



# HEARTLAND CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
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In last month's newsletter, Heartland UCC Conference Minister, Rev. Dave Long-Higgins, shared the document Heartland Conference 2022-2025 Priorities. This work was the product of prayerful discernment on the part of the conference Board of Directors, the leadership of our associations which forms the Executive Teams and the input of our Leadership Roundtable, comprised of the association ministers and conference minister. We hope that you took the opportunity to view the complete document which can be found by clicking [here](#).

These established priorities join to enhance the on-going ministries of the Heartland. They provide a basis for channeling energy and resources to existing ministries and networks and the launching of new ventures.

As the priorities were developed and refined, one of the striking elements to emerge was how the six major areas are inter-related, almost as if they are the ingredients to the pie chart in which they are visually presented.

This was quite evident in the priority of **Faith Formation and Outdoor Ministries**. For example, Faith Formation was identified as a central tenant to Reimagining Church Vitality with significant roles in all others. Additionally, Outdoor Ministries and our camp and retreat center, Temples Hills, was identified as a key resource.

Our **Faith Formation Network** has been extremely active. It recently conducted its fourth two-day conference, albeit virtually, titled "Share It." This complemented the network's previous conferences, "Learn It" and "Live It" and the introduction of the entire model in 2019. Rev. Rebecca Anderson, co-pastor of Gilead UCC in Chicago, was the keynote presenter and engaged the participants in the skills of discovering, formulating and telling faith stories that we each have within our churches. We congratulate Rev. Sprite Johnson and the Faith Formation Network for another informative and inspiring conference. We hope our churches will seek and tell their stories.

**Heartland Outdoor Ministry** has been re-invigorated under the leadership of Outdoor Ministries Director Jill Frey. Though many of the initiatives that Jill has brought to the camp program had been pushed to the back burner as she and camp administration was forced to respond to the challenges of COVID, we have now reached a point where the Temples Hills facility and the many options it presents for programming are moving ahead with renewed vigor and development.

**The Hills are Alive campaign**, to raise support for capital improvements to the camp, has been extended with a new push to fund important capital projects. Some upgrades have already been made. The swimming pool, inoperable last summer due to aging mechanics, will be ready for swimmers this season.



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A larger project to have accessible restrooms in the dining hall has been delayed due to the current high costs of construction as leadership strives to ensure this project can be accomplished with the best stewardship possible.

Finally, there is news about the **Heartland Conference Annual Gathering**. Rev. Beth Gedert and her committee have been holding regular meetings to plan our 2022 event. The hope is that we will be able to meet in person again, but the Annual Gathering is being designed as a hybrid event that can be attended either in-person or virtually.

**One big change for this year's Conference Annual Gathering are the dates:** the event will move to a **Thursday-Friday** format. This is in response to a survey of the Heartland membership that showed a preference for Thursday-Friday. In fact, the least desirable option of conference days was that which involved Saturday. So, mark your calendars and plan to attend this year's gathering, which will be held on Thursday and Friday, **September 22-23**.

Tom Hathaway  
Heartland Conference Board Moderator