

1 Ohio Conference Outdoor Ministry Plan

2

3 OBJECTIVE:

4 To establish the operating plan and goals for outdoor ministry for the Ohio Conference based at Templed Hills.
5 This plan is assumed to begin in 2018 and continue until a more comprehensive plan is developed. That
6 planning is recommended to begin once a pattern of success is being achieved. It's expected that this initial
7 plan will be in place for approximately three years and will be adapted as needed by the Division of Outdoor
8 Ministry and the Conference Board of Directors.

9

10 MISSION STATEMENT:

11 Partnering with local congregations to connect God's people with nature for faith formation, spiritual growth
12 and leadership development.

13

14 BACKGROUND:

15 A legacy from the merger of the United Church of Christ was the blessing to the Ohio Conference of two church
16 camps, Pilgrim Hills and Templed Hills. For a time, the two camps served the conference well but usage has
17 declined steadily over the past twenty years. The decline is reflected in the camping programs offered by the
18 Ohio Conference and in usage by churches within the conference. This situation put substantial financial
19 pressure on the conference and led to Templed Hills being put "on sabbatical" in 2014. Also in 2014, United
20 Camps, Conferences, and Retreats (UCCR) was engaged to manage Pilgrim Hills, a step that has been successful
21 in reducing the financial burden but has not resulted in an increase in attendance, although the rate of decline
22 has lessened.

23 In February of 2017, the Ohio Conference Board voted to focus all future outdoor ministry programming at
24 Templed Hills and to sell Pilgrim Hills. The board also organized a Business Plan Team to develop this business
25 plan, an Operations Team to get Templed Hills ready for use, and a Sales Team to sell Pilgrim Hills.

26

27 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

28 This document consists of five key areas of concentration that collectively are expected to extend the reach of
29 outdoor ministries within the conference to additional children, youth, and adults. These five areas are in the
30 next section called "Initiatives."

31 There will likely be an initial dip in participation as a result of the transition from Pilgrim Hills to Templed Hills,
32 followed by steady increases as a result of initiatives described here. There is more preparation and
33 communication this time so the impact due to the transition should not be as great as when Templed Hills was
34 put on "sabbatical" in 2014. Assumptions about participation levels are in the financial projection in Appendix II.

35 It is recommended that the conference continue its relationship with United Camps, Conferences, and Retreats
36 (UCCR) who was engaged to manage Pilgrim Hills in 2014 and Templed Hills beginning in 2016. UCCR provides
37 Property Management Services for facilities throughout the United States, including a growing number of UCC
38 camps. UCCR provides an onsite professional to manage staff, provide oversight of regulatory compliance,
39 oversight of food service, maintenance, and property management. Current site staff at Pilgrim Hills are
40 employed by UCCR and the same model is expected at Templed Hills. UCCR provides marketing and
41 reservations services so that the conference only manages its own programs like Summer Camp and various
42 events such as the Fall Youth Event. UCCR also provides oversight in human resource, finance/accounting, and
43 project management.

44
45 As in the past, the conference will need to manage the programming, marketing, and reservations for all
46 conference sponsored programs, i.e. Summer Camp and conference retreats. This work will continue to be
47 shared between volunteers and employed staff in the conference office. Examples of work that will continue to
48 be performed by conference staff are managing the reservation system for events, conference-wide
49 communications, and communicating with UCCR staff. Developing programming for Summer Camp, Youth
50 Events, and other conference sponsored events will be handled primarily by volunteers with support from
51 employed staff.

52
53 There are many critical roles that will need to be performed by volunteers in order to have robust faith
54 formation activities, including programming at Templed Hills and for those events planned for other locations.
55 The conference is also responsible for recruiting and training volunteer camp directors and counselors, with
56 some assistance from UCCR on the training. This work will continue to be the responsibility of the Division of
57 Outdoor Ministries. The structure and responsibilities of the Division are being clarified. That work needs to
58 be finalized quickly and positions filled on the Division so that it is ready to accept responsibility for certain
59 assignments defined below.

60
61 Based on the performance at Pilgrim Hills, it's expected that UCCR will manage the facility budget at Templed
62 Hills so that personnel costs and routine maintenance will be covered by the fees paid by program participants.
63 Like at Pilgrim Hills, Templed Hills will run better with UCCR's management than it would without, with steady
64 improvements to the facilities year by year.

