



HEARTLAND CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
N. KY • OH • WV



Greetings. I am honored to become Moderator of the Heartland Conference and look forward to serving all of you.

A little bit about me. I have a near-lifetime association with the UCC. I was baptized and confirmed at First UCC in Canton, Ohio and have many dear memories of that church and the pastor during my time there, Dr. Karl Koepke. My wife, also with UCC roots as a youth, and I were married in a UCC church. After relocating to Cincinnati over 40 years ago, we became members of St. Paul UCC-North College Hill. For the past dozen years, I have worshipped at Fleming Road UCC.

My professional career was spent in athletic administration, most of it at the college level where I served as assistant athletic director at the University of Cincinnati and later as athletic director at Cincinnati State Technical and Community College.

You might wonder how my background in athletics relates to my present service. Administrators in athletics are continually seeking the most dynamic leadership for their sports teams and then nurturing and supporting that leadership; they are mindful of development and maintenance of support facilities; they endeavor to increase the fan base of people supporting their sports programs. That sounds like the responsibilities of our church lay leaders.

I became somewhat immersed in those responsibilities in 2016. While wrapping up my professional career, joined the leadership team at my church. Shortly thereafter, our pastor announced his retirement. In the ensuing months of transition, and search and call, I learned quite a bit about the workings of our association (SONKA) and the conference.

And I am still learning. And I welcome any and all input.

There is no question that our churches—and the church—face challenges posed by contemporary society. However, we also have a wealth of resources for meeting those challenges. One of the most significant of those resources is each other and the ability to collectively work together (teamwork—another lesson from athletics).

During much of my past two years as Vice Moderator, the associations and the conference have created a vision for that collaboration with the creation of the new Why, Calling and Covenant statement. This statement has been affirmed by each association and by the conference. I look forward, during my next two years as Moderator, to seeing us live this new covenant as we explore ways to collaborate, share and conspire.

I would be remiss if I failed to recognize Rev. David Plant for his service as Moderator the past two years. There certainly were a number of challenges our leadership faced and Dave piloted us through these challenges. He also became a great friend to me. We look forward to Dave's continued contributions in his role as Past Moderator.

Tom Hathaway
Heartland Conference Board Moderator