

September 8, 2016



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***Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!***

**Dear Saints of New Covenant Fellowship:**

**Your Interim Pastor Search Committee is busy making phone calls and personal visits with potential Interim Pastors to serve NCFA.**

**The Officer Nominating Committee will be meeting this Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup> to select potential Elders and Deacons for the Class of 2019. You will find a sheet on the back table to nominate persons whom you believe would be excellent leaders for our congregation for the next three years.**

**We are indeed “moving forward” as Pastor James always called us to do.**

**The role for each of us is to pray that these two committees and each of us will be open to the presence of God’s Spirit within us and listen for the Lord’s guidance. Jesus promised his disciples and each of us: “I will be with you always!” and we can count on Christ’s presence within us to lead and guide us every step of the way.**

***Grace and Hope,***

***Trish Holland  
Interim Session Moderator***

**For I know the  
*Plans*  
I have for you,  
DECLARES THE LORD**

---

**Plans for  
*Hope and a Future.*  
Jeremiah 29:11**

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**Please be prayerful and prepared to share your opinion on who our next leaders should be. Simply fill out one of the “hot pink” forms on the back table this Sunday!**

## **You have a Voice! Share it!**

The Nominating Committee is requesting **your recommendations for Elders and Deacons** in our next class. **“What do they do?”**, you ask??

**Deacons...** persons who keep in touch with other members and offer care and support in times of sickness, death, or other needs.

They might do any of the following for their assigned members: **call or email** a member to follow-up on a prayer request, **coordinate food** for a new parent or mourner, mail an **anniversary or birthday card**, honor a member during worship or **present a Bible or gift from the church**, have **lunch with a member**, arrange **holiday gifts and food baskets** for families who need them.

**In general, deacons are to be persons of spiritual character, honest repute, brotherly and sisterly love, warm sympathies, and sound judgment.**

Who are the future leaders you see? Let us know!

**Elders...** members of the church leadership who make decisions on behalf of the congregation, administer the church's finances and education, and lead the church in mission, evangelism and congregational life.

They might do any of the following *in accordance with their gifts*: **encourage others** in worship and service, **equip the people** for their tasks in the Church or their **mission** in the world, **visit and comfort** and care for the people (the sick, lonely, oppressed), cultivate the ability to **teach** the Bible, **exercise leadership**, and serve as commissioner to higher governing bodies when elected.

**In general, elders are to be persons of faith, dedication, and good judgment.**

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## **PRAYER AND PRAISE**



- ⇒ **Lift up the Longhorn Football players for calm, and confidence in their training and leadership as they face today's game.**
- ⇒ **Lift up Kimberley for continued improvement in her health. Lift up the family for safe travels and good family times as they go on vacation.**
- ⇒ **Praise for Sophia's birthday!**
- ⇒ **Praise the Lord! Doris reports that she can feel a difference in the spirit at her school which portends a promising year ahead.**
- ⇒ **Praise for Doris and Vernon celebrating their 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of marriage.**
- ⇒ **Lift up a nephew named Freddy for resolutions to his problems of alcoholism and medical needs.**
- ⇒ **Lift up travel mercies for Dexter as he travels from Dallas every weekend to assist Vi with James' estate.**
- ⇒ **A big thank you to Pam for helping Vi all day Saturday.**
- ⇒ **Lift up Elizabeth's brother Alan for healing of a neck injury.**
- ⇒ **Praise for Elizabeth's sister-in-law being honored for her volunteerism.**
- ⇒ **Lift up Tracy's father-in-law for continued healing. He is home from the hospital.**

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## PRAYER AND PRAISE



- ⇒ Lift up Ryan and Tracy as they visit England and friends. Lift up good health as Tracy's pregnancy progresses.
- ⇒ Praise for a good first day for the Mojica's football teams. The children and families seemed to have a good time. Lift up healing for the few who were injured.
- ⇒ Lift up recovery for a family's grandfather who had a stroke while going through surgery. Lift up the family as they assist him.
- ⇒ Lift up a young neighbor who has had open heart surgery and is having cardiac issues again.
- ⇒ Lift up Amir Abdul-Khaliq an Austin Police officer who was fatally injured when an automobile hit his motorcycle as he escorted a funeral procession. He was 46 years old. Please keep his family in your prayers.
- ⇒ Thank you to Pastor Ellis for his message about the veracity of the Bible.
- ⇒ Praise for Jacob sharing his piano playing skills during the recessional.
- ⇒ Praise for Ellis and Lucy's 16<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of marriage.
- ⇒ Lift up Ryan's father in law John. He was admitted back into the hospital with a MS flare up today. Thanks.