65
66 Major maintenance and capital improvements will need to be funded from sources other than fee income. Now
67 that we're focused on a single site, the conference board is ready to authorize use of nearly \$400,000 in reserves
68 designated for outdoor ministries. The Operations Team is identifying priorities with expenditures subject to
69 board approval. The board has also determined that \$350,000 of the proceeds from the sale of Pilgrim Hills will
70 be added to the reserves for major maintenance and improvements at Templed Hills. These resources will
71 make a definite impact but additional funds will need to be raised in order to continue the renovations.

72
73 Stewardship of our natural resources is a key focus for all settings of the United Church of Christ. It is a moral
74 imperative for us as stewards of the earth's abundance to limit our negative impact on the global climate while
75 making positive changes that save both energy and money in the long term. At this stage of planning for the
76 future of Outdoor Ministries, we encourage the full embrace of strategies that will limit our collective carbon
77 footprint, support renewable energy, and support opportunities to educate all camp users on the importance
78 and benefit of seeking greener alternatives to energy needs. This strategy of frugal conservation will
79 simultaneously honor our faith commitment as God's stewards of the earth and provide a more sustainable
80 future for our Outdoor Ministries programming by saving much needed financial resources for the use of future
81 generations.

82

83 **INITIATIVES:**

84 1. Expand Outdoor Ministry Programming - Add General Camp opportunities for Faith Formation. In
85 addition to the specialty camp programs already offered in our summer camping ministry, we will
86 introduce more general church camping experiences where youth and children of similar age can
87 experience God through summer camp. This is especially important to attract and retain younger
88 campers who may not be ready for or interested in one of the specialty camps, but who crave the
89 experience of summer camping and who would greatly benefit from the intentional faith formation
90 that our programming provides.

91 Efforts should be made to accomplish this in partnership with Camp Christian of the Disciples of Christ.
92 Camp Christian's primary focus is general grade-level church camp, and some UCC members are
93 already involved in developing programs for the younger ages. A partnered approach with the DOC
94 would expand schedule and programing options for youth and children from both denominations. This
95 will make it easier for youth and children to find a camp program that fits their schedules and interests.
96 In some instances, it may also allow youth and children from both denominations to choose a camp
97 that is somewhat closer to home. Should a collaborative approach with the Disciples not prove
98 feasible, we recommend proceeding on our own.

99 Additional Program Thoughts:

100 As the ongoing business plan is created for Outdoor Ministries, there will be decisions needed in the
101 area of programming, some needed quickly in order to support the work of the Operations Team.
102 Decisions regarding activities (like the labyrinth, sports fields, archery, or the Action Challenge course)
103 as program options for both summer camp and retreats will impact the transfer of equipment from
104 Pilgrim Hills to Templed Hills and will impact staffing considerations moving forward.

105 There will need to be a concentrated focus on programming offered by the Ohio Conference in the area
106 of Outdoor Ministries in conjunction with the Faith Formation team. Two main areas of focus are:
107 Summer Camp and non-summer retreats.

108

109 WHO: Division of Outdoor Ministries

110 WHEN: Beginning for the 2018 camp season

111 2. Church Groups and Adult Meetings/Retreats – Make Templed Hills an attractive location for adult and
112 intergenerational gatherings, especially groups from churches in the conference. While other buildings
113 at Templed Hills can and will serve some groups, Heritage Hall has the potential to become an excellent
114 location for small and medium size groups. It has six sleeping rooms, each designed to accommodate
115 four guests. We recommend making improvements to the restrooms, parking, and entrance in order to
116 be fully handicap accessible.

117 Gathering/meeting/dining space in Heritage Hall should be planned to accommodate twenty-four to
118 match the beds available. Ideally, outdoor gathering space should be introduced, perhaps overlooking
119 the valley to the south. Bedding should be improved to be comfortable for adults and an option of linen
120 service (towels, sheets, blankets, and pillows) should be considered with an additional fee. The kitchen
121 should be equipped to be effective for groups that wish to prepare their own meals (some or all).

122 In addition to these changes at Heritage Hall, there are other key modifications that are necessary in
123 order for Templed Hills to attract greater numbers of church and other groups. These improvements
124 are recommended: 1) accessible restroom(s) on the main floor of Skipper Lodge (the dining hall); 2)

125 accessible restroom(s) in Memorial Hall; 3) new carpeting in Memorial Hall; and air conditioning in all
126 three principle buildings – Skipper, Memorial, and Heritage.

