



## Conference Annual Gathering Workshops 2021

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### Friday Workshops

- **Creation Care Workshop** - Hank Stonerook  
Does your congregation have an environmental justice or green team committee? Is your congregation interested in becoming part of a Heartland Conference network that addresses climate issues? Consider attending this workshop which will have a video invitation from Brooks Berndt, the UCC's Environmental Justice Pastor, for the Heartland Conference to create a climate justice network. Hear what other conference representatives have achieved with their climate justice committees. Become part of a conference-level group that addresses climate justice that is unique to the Heartland Conference.
- **A Reason to Hope** - Rev. Michael Howard  
Rev. Michael Howard and other members of the Heartland Conference Anti-Racism Network will introduce multiple online resources including the online curriculum "A Reason to Hope". These resources offer ways for local churches to **engage the work of anti-racism**, especially by examining racism as a public health crisis. These resources help us to live into this year's General Synod resolution "Declaring and Responding to Racism as a Public Health Crisis". This workshop will also introduce the work of the **Heartland Conference Anti-Racism Network**. Rev. Michael Howard is the Minister for Faith in Action of the Living Water Association of the Heartland Conference.
- **Together in a time like this: how we might reimagine worship.** - The Many  
As those who help plan worship or those who simply believe in the power of worship, we can't help but wonder how our worship gatherings can truly speak to the world we live in today. We wonder how they can resonate with people of all ages, life experiences, and backgrounds, people who don't all look alike, believe the same things, or need the same things. Especially in light of the challenges and new ways of interacting in worship that grew out of the pandemic, we are called, now more than ever, to reimagine how we worship.

Led by members of The Many, all experienced local church worship planners, this workshop draws from a course Gary Rand developed for McCormick Theological Seminary and Christian Theological Seminary. It's a great starting place for churches that want to reimagine their worship

and begin to make real change. In it, we will look at how we can revitalize and empower our worship by rethinking the strategies, metaphors, and expectations we bring to the Experience.

- **Created to Age** - Rev. Beth Long-Higgins  
Our culture's stereotypes and narratives about aging as something to be denied, overcome or cured have an impact on us individuals and collectively as congregations. We will explore the theological foundation that we are created in the image of God—throughout the lifespan, share resources to engage in conversations about aging and ageism with your congregation, and exchange ideas to strengthen your ministry with elders. Rev. Beth Long-Higgins is the executive director of the Ruth Frost Parker Center for Abundant Aging, an initiative launched by United Church Homes in 2017 to transform aging through engagement, education, and advocacy with congregations and community partners.
- **Faith Forming Practices of Prayer** - Rev. Dr. Marian Plant, Rev. Sprite Johnson, Rev. Rich Plant and Rev. Jeff Nelson  
In this long season of the shifting sands of COVID and so much else that demands our attention and energy, there is a hunger for practices of faith providing a centering anchor. The Heartland Conference Faith Formation Network offers a unique engagement in this workshop that will explore two practices - body prayer informed by the practice of Qi Gong and the Ignatian Spiritual Exercise of imaginatively engaging scripture. Our leaders: Rev. Rich Plant has received spiritual direction training at the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation and Rev. Jeff Nelson is a trained spiritual director and the author of four books including, *Coffeehouse Contemplative: Spiritual Direction for the Everyday* and *Prayer in Motion: Connecting with God in Fidgety Times*. Jeff currently serves in the national setting of the UCC working on the Ministerial Excellence Support and Authorization Team.

## **Saturday Workshops**

- **Cultivating Generosity in Your Congregation** - Hank Stonerook  
Many congregations struggle with increasing their individual member giving. This workshop will offer some insights into steps that other congregations have taken that have resulted in positive financial gains. This workshop will include a video from Andrew Warner of the UCC's Philanthropy Team who will discuss the resources available from the UCC that can stimulate and encourage "generous" giving. Individuals who participated in the recently offered "Cultivating Generous Congregations" seminar will also share their insights.

- **Head to the Hills: Tips and Tools for a successful church retreat at Templed Hills!** - Chris Isaacs, Kim Heimlich, and Jill Frey

Have you ever thought about planning a church gathering at Templed Hills? Come hear from church retreat leaders Chris Isaacs and Kim Heimlich, from North Congregational UCC Columbus, Ohio! Together they have been planning and executing successful church camp retreats for 26 years! During this session, they will share with you some tips and tricks they use to make planning easy by using the “keep it simple” method. Jill Frey, Executive Director of Outdoor Ministries will also share some up-to-date information about making a reservation for Templed Hills and other site news. We will also leave time during this session for participants to ask questions, share what has worked for them, and share tools and ideas to make planning a camp gathering simple. Bring your ideas and questions! Join us to see how you can re-engage your community, by reconnecting with God and each other through nature in the sacred space of Templed Hills Camp and Conference Center.
- **Praying as the Early Church Prayed** - Mr. Philip Balla, M.Div.

Designed to inspire deeper prayer practice, this workshop will be a time to explore, reflect upon, and try out a few simple models of prayer practiced in the diverse settings of the Early Church. The workshop leader, Philip Balla, is working on his Ph.D. at Fordham University and focuses on the thought and practices of Late Ancient Christianity, particularly in Egypt. Philip has been a life-long member of Memorial UCC in Toledo and will be ordained October 2nd into the Christian ministry.
- **How we bring our creativity into worship – and how you can too.** - The Many

As Walter Brueggemann has said: “The deep places in our lives—places of resistance and embrace—are not ultimately reached by instruction.” What can reach those deeper places are poetry, music, visual arts, story, symbolic gestures, rituals – creative acts. Creativity in worship can help connect people with their heart and soul, help them see things differently, and engage them more fully. Creativity in worship can help the experience be more memorable and form a greater sense of community. But, the truth is, it is not always easy to plan and lead creative worship...week in/week out...for our local congregations. Especially when you aren’t feeling all that creative yourself.
- **Warriors Journey Home/Awakening** - *Listening to the call* The Rev. John M. Schlupe, D.Min.

“War is hell.” When war is over; it is not finished. The political disruption, economic chaos, social upheaval, and spiritual crisis remain. Soul wounds are experienced by the veteran, family and friends, and our institutions. *Military.com* recently informed us that veteran suicides are four times the combat casualties of

the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. This reality is an indictment of our collective abdication of responsibility; it is also a call to serve. The Church's mission includes healing the invisible wounds of war and military service. This workshop will present a theology of healing based on three essential principles: **Community. Ritual. Healing.** We will also present liturgical orders in worship, education, and rituals involving the community beyond the local congregation. John M. Schluep, D.Min. is the founder of **Warriors' Journey Home Ministry: Listen – Speak – Heal.** Dr. Schluep is a U.S. Army veteran, commissioned in 1974 in the Regular Army through Ohio State University. The Rev. Dr. Schluep retired as Senior Pastor of Tallmadge First Congregational Church, UCC in 2017. He has written several books; *Soul's Cry*, is a primer for this specialized work with veterans. He has consulted on several PBS broadcasts and has been a featured interviewee on several NPR broadcasts.