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**N**  
**C**  
**F**  
**A**

# SUNDAY MORNINGS

*NCFA Sunday Schedule*

***8:30am will resume soon!***

10:15am - Worship Service

1507 Wilshire Blvd.  
9am Adult Sunday School  
10am Fellowship  
10:45am - Children's Church



## NCFA SUNDAY WORSHIP

*Sunday, September 11<sup>th</sup>*

*Rev. Rebecca Longino*

*Sunday, September 18<sup>th</sup>*

*Pamela Benson Owens*

## NCFA SUNDAY WORSHIP AT 10:15am

We would love to have you and your family come share in the CELEBRATION OF THE GOOD NEWS!

We are worshipping in the Fellowship Hall of Genesis Presbyterian Church on the Wilshire Campus starting at 10:15 a.m.

Real Church...  
Real People...  
Real Simple...

New Covenant Fellowship of Austin PC(U.S.A.) is a racially diverse community informed by the Bible, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and motivated to share God's love with all. In response to God's love, we are called to equip disciples to faithfully serve, to encourage seekers to joyfully commit, and to implore all to worship our Lord, as we love our neighbors, grow in grace, and live by faith.

**JOIN US IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE GOOD NEWS**

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- 1<sup>st</sup> Comfort Agbahu and Kofi Vida-Torku
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Lucy and Ellis Oglesby
- 5<sup>th</sup> Jimmy Bohn and Kimberly Hall
- 14<sup>th</sup> Clarke and Maggie Spinks
- 15<sup>th</sup> Matthew and Erin Grisdale
- 26<sup>th</sup> Doug and Patricia Caroom
- 28<sup>th</sup> Bill and Edna Parish

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Greg Buford
- 4<sup>th</sup> Sofia Bohn-Hall
- 5<sup>th</sup> Kathy Smith
- 8<sup>th</sup> Dorrette Ayensu
- 12<sup>th</sup> Joe Parsons
- Miranda Cortez
- 16<sup>th</sup> Charlie Shin
- 17<sup>th</sup> Kim Parsons
- 18<sup>th</sup> Ricky Palacios
- Jace Lopez
- 20<sup>th</sup> Paula Akujor
- Paul Akujor
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Juan Ortiz ("Junior")
- 24<sup>th</sup> Precious Hernandez
- 25<sup>th</sup> Carol Nemir
- 26<sup>th</sup> Clarke Spinks
- Kellcee Justice
- 27<sup>th</sup> Cheyenne Hernandez
- 28<sup>th</sup> Elena Endres
- JoJo Akujor
- 29<sup>th</sup> Erin Grisdale

**Session Members**

- \*Rev. Trish Holland  
Interim/Moderator
- \*Elder Kathy Smith  
Clerk of Session
- \*Elder Oliver Smith  
Administration & Personnel
- \*Rev. Bill Harris  
Buildings & Grounds
- \*Elder Randy Mojica  
Children and Youth
- \*Elder Ben Hooks  
Discipleship & Men's/  
Women's Ministry
- \*Elder Mary Jo Mojica  
Finance & Stewardship
- \*Elder Robert Booth  
Congregational Life/  
Lay Ministry
- \*Elder Vernon Bailey  
Missions/Evangelism
- \*Vacant  
Worship & Membership

**Deacons**

- Kathryn Aldas
- Ashley Phillips
- Scott Phillips
- Carol Saddington, Chair
- Cathy Trifiro
- Roxann Vallejo

