

CHECK-OUT INSTRUCTIONS FOR LOCAL CHURCHES

Through the Ezra Data Management System UMC January 2022

**The North Texas Conference is using the United Methodist statistics program, Ezra,
this year for Check-Out.**

PLEASE NOTE: The system contains warnings and error notifications for many lines that will alert the local church filer if a line may have been filled out incorrectly. Each church will need to address the warnings and errors by correcting the error or giving a written reason to the warning before submitting their tables online.

ONLINE FORMS FOR CHECK-OUT

Table 1 – Membership and Participation

Table 2 – Church Assets and Expenses

Table 3 – Church Income

Special Report – Apportionment related line items. You must total Line 10 manually.

New Faces New Spaces – Follow each line's instructions on form.

Clergy Compensation Worksheet – print out, fill out, submit to Check-out

APPORTIONMENT INFORMATION

Here is the apportionment formula as voted on at Annual Conference and found in the Journal in the legislation section, pages 248-249 of the 2021 Journal:

Formula for Two-Part Decimal for Apportionments:

- 1/3 membership (Line 4)
- 2/3 finance (Lines 41a, 41b, 41c, 43-47)
- *LINE 50, the Grand Total, is not part of the apportionment formula.*

HOW TO GET STARTED

Log in at <https://ezra.gcfa.org/login.aspx>.

Each local church has two users:

- One for the office
- One for the pastor

The User Name is the church's **GCFA number +p** for pastor and the **GCFA number+o** for the office staff (office staff is "o", not zero). The password is **ntexas2021#**, until the local church and/or pastor changes it.

WRITE DOWN THE NEW PASSWORD. If you forget or lose it, your district admin or the conference office will have to re-set it. The local church/pastor cannot reset passwords.

1. Log in and create your password.
2. You must include your email and phone numbers, preferably a cell phone number.
3. Select "Enter Stats" and Table 1 will be the default table. (You may select any table to fill out from the drop down menu by "Tables.")

Download or copy the Church User Guide. It contains detailed log-in instructions along with pictures illustrating the instructions.

Select "Print Blank Report Form" so you will have the complete set of data entered last year. You can do this from the Tab in the center or "Blank Report Forms" under Menu at the right.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- For all the tables, specific instructions are included with each line. You can also hover your computer mouse over the question mark (?) for the same instructions.
- Section instructions are in the blue sections.
- On the right side of your church's home page there is a color-coded key that matches the colors of the boxes on each form.
 - **Purple** (Purple)-lined boxes are lines that are part of our North Texas apportionment formula.
 - **Peach** (Peach)-colored boxes are "sums" and are computed automatically.
 - **Orange** (Orange)-colored boxes are filled by the Conference Office after Close-out on January 11. (Table 2)
- For many boxes, if an incorrect amount or wildly different amount from the previous year is entered, a **line error** or **line warning** will appear at the top of the table.
 - The error or warning necessitates one or both of the following:
 - Fixing the line amount.
 - Explaining in the notes why this year's entry is correct.
- You can "Save" each table as you work on it without completing the table and that enables you to come back later to finish it.
- When every table is completed and you believe you have completed your check out forms, then you "Submit" your church's tables.

TABLE 1

- Line 1 is automatically filled in from the 2020 reported membership. This line CANNOT be changed. If it is incorrect for some reason, you can make the correction on Line 2c.
- Lines 2a and 2b Professions of Faith
 - To gauge the number of people who join the church through facets other than confirmation classes (i.e. of their own volition), we have added a secondary professions of faith category. We are now collecting "Professions of Faith through confirmation" in addition to "Professions of Faith other than through confirmation."
- **Line 7a Online Worship. PLEASE REFER TO 2021 INSTRUCTIONS AT THE END OF THIS DOCUMENT.** Generally, it is **not** included with the total worship attendance, so if you have been counting online attendance as part of your worship attendance, you should NOT include it on Line 7 but then report it on 7a as a separate number. **DO NOT ADD LINE 7a WITH LINE 7. THE CONFERENCE OFFICE MUST REPORT THESE SEPARATELY TO GCFA. For the Journal and all other reports, the conference office will add these two lines together.**
- Ministries included in Line 21 may be listed in both lines 21a and 21b if they fit the definitions of those lines.

TABLE 2

- Line 25 is the line previously asking for the “Market Value of all other church-owned assets” and has now been updated to collect liquid assets only (which is what the line originally meant to collect). The description has been updated to reflect this. YOU MAY USE YOUR FUND BALANCE REPORT to help this. If you haven’t already done so, submit your Fund Balance Report at Check-out.
- Line 27 includes Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans that have NOT been forgiven.
- Lines 28-36e will be completed by the Annual Conference following close-out on January 11. Note these lines are orange and you cannot enter values. Only the conference can fill in these lines. The amounts should be reflected on your Table 2 by January 12.
- Line 41aa is for equitable compensation funds and/or conference grants that supplement the lead pastor’s salary.
- Line 41bb is for conference grants that supplement the associate pastor’s salary.
- Line 50 WILL NOT UPDATE automatically as values are added. As you are filling out Table 2 and you do not see correct values in Line 50, that is because it can only be updated by the conference. This is programmed into Ezra.
 - **Only the Conference Office can update the grand total line (Line 50) and it cannot be updated per individual church but only for all the churches at one time.** The Conference Office will notify the District Administrators when the Grand Total is updated, and it will be updated daily starting January 12.