127 Dining options also need to be reimagined to be more appealing to adult palates rather than offering
128 the same camp food provided for youth and children.

129 WHO: The Camp Operations Team – once plans and budgets have been approved

130 UCCR – development of new dining options and implementation of linen service

131 WHEN: Many of these improvements will be introduced during 2018 but some will be
132 implemented in following years.

133 3. Strategic Marketing and Engagement – Obtain professional assistance in developing comprehensive
134 marketing and engagement plans with a focus on increasing utilization by members of churches within
135 the conference. Secondary objectives are to support directors in recruiting counselors and to build a
136 database that can be used for fundraising in the future.

137 Implementation will be shared between UCCR and volunteers from the conference. Outcomes must be
138 clarified, mission driven and consistently communicated. One message is “It’s about the experience not
139 the space.” Where volunteers are utilized, clear job descriptions and training are necessary. Best
140 practices are for the marketing budget to be 5-6% of the operating budget, including estimated staffing
141 expense. It is recommended that elements of the plan include the following:

- 142 a. Outreach to ministers within the conference, and especially those that are new to the
143 conference. Consider overnight events at Tempel Hills, offered in partnership with the
144 associations. Also, consider offering workshops on leading camps and retreats in order to
145 develop camp directors for the future and to prepare leadership from churches that may then
146 use Tempel Hills for church retreats.
- 147 b. Outreach to participants in Ohio Conference Summer camp programs over the past few years,
148 informing them of what camps will be available at Tempel Hills.
- 149 c. Outreach to churches and other groups that previously used Tempel Hills to let them know
150 that it is once again available. It will be important to make multiple contacts using a variety of
151 methods – email, direct mail, phone call, etc.
- 152 d. Outreach to churches and other groups that previously used Pilgrim Hills to make sure they are
153 aware of what Tempel Hills has to offer.
- 154 e. Identify and cultivate ecumenical partnerships, particularly with those that no longer have their
155 own camps. One such possibility is the PCUSA Presbytery of the Western Reserve who may be
156 interested in using Tempel Hills for retreats, or even to offer their own camps to their
157 churches.
- 158 f. Develop and implement an “ambassador” program such as was used in 2010 to better connect
159 with the churches within the conference.
- 160 g. Develop reports to monitor camper and retreat group usage from year to year. Examine
161 camper retention rates and explore strategies and possibilities for why this number is so low.
- 162 h. Develop surveys of our campers and families to help get a better feel for some of the reasons
163 behind these trends. We believe it is critical that we communicate clearly with our current users
164 and campers to encourage their return usage of our camps and camping programs as we move
165 to Tempel Hills. Use information from these surveys to make decisions regarding the priority
166 and timing of improvements at Tempel Hills.

167 WHO: Led by the new Director of Outdoor Ministries with support from volunteers and
168 UCCR.

169 WHEN: Beginning in the fall of 2017

170
171 4. Development/Fund Raising – Successful camps do not generally rely exclusively on fee income to
172 support operations. Best practices indicate that 15% usually comes through gifts. Historically, OCWM
173 from the conference has filled this gap. While this use of OCWM is entirely appropriate and is expected
174 to continue for the immediate future, it's easy to envision a day when the conference share of OCWM
175 isn't sufficient to provide this funding, at least not in full.

176 The Conference Board is considering a proposal to use a significant portion of proceeds from the sale of
177 Pilgrim Hills to create a \$1 million endowment whose income will be used to fund Faith Formation
178 initiatives in the conference. At least in the first few years, it's expected that this income will be
179 primarily devoted to Outdoor Ministries and will help cover the expense of hiring a Director of Outdoor
180 Ministries.

181 It is essential that churches, camp alumni, and others be invited to engage with outdoor ministries and
182 to make gifts to sustain this programming. Gifts could be made to support the current year operations,
183 for specific capital improvements, and to increase the endowment to better secure Faith Formation and
184 Outdoor Ministry programming for generations to come.