September 2016

- 11<sup>th</sup> Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost  
9-10am Adult Sunday School  
9:45am Psalm 150 Praise  
Team Rehearsal  
10:15am Worship at Wilshire Blvd.  
*Rev. Rebecca Longino, preaching*  
Sunday School Ages 3-5 (Rm.1);  
Grades 1-5 (Rm. 7)
- 13<sup>th</sup> 6:30pm Men's Ministry Dinner;  
7pm Study
- 14<sup>th</sup> 6:30pm Fellowship dinner.
- 18<sup>th</sup> Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
9-10am Adult Sunday School  
9:45am Psalm 150 Praise  
Team Rehearsal  
10:15am Worship at Wilshire Blvd.  
*Pamela Benson Owens, preaching*  
Sunday School Ages 3-5 (Rm.1);  
Grades 1-5 (Rm. 7)

**Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!**

**“Defending the Bible”  
Psalm 119:97-104; 2 Peter 3:10-18**

**Rev. Wm. Ellis Oglesby**

*New Covenant Fellowship of Austin  
September 4, 2016*

**SCRIPTURES**

Psalm 119:97-104

*<sup>97</sup>Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all day long. <sup>98</sup>Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is always with me. <sup>99</sup>I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your decrees are my meditation. <sup>100</sup>I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts. <sup>101</sup>I hold back my feet from every evil way, in order to keep your word. <sup>102</sup>I do not turn away from your ordinances, for you have taught me. <sup>103</sup>How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! <sup>104</sup>Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way abomination.*

2 Peter 3:10-18

*<sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed <sup>11</sup>Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? <sup>13</sup>But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. <sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; <sup>15</sup>and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, <sup>16</sup>speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. <sup>17</sup>You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability. <sup>18</sup>But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

**I believe that every sermon should have a certain amount of humor, which mine is sorely lacking. So I’m going to put one up front just to balance things out:**

**Why did the chicken cross the road?  
To see the idiots in his father’s house.**

**Not funny? Okay. Here’s another one:**

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Knock, knock.

Congregation: “Who’s there?”

The chicken.

The chicken who went to see the idiots in his father’s house. That’s you.

Yes, I just called you idiots. We should be used to it. People call Christians idiots all the time. This isn’t a new phenomenon. There is an ancient Russian expression that translates roughly to “He is stupid to the point of sainthood.”

Here is an example of what I’m talking about. I read a blog post one day from a guy who had “discovered” that Jesus was not dead and in the tomb for three days. The *Bible* says he was buried Friday evening and declared missing on Sunday morning. That is, at the most, thirty hours, less than half of the 72 hours to constitute three days.

Since the sign of Jonah requires the Son of Man to be in the grave for “three days and three nights,” Jesus would be disqualified. (*Matthew 12:40*) Ergo, Christianity is built on dust.

How stupid does this guy think we are? Really? Somehow we are so daft that no one has realized this in two thousand years?

Perhaps you don’t know that “a day and a night” is an idiom in ancient Hebrew that means “a day.” If someone comes to your house for lunch and leaves, you could say he was at your place for a day and a night. That seems confusing. However, if a client asks me how long it will take to get his car fixed, and I say, “Well, that’s gonna be a minute,” he knows it will be hours or even days.

But if you don’t know that and you’re arguing with someone who makes this point, you’re kind of stuck. You aren’t able to defend the *Bible*.

The title of this sermon is “*Defending the Bible*.” It’s purpose is to provide you a little armor against some of the most common attacks on the *Bible*. As my assailant, I’m going to use an article from a 2014 *Newsweek* article titled, “*The Bible -- So Misunderstood It’s a Sin*.” To be fair, its stated purpose is to point out biblical illiteracy in America.

\* Fewer than half of all adults can name the four gospels.

\* Many professing Christians cannot identify more than two or three of the disciples.

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- \* 60 percent of Americans cannot name even five of the Ten Commandments.
- \* 82 percent of Americans believe “God helps those who help themselves” is a *Bible* verse.
- \* 12 percent of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah’s wife.
- \* A survey of graduating high school seniors revealed that over 50 percent thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife.
- \* A considerable number of respondents to one poll indicated that Billy Graham preached the Sermon on the Mount.