TABLE 3

- Several lines on Table 3 have been updated for clarification. Most pertain to the intent of use of funds – if money was transferred from liquid assets to be used for operating expenses/budget, this amount should be reflected in the Market Value of Liquid Assets on Table 2 and reported as “Amount received from interest and dividends and/or transferred from liquid assets” on Table 3.
- The line asking for “Amount received from Sale of Church Assets” (Line 52e) has been updated to ensure that only amounts allocated toward the budget/spending plan should be recorded here. In turn, “including the sale of buildings” has been added to “Funds from other sources and projects” (Line 53c) to account for sales that are not allocated for the church budget and saved for later use. This also should be reflected in market values.
- “Memorials endowments, and bequests” (formerly line 63b, new line 53b) has been updated to indicate that only the total amount of funds received should be included here only for the year it was received. The value of the fund should then be reflected in Market Value, and any rent payments, interest, or dividends earned should be recorded in 52d or 52f for budget.
- Line 54c is for recording Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans and/or Employee Retention Credit (ERC) funds, if the church received any of these funds in 2021.

SPECIAL REPORT

- Whomever completes the tables will need to check the Special Report, which contains all the apportionment related line items.
- When it is reviewed, **the filer will need to manually add the total for the financials and enter this amount on line 89.** If the math is incorrect, a “note” will appear at the top of the table.

NEW FACES, NEW SPACES

- This is the fourth year for this form as requested by the Cabinet. Churches must complete this form to submit all the Check-Out forms. For 2021, if the answers to the questions are all “0”, that is fine. The Cabinet recognizes that New Faces New Spaces is a new emphasis. The form must still be submitted.

CLERGY COMPENSATION WORKSHEET

There is no online worksheet that automatically populates the appropriate lines on Table 2. Please follow the instructions below.

- You MUST fill out the Clergy Compensation Excel Worksheet before filling out Table 2.
- The worksheet is found online at your Ezra site under:
 - Reports and then at the **bottom of the page** under “North Texas Conference Worksheets.”
 - You can also find the worksheet at <https://ntcumc.org/connectional-resources/close-out-check-out>
- Download the excel file and fill it out. There are tabs for lead pastors, associate pastors and deacons. There is also a “**TOTALS FOR EZRA**” tab.
- In cases where there was a mid-year appointment change for lead pastors, or if there are multiple associate pastors or deacons under appointment list each clergy separately on the appropriate tab with their corresponding amounts paid. Each tab will total the lines.
- The amounts entered in the lead, associate, and deacon tabs automatically populate the “TOTALS FOR EZRA” tab.
- Manually enter the total amounts from the individual categories on the “Totals for Ezra” worksheet into the appropriate lines on Table 2.
- **Print out this completed worksheet—all sheets that you filled out—could be up to 4 excel files printed out—and submit it on your church’s check-out day.**

SUBMIT

- At the top of the church’s Ezra page is the “Submit” button. When you have completed the tables, select “Submit” and follow the prompts.
- If you follow the prompts and it will not let you submit, this probably means you have not addressed an error or warning on one of the tables.
- After addressing the errors and warnings and you still cannot submit, call your district office.
- Submitting your statistics prevents you from being able to change them. If you discover a mistake and need to make a correction, contact your district office for help.
- Always print hard copies for your files.

NORTH TEXAS CONFERENCE
COUNTING WORSHIP ATTENDANCE IN EZRA FOR 2021
(11/30/21)

1. Your church should have in place a system it used in 2021 to count online worship attendance, so some of the following information may just be additional items to consider.
2. We are attempting to get an accurate picture of worship attendance whether it was in-person or online.
3. Both in-person worship and online worship are reported as annual averages.
4. When reporting **in-person worship** and calculating the average attendance, remember there may have been Sundays when only online worship was offered.
5. Counting weekly **online worship** attendance (Whatever your church chooses, be consistent!)
 - a. Count online attendance as not a “scroll” but worshippers who stayed connected for 20-30 minutes, no matter which online platform was used.
 - b. Count one Sunday of worship attendance as “one week.” I.E., count Sunday thru Saturday as one worship service. Since worshippers can worship anytime now, there needs to be a cutoff. A 7-day week seems appropriate rather than counting every time a particular Facebook or You Tube service is watched months later.
 - c. In reporting online worship attendance, we suggest you count one “view” as 1.8 persons in attendance. Whatever system your church chooses to count the number of online viewers in a home at any one time, be consistent.

TABLE 1, Lines 7 and 7a

In Ezra, lines 7 and 7a have the following embedded instructions as help in completing Table 1.

Line 7 Report average in-person attendance at all services held on a consistent weekly basis as the primary opportunity for worship. Count all persons (including children) who participate in part of any of these services. Do not include online worshippers nor attendance from irregularly held special services (i.e., Christmas Eve services).

Line 7a Report here average weekly number of unique viewers who access worship online. This includes those live streaming your worship service and views/downloads of recorded worship services (audio or video), sermons, and/or podcasts. Do not include generic hits/visits to your website.