185 WHO: Led by the new Director of Outdoor Ministries with support from volunteers

186 WHEN: Beginning in late 2018

187 5. Staffing – To successfully implement this plan, the conference should hire a full-time Director of
188 Outdoor Ministries to work with the Division of Outdoor Ministry on the development of camp
189 programming, implement the marketing and engagement plans in partnership with UCCR, and to build
190 an outreach program to generate funding to supplement fee revenue. It's expected that the
191 relationship with UCCR will continue and that staff at Temple Hills will be the employees of UCCR.

192 The new Director of Outdoor Ministries (described in #5) will be responsible for overseeing and
193 facilitating much of this work, with emphasis on recruiting, training, and empowering volunteers to
194 perform many of the tasks listed below. The Division of Outdoor Ministry will be an essential partner.
195 Necessary work includes, but is not limited to:

196 Summer Camp:

- 197 • Determine events to be offered – based on needs, faith exploration goals, traditions,
198 evaluation
- 199 • Provide input to Operations for facility changes and needs for activities.
- 200 • Provide input to Financial team regarding budget needs (staff, supplies, etc.)
- 201 • Create calendar – schedule events, reserve site
- 202 • Recruit/Invite directors – foster culture of directors acting on behalf of Conference, not owning
203 the event
- 204 • Select curriculum – create resource suggestions (crafts, nature activities)
- 205 • Support directors in recruiting staff
- 206 • Support churches in promoting camp
- 207 • Training (in partnership with UCCR) – directors, counselors, camp advocates
- 208 • Facilitate camp registration
- 209 • Recruit, hire, train, oversee summer camp staff (weeks of camp plus 2-3 for training, prep,
210 clean up @ ~\$350 per week) – positions can be combined, but needs include:
 - 211 ○ Archery – may need to pay for a staff person's training and certification

- 212 ○ Action Challenge (low ropes) - may need to pay for a staff person's training and
- 213 certification
- 214 ○ Program Coordinator (if multiple camps on site)
- 215 ○ Medical staff person – RN/LPN/EMT/MD/DO – only needed during actual events –
- 216 would not need to be the same person each week – would need acclimation to process
- 217 and procedure
- 218 ● Review evaluations of each camp

219 Retreats:

- 220 ● Determine events to be offered – based on needs, faith exploration goals, traditions,
- 221 evaluations
- 222 ● Provide input to Operations for facility changes and needs for programming (space
- 223 configurations, furniture, etc.)
- 224 ● Create calendar – schedule events, schedule site
- 225 ● Recruit/invite event leadership
- 226 ● Create model of volunteer event coordinator/facilitator from Division or trained volunteer base
- 227 ● Facilitate promotion and registration
- 228 ● Schedule Medical staff person
- 229 ● Review evaluations

230 WHO: A Search Committee appointed by the Board of Directors

231 WHEN: Beginning in late 2017

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233

234 APPENDIX I NOTES FOR FINANCIAL FORECAST:

235

236 REVENUE:

237 • Summer Camp

238 ○ Campers as shown on the forecast. A decrease is anticipated for 2018 because of the change in
239 venue. Increases begin in 2019.

240 ○ Average camper days the same as in 2017.

241 ○ Room & Board to UCCR are forecast to increase by 1.5% annually and camp fees to increase by
242 3.5% annually. The additional margin is designed to gradually help cover the cost for the
243 Director of Outdoor Ministry.

244 • Other Conference Events

245 ○ Lantern Fellowship - Revenue and Expenses decreased by 5% in 2018 due to the transition from
246 Pilgrim Hills. Annual 2% inflationary increases thereafter.

247 ○ Youth Events – Revenue and Expenses are flat in 2019 followed by annual increases of 5% in
248 the subsequent years. 2% of the increase is an inflation factor.

249 • Direct Gifts – Best practices indicate that most successful camping programs cover 15% of operating
250 costs through benevolence. Gifts also are solicited for capital improvements. Churches and members
251 will be invited to support outdoor ministries financially. This forecast assumes steady improvement of
252 15% in annual increases in gifts.

253 • UCCR Rebate – The conference receives a 5% rebate from UCCR on all revenues for non-conference
254 events. This includes bookings by local churches. The forecast for the rebate is for increases of 20%
255 beginning in 2019. This is based on past history of such bookings at Temple Hills and UCCR's
256 optimism that Temple Hills will be easier for them to market.

257

258 EXPENSES

259 • Director of Outdoor Ministries – This full-time position is added beginning in 2018. The