*(<http://www.igniteus.net/archives/1061>)*

But instead of discussing the causes and solutions to biblical illiteracy, he exploits it by bundling together a half dozen classical assaults on the veracity of Scripture and he calls it news. It’s also worth noting that the author, Kurt Eichenwald, is an investigative reporter, not a *Bible* scholar.

The structure of his article makes rebuttal difficult, and I suspect that was intentional. I’ve gone through it and ordered the attacks chronologically -- writing, collecting, translating, interpreting.

One important aspect of defending the *Bible* is knowing which hills are worth dying on and which ones aren’t. Scripture is full of errors and contradictions. Scribes made mistakes when copying manuscripts. Scholars disagree on the meaning of important passages. But none of this is fundamental.

Does it shake your faith that some scribe changed a “the” to an “a” in the fifth century? Do you really care that an orchid is the smallest seed, not the mustard seed as Jesus said? Give me a break. He isn’t a 21st century botanist. He is our eternal Lord and Savior, King of Kings, Lord of Lords. My love of Jesus doesn’t depend on the size of a seed.

However, these silly arguments can trip us up if they catch us by surprise. So this morning I’m going to introduce you to several of them, courtesy of *Newsweek*, and show you how to put them in context.

**#1. Books in the *Bible* are Forgeries**

From *Newsweek*: “New Testament, including some attributed to Paul, are now considered forgeries perpetrated by famous figures in Christianity to bolster their theological arguments.”

No. Nothing in the *Bible* is a forgery. A forgery must have the intent to deceive. That is a part of the definition.

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It is true that many of the books of the *Bible* that are attributed to Paul weren't written by Paul. And there are a lot of ways something can "not be written by Paul." For example, he dictated some of his books. Technically, they were written by the scribe. Others were written by his traveling companions. Others were written long after his death by people who had never met him.

All of these books are attributed to Paul not to deceive anyone, but to honor Paul. Believe me, if the church in Thessaloniki received a letter from Paul fifty years after his death, they didn't think he wrote it. It came from his students or their students who remained in his way of thinking.

This was a well-accepted practice in the ancient world, not a forgery.

**Argument 2: Canonization**

From *Newsweek*: "For many centuries, Christianity was first a battle of books and then a battle of blood. The reason, in large part, was that there were no universally accepted manuscripts that set out what it meant to be a Christian, so most sects had their own gospels. There was the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, the Gospel of Simon Peter, the Gospel of Philip and the Gosel of Barnabas."

Yes, it is true that there were a bunch of books that claimed to be inspired by God, and over the years, some were selected to be in the canon and others didn't make it. At first, this happened organically and then through a series of church councils. Many people suspect that books that should have made it in were excluded for political reasons. What about the Gospels of Philip, Mary, and Barnabas?

Want to know why they didn't make it?

Go read them. Baby Jesus makes birds of clay and then brings them to life. The cross dances out of the tomb and speaks. They are very entertaining, but, I promise, you won't wonder why they didn't make it.

**Argument # 3: It's just a game of Telephone**

"No television preacher has ever read the *Bible*. Neither has any evangelical politician. Neither has the Pope. Neither have I. And neither have you. At best, we've all read a bad translation—a translation of translations of translations of hand-copied copies of copies of copies of copies, and on and on, hundreds of times."

Do you hear the disdain? The Pope hasn't read the *Bible*? All we have are bad translations? Really?

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It is true that no original manuscripts exist. It is true that monks copied the books by hand and that they made mistakes. However, the game of Telephone is a terrible analogy for this for two reasons. Each player passes their message to only one other player. The monks, on the other hand, copied hundreds of manuscripts each. Second, in Telephone, everything is oral. You can't go back and look at what other players said. With the New Testament, we have over 5,800 ancient manuscript fragments, including 120 written on papyrus.

A better analogy is a family tree. So think of errors in the text as mutations in a dominant gene. It starts in a certain generation of manuscripts and continues in all subsequent generations. This allows us to make a family tree of manuscripts and literally place each one in history, much like you could sample your DNA and find out where your family lived 5,000 years ago.

