the memorial written on an official United Methodist Church historical marker, located at the grave site of the Reverend Alejo Hernández in Corpus Christi, Texas.

In memory of the Rev.  
ALEJO HERNANDEZ  
Who was the first native  
Mexican preacher of the  
Methodist E. Church South.  
Born in Aguascalientes,  
Mexico, Jul. 17, 1842, he was  
ordained a deacon by Bishop  
Enoch M. Marvin, Dec. 1871,  
Ordained an elder by Bishop  
John C. Keener, Feb. 8 1874 in Mexico City.  
He was a burning bush  
and the first to preach the gospel among the Mexicans  
in the manner done by the Methodists.  
Restored 1971 as part of the Centennial Celebration  
of Rev. Hernandez's ordination.

Santa Biblia  
La esperanza de Mexico a la memoria del. Rdo.  
Alejo Hernández,  
quien fue el primer predicador nativo Mexicano  
de la Iglesia Metodista E. del Sur.  
Nació en el estado y ciudad  
de Aguascalientes, Mexico  
el 17 de julio de 1842,  
Ordenado diácono  
por el Obispo Enoch M. Mervin  
el 24 de diciembre de 1871  
y presbítero por  
el Obispo John C. Keener  
el 8 de febrero de 1874,  
en la ciudad de Mexico.  
Era una lumbrera  
ardiente y el precursor  
entre los mexicanos del  
evangelio como se predica  
entre los Metodistas.  
Falleció septiembre 27, 1875.  
Restaurada en 1971 con  
motivo de la celebración del centenario  
de la ordenación del Rdo. Hernández.



**COUNCIL OF BISHOPS**  
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

December 8, 2006

Dear Members and Friends of the Rio Grande Conference,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Savior whose birth we await.

I write to join you in celebrating the 135<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ordination of Alejo Hernandez in the Leesville United Methodist Church on December 16, 2006. This Celebration is a historic event, and I regret that I cannot be present with you personally.

When Bishop Enoch M. Marvin ordained Reverend Hernandez as a Deacon on Christmas Eve in 1871, he could not know the fruit that would be born by the seed planted on that day. Although Reverend Hernandez' life was brief, his appointment to the Mexican Mission in Corpus Christi was the beginning of ministry with Hispanic persons that has resulted in the evangelization of thousands of Hispanic persons, the ordination of hundreds of Hispanic pastors, the formation of the Rio Grande Conference and the election of a Hispanic bishop to officiate at this service today. We thank God for Reverend Hernandez' life and witness.

It is my prayer that what was begun with such hope and promise on that Christmas Eve so long ago, will, like Jesus' own birth, continue to transform the world to become more just, more peaceful and more like the Savior that Reverend Hernandez served.

God bless you today and every day.

Grace and peace,

Janice Riggle Huie

President, Council of Bishops

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# The 1870 Doctrines & Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South

238      ORDINATION OF DEACONS. [CH. 13.

## SECTION IX.

### THE FORM AND MANNER OF ORDAIN- ING DEACONS.

*When the day appointed by the Bishop is come, after a suitable sermon or exhortation, one of the elders shall present unto the Bishop all them that are to be ordained, and say.*

I present unto you these persons present, to be ordained deacons.

*Then their names being read aloud, the Bishop shall say unto the people:*

Brethren, if there be any of you who knoweth any impediment or crime in any of these persons presented to be ordained deacons, for the which he ought not to be admitted to that office, let him come forth in the name of God, and show what the crime or impediment is.

*If any crime or impediment be objected, the Bishop shall surcease from ordaining that person, until such time as the party accused shall be found clear of that crime.*

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*The Epistle. 1 Tim. iii. 8-13.*

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre: holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

*Then shall the Bishop examine every one of those who are to be ordained, in the presence of the people, after this manner following:*

Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon

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*Then shall be read the following Collect.*

*The Collect.*

Almighty God, who by thy divine providence hast appointed divers orders of ministers in thy Church, and didst inspire thy apostles to choose into the order of deacons thy first martyr, St. Stephen, with others: mercifully behold these thy servants, now called to the like office and administration: replenish them so with the truth of thy doctrine, and adorn them with innocency of life, that both by word and good example they may faithfully serve thee in this office, to the glory of thy name, and the edification of thy Church, through the merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and forever. *Amen.*

*Then the Bishop, or one of the elders appointed by him, shall read the Epistle.*

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you the office of the ministry in the Church of Christ, to serve God for the promoting of his glory and the edifying of his people?

*Ans.* I trust so.

*The Bishop.* Do you unfeignedly believe all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament?

*Ans.* I do believe them.

*The Bishop.* Will you diligently read or expound the same unto the people whom you shall be appointed to serve?

*Ans.* I will.

*The Bishop.* It appertaineth to the office of a deacon to assist the elder in Divine service, and especially when he ministereth the holy communion, to help him in the distribution thereof, and to read and expound the Holy Scriptures; to instruct the youth; and in the absence of the elder to baptize.

And, furthermore, it is his office to

search for the sick, poor, and impotent, that they may be visited and relieved.

Will you do this gladly and willingly?

*Ans.* I will do so, by the help of God.

*The Bishop.* Will you apply all your diligence to frame and fashion your own lives (and the lives of your families) according to the doctrine of Christ; and to make (both) yourselves, (and them,) as much as in you lieth, wholesome examples of the flock of Christ?

*Ans.* I will do so, the Lord being my helper.

*The Bishop.* Will you reverently obey them to whom the charge and government over you is committed, following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions?

*Ans.* I will endeavor so to do, the Lord being my helper.

*Then the Bishop, laying his hands severally upon the head of every one of them, shall say,*

Take thou authority to execute the office of a deacon in the Church of God; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

*Then shall the Bishop deliver to every one of them the Holy Bible, saying,*

Take thou authority to read the Holy Scriptures in the Church of God, and to preach the same.

*Then one of them appointed by the Bishop shall read the Gospel.*

*The Gospel.* Luke xii. 35-38.

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself and make them to

sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

*Immediately before the benediction shall be said these Collects following:*

Almighty God, giver of all good things, who of thy great goodness hast vouchsafed to accept and take these thy servants into the office of deacons in thy Church: make them, we beseech thee, O Lord, to be modest, humble, and constant in their ministration, and to have a ready will to observe all spiritual discipline; that they having always the testimony of a good conscience, and continuing ever stable and strong in thy Son Christ, may so well behave themselves in this inferior office, that they may be found worthy to be called unto the higher ministries in

thy Church, through the same thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; to whom be glory and honor, world without end. *Amen.*

Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings, with thy most gracious favor, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*The Benediction.*

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be among you, and remain with you always. *Amen.*

135TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE ORDINATION OF ALEJO HERNANDEZ