

# **SECTION G**

## **OHIO CONFERENCE**

REV. JOHN GANTT,  
INTERIM OHIO CONFERENCE MINISTER

OUTDOOR MINISTRIES  
[www.journeythehills.org](http://www.journeythehills.org)



February 24, 2017

A report shared with the Ohio United Church of Christ community  
in Northwest Ohio Association.

John M Gantt, Interim Conference Minister

I was ordained in Northwest Ohio Association, and served for a little over 20 years in various pastoral roles in the Ohio Conference. But I never dreamed there would be a day when I would return to serve among you as a Conference staff member!

Following the completion of the Rev. Phil Hart's designated interim term, the Board of Directors knew there was much more work to do before the Conference could formally call a person to serve as Conference Minister. Thus, a new interim period began October 1, 2016.

The first five months of my experience with you revealed immense changes in staffing, finances, outdoor ministry, and configuration of the whole Conference/Association structure.

Four Association staff members will retire in 2017. Two Conference staff members will retire or end contracts in 2017, leaving one full time person (the interim CM) and a part time accountant.

Associations dramatically revised their management of OCWM contributions, and adjusted their staffing.

The Board of Directors declared in February, 2017 that Faith Formation is a core value of the Conference, that a Faith Formation design should include an outdoor ministry program but that such a focus does not require the Conference to own camp properties.

The Board of Directors, which is composed of representatives of each Association and Association Ministers, determined in February, 2017, Ohio Conference cannot afford to own two camp sites. Plans began immediately to sell Pilgrim Hills while preparing Templed Hills for greater service. Summer camping for 2017 will continue at Pilgrim Hills, but will move to Templed Hills in 2018. A strategy and business plan for outdoor ministries will include efforts to reduce alarming annual deficits generated by this program.

An all-Ohio visioning team continued its work. Rev. Mr. Hart observed in last year's report that discussions were often conducted in an unhealthy manner. Work in late 2016 and into 2017 has proceeded in a more amicable and collegial manner. The visioning team is intent on producing a proposal for addressing the costly and counterproductive organizational layers within the Conference in time for the Annual Gathering in September 2017.

For long time participants in the ministry of Ohio Conference, and for me who grew up as a pastor in Ohio Conference, our decline and disarray is distressing. The situation cries out for us to be better stewards of the rich talents and discipleship of the people of the UCC in Ohio.

There is much for which to be grateful, however, especially for faithful ministries of dedicated authorized ministers and devoted congregations. Thank you to all who embrace the call of Christ to love God and one another, and who work for a just and peaceful world for God's children!

Shalom

# OUTDOOR MINISTRIES

**Partnering with local congregations to connect God’s people with nature for faith formation, spiritual growth and leadership development**

Outdoor Ministries of the Ohio Conference UCC provides programming, resource support and rental facilities for Christian summer camp, church and fellowship retreats (all denominations), year-round Outdoor Ministries sponsored events, Nature’s Classroom program for educational organizations, and many private and business events. To Register for Camp check here: <http://www.journeythehills.org/>

## 2017 Summer Camp Schedule

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Event Name</b>	<b>Event Leaders</b>	<b>Ages/Grades</b>
June 1-4	<a href="#"><u>Floating with the Spirit</u></a>	Lori Wick & Lisa LaDu	Women
June 11-17	<a href="#"><u>Love the Pool</u></a>	Elli Kalas	Grades 3 – 8
June 11-14	Grandparent-Grandchild 1 <b>THIS CAMP IS AT CAPACITY</b>	Mark Frey	Grands & Grandkids ages 4 – 12
June 18-24	<a href="#"><u>MMADD</u></a>	Sarah Ambrose-Sypolt & Bobby Burt	Grades 2 – 12
June 18-24	<a href="#"><u>Finding You: A College Experience</u></a>	Youth/Adult Team	Grades 9-12
June 18-21	<a href="#"><u>Grandparent-Grandchild 2</u></a>	Terry Williams & Jo Anne Nay	Grands & Grandkids ages 4 – 12
June 25-July 1	<a href="#"><u>Sports Camp</u></a>	Tommy Hart & Renee Neuron	Grades 1 – 12
July 2 – 6	<a href="#"><u>Hand in Hand</u></a>	Randy Gehres & Lisa Studenmund	Grade 7 – Adult
July 2 – 8	<a href="#"><u>Circle of Friends</u></a>	Robin Stanley	Grades 1 – 12
July 9 – 12	<a href="#"><u>Grandparent-Grandchild 3</u></a>	Brian Burke	Grands & Grandkids ages 4 – 12
July 9 – 15	<a href="#"><u>Choir Camp</u></a>	Lori Betz & Aaron Miner	Grades 1 – 12
Sept. 2-4	<a href="#"><u>Labor Day Family Camp</u></a>	Brent & Jennifer Westover	Families

All camps will be held at Pilgrim Hills  
EXCEPT *Finding YoU: A College Experience*, at [Heidelberg University](#) in Tiffin.