



Rev. Gary D. Willis was born the middle of three sons to retired District Superintendent Rev. Terry C. Willis and his wife Judy, who both now reside in Homer. Willis and his older brother, Ricky, are active pastors in the Louisiana Conference.

Over the course of his ministry in the Louisiana Conference, Rev. Willis has:

- Taught or initiated Disciple Bible Studies in every church served
- Experienced growth in every church he served
- Attended Cursillo #28 and served as Spiritual Director several times for Cursillo and Walk to Emmaus
- Attended The UMC School of Congregational Development, twice
- Initiated Volunteers In Mission trips in half the churches served, in which there were none formerly conducted
- Initiated international missions in Gonzales
- Successfully launched contemporary worship at First UMC, Gonzales
- Participated in a \$2.15 million building program, including two capital funding campaigns
- Mentored six ministry candidates from his congregations and one intern over the last 12 years
- Coordinated Katrina community response ministries including sheltering, distribution, ecumenical worship for evacuees, transportation services, automotive repair and client services
- Chosen for Perkins School of Theology Excellence in Preaching advanced education course
- Selected for the Saint Paul School of Theology Graduate Award in 2006
- Completed the inaugural Louisiana Leadership Excellence Advancement Program (LEAP)

“My ministry leadership style is strongly based on my belief in the ‘Priesthood of Believers,’ and my faith in the laity’s ability to serve in ministry is often greater than their confidence in themselves. I favor a non-autocratic, team style approach in which we partner with one another and with God,” said Rev. Willis.

Gary graduated Sulphur High School in 1980 and obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics from Louisiana Tech University in 1986 and a Master of Divinity from Saint Paul School of Theology in 1989.

He is married to Amy Halley, who is a Louisiana Department of Education educator consultant. Amy and Gary have two children, Amanda, 19, and Jason, 12. Amanda will be attending Centenary College in the fall and singing in the Centenary Choir. Jason is a gifted sixth grader who enjoys art, computers and reading.

Churches and related positions served by Gary include:

- 1989-1994: Associate Pastor of First United Methodist Church, Slidell, La.

- 1992-2000: Served on the Conference Board of Discipleship.
- 1994-1996: Pastor of First United Methodist Church, Lake Providence, La.
- 1996-2000: Pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church, Alexandria, La.
- 2000-2010: Senior Pastor of First United Methodist Church, Gonzales, La.
- 2001-2005: President of the Saint Paul School of Theology Graduate Council.
- 2002-2004: Community Spiritual Director for Lagniappe Country Walk to Emmaus.
- 2008-Present: Serve on the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, formerly as Director of the License to Preach School and currently as Board Chairperson.
- 2010-2014: Senior Pastor of Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Slidell, La.
- 2014-Present: Senior Pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church, Ruston, La.