All this distills down to a Greek text that has, I believe, a very strong claim of originality. There are a couple of variant readings on every page, usually a missing comma or a changed preposition, and people earn their PhD's by arguing whether Paul said "by" or "next to."

There are a couple of significant mysteries. I suspect most of you know that we are unsure how *Mark* ends and the story of the Woman Caught in Adultery circulated by itself for hundreds of years before someone stuck it in the *Gospel of John*. This isn't a scandal. We don't know everything, and that's okay.

By the way, between the writing of these documents and our oldest manuscripts, there is about a 100-year gap. Between Socrates' writing and our oldest existing manuscript? Twelve hundred years. Aristotle? Fourteen hundred years.

The New Testament is the most thoroughly attested writing of the ancient world. By far! Take that, *Newsweek*.

**Translation Transubstantiation**

Next attack from *Newsweek*: "Then comes the problem of accurate translation. Many words in New Testament Greek don't have clear English equivalents. Sentence structure, idioms, stylistic differences—all of these are challenges when converting versions of the New Testament books into English. And this can't be solved with a Berlitz course: Koiné is ancient Greek and not spoken anymore. This is why English translations differ, with many having been revised to reflect the views and guesses of the modern translators. The gold standard of English Bibles is the King James Version, completed in 1611, but that was not a translation of the original Greek."

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First, saying that King James is the gold standard of English Bibles is like saying Charmin is the gold standard of toilet paper. There is no gold standard of toilet paper. There is no Gold Standard of English Bibles. The only Gold Standard is the original Greek. The statement that “Koiné is ancient Greek and not spoken anymore” is wrong on two counts. First, Ancient Greek is Ancient Greek. Koiné Greek is different. Second, lots of people can speak it, including my professor of New Testament Greek, Dr. John Alsup. He can speak it as well as Paul and probably better than Peter.

From a faith formation perspective, it doesn’t matter which translation of the *Bible* you have. All that matters is that you read it.

The last series of attacks from *Newsweek* focuses on the content of the *Bible*. As I said at the beginning, today’s Christians are woefully lacking in biblical knowledge. I am, too. Not as bad as some. A woman once came up to me and said, “Pastor, on the church sign I saw Pilates 4:15 and I can’t find that in my *Bible*.”

That’s just a joke, but I couldn’t help but throw it in.

There is one last point I wish to address. *Newsweek* writes:

“In fact, every female politician who insists the New Testament is the inerrant word of God needs to resign immediately or admit that she is a hypocrite.”

People will try to trip you up on this kind of thing all the time. “Papa, Papa. Luke just said a bad word about you and the *Bible* says you must kill a child who curses you. (*Leviticus 20:9*) Here’s your favorite axe.”

Just remember: Never look at what a verse has to say about something. Look at what the *Bible* has to say about it.

Is it a sin to vote for Hillary?

Full Stop. Let me rephrase that:

From a biblical point of view, is it okay for a woman to have a political office? True, *First Timothy 2:12* says, “*I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man.*” Yes, it does say that. But what about Deborah, Miriam, Anna, Lydia, and Mary, among others? Once you open up the topic like that, you are in a position to have an adult discussion, perhaps even a community-building discussion.

Now, I feel like I’ve sufficiently defended the *Bible* from *Newsweek*. People have been using these same arguments for hundreds and hundreds of years. We will hear them again, maybe in *Time*, or *The Economist*, or maybe at the watercooler. I hope that you are now better equipped to answer them.

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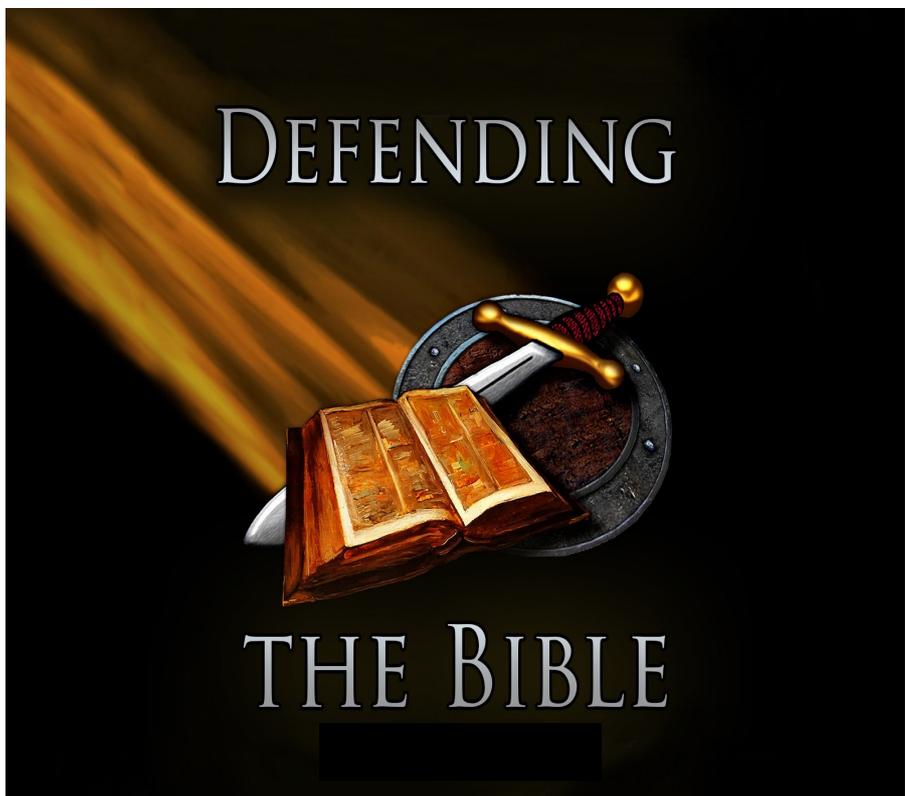
**Rev. Wm. Ellis Oglesby**

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I'll close with a difficult theological question from Bart Simpson: "If God can do anything, could he create a hot dog so big that even he couldn't eat it?"

I'll let you figure that out on your own.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Hallelujah and Amen.



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The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services invites caregivers to participate in a focus groups to develop culturally diverse brochures to inform caregivers about the importance of taking time to care for themselves.

Date: 9/26/16

Do you provide regular care for a loved one who has a long-term illness or disability?



Times: 10:00 am or 1:30 pm

Where:

THE ARC CAPITAL AREA  
4902 GROVER AVE (Near 49<sup>th</sup> St.)

Austin Texas 78756

Please Contact:  
CAPITAL AREA ADRC  
CONTACT NUMBER  
(512) 916-6045

Caregivers with disabilities who will need auxiliary aids or services are asked to notify focus group staff as far in advance as possible.

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# 4th Annual VA COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SUMMITS



### Objective:

Enhancing access to care for Veterans and their families through VA and community partnerships

### Summit Topics:

- My VA Access
- Choice and Accountability Act
- Suicide Prevention
- Peer Support Services
- Community Resources and Outreach

## Save the Dates:

### Waco:

**Friday**

**September 9, 2016**

**9 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

Doris Miller Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center  
Stracke Auditorium; Bldg. 6  
4800 Memorial Drive  
Waco, Texas

Please RSVP by September 2, 2016, or for questions, email: [Melissa.Switzer1@va.gov](mailto:Melissa.Switzer1@va.gov)

### Temple:

**Wednesday**

**September 14, 2016**

**9 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

Olin E. Teague Veterans' Medical Center  
Bldg. 171; Room A25  
1901 Veterans Memorial Drive  
Temple, Texas

Please RSVP by September 7, 2016 or for questions, email: [LaMencia.Berry@va.gov](mailto:LaMencia.Berry@va.gov)

LUNCH provided for all attendees by the Veterans Canteen Service.

These Summits are FREE and open to community stakeholders, agencies, programs, advocates, Veterans and their family members and VA staff.



Veterans Health Administration

Central Texas Veterans Health Care System

*VA staff on duty should obtain permission from their immediate supervisor to attend.*