



HEARTLAND CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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The Heartland Conference Board of Directors Nominates

Rev. David Long-Higgins

To be Called as Conference Minister to the Heartland Conference, United Church of Christ

May 21, 2021

Nomination Recommendation from the Heartland Conference Board of Directors

At its May 21, 2021, meeting the Heartland Conference Board of Directors voted unanimously to nominate Rev. David Long-Higgins to be called as the Conference Minister to the Heartland Conference pending an affirmative vote of conference delegates at the Annual Gathering of the Heartland Conference on September 24-25, 2021.

Background

In 2018, a decision was made to conduct a national search for a Transitional Conference Minister. After reviewing numerous profiles, interviewing a diverse set of candidates, and evaluating each candidate based on the skill sets and experience needed to shepherd the recommendations of the 2018 Conference Vision Proposal, a candidate was presented to the Board of Directors. Rev. David Long-Higgins was contracted for a period of up to three years for the position. A potential longer-term position description was left open-ended for there to be flexibility related to the identified needs and emerging ministry directions of the Conference that would likely surface during the transitional period. In keeping with standard practice, the Transitional Conference Minister agreement allowed for the individual in this role, in this case, Rev. Long-Higgins, to be eligible to apply for whatever the future configuration of staffing might become. The end of August will mark the completion of the three-year arrangement with Rev. Long-Higgins.

Evolutionary Learnings

In the time since this initial arrangement was engaged there has been much accomplished related to the 2018 Vision Proposal though evolving in some different directions of form than were initially considered. At the March Board meeting the Board reviewed the path the Heartland Conference has been journeying together, noting the important discoveries, the vital work of healing, and emerging trajectories for ministry that are surfacing. Especially we have noted and have come to celebrate the unique character of each of our associations along with the conference, and the gifts which each of these settings brings to the whole.

We have identified the importance of the Leadership Roundtable (Association Ministers and Conference Minister) working in a deliberate peer relationship that aids in the call to be a nimble covenant ever responsive to the changing realities of the world in which we live. Especially we have come to realize the call to ever greater collaboration, often expressed in networks that help connect wisdom, passion, and need across our whole life.



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These realizations have been newly framed in our “Why, Calling, and Covenant” document which has now been affirmed by the governing bodies of each setting of our life. In recent conversations of the gathered executive teams of the associations and conference, a review of the journey we are sharing led to an affirmation of the road we are on. It seems we are ready to live even more robustly into the covenantal collaborations which are emerging, celebrating the varying gifts of the body and building on the reframed understanding of how we engage each other.

The configuration of leadership as described above confirms the ongoing need and desire for the role of a conference minister in our life together, defined in ways that continue the growth of the emerging model of ministry God has been urging in our life. A revised Conference Minister position description outlining the responsibilities of this calling in our shared life and its connecting role to the wider church nationally, globally, and ecumenically are included in this email.

Process for Identifying a Called Conference Minister

The annual evaluation of Rev. David Long-Higgins was completed under direction of the chair of the Conference Human Resources Committee together with members from each association that interact with David Long-Higgins in various roles. The evaluation team included: Rev. Dr. Cheryl Lindsay, Rev. Patricia Battle, Ms. Pam Linderson, Rev. David Plant and Mr. Tom Hathaway. Based on the positive outcome of the evaluation, noting that the contract with the Transitional Conference Minister was coming to a conclusion, it was recommended by the Evaluation Team to the Executive Committee of Conference Board of Directors that Rev. Long-Higgins be nominated to be called to the position of Conference Minister.

Upon receiving the recommendation, the Executive Committee met with Rev. Lee Albertson, national staff for conference minister searches. Lee was a partner with the conference in the formation of the Transitional Conference Minister (TCM) job description. He shared about best practices in the situation of a TCM where the relationship is healthy and strong. Lee also reminded the committee that the drafting of the TCM position was designed to allow for the consideration of the TCM to become the candidate for the settled Conference Minister position.

The Executive Committee then continued with a discussion about the value of either entering a new search process or affirming the recommendation of the evaluation team. The Executive Committee voted unanimously to recommended to the Conference Board of Directors that Rev. Long-Higgins be nominated for the call to the position of Conference Minister.



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The Board of Directors, at its May 21, 2021, meeting, entertained the Executive Committee's recommendation that Rev. David Long-Higgins be nominated and presented to the September Annual Gathering for affirmation as the called Heartland Conference Minister. In its deliberations, the Board considered the following:

- The Board affirmed the need of the position of settled conference minister.
- The original search process was national in scope reflecting a diverse pool of applicants and skill sets which brought David Long-Higgins to us as an outstanding candidate.
- This process afforded us the opportunity to consider David Long-Higgins for a called position was offered as a possibility in the original contract at its completion.
- The Board noted David's exceptional performance in the transitional role, and the desire to continue with a ministry defined by accomplishment and excellence.
- The nomination would allow the continuation of the progress that has been made and continue the breadth of relationships already built across the conference and in the wider church.
- David's strong commitment to diversity and inclusion recognized by all who have worked with him, is an important component of the job description.
- David's temperament has been valued by all who work with him, including his ability to adapt and reframe expectations as new understandings of our shared life emerge.

Given these considerations, the Heartland Conference Board of Directors voted unanimously to nominate Rev. David Long-Higgins to be called as the Conference Minister to the Heartland Conference pending an affirmative vote of conference delegates at the Annual Gathering of the Heartland Conference on September 24-25, 2021. Biographical information about Rev. David Long-Higgins is included in this mailing.

Questions of clarification may be directed to Rev. David Plant, Heartland Conference Moderator, by emailing him at revdplant@yahoo.com or calling him at 419-782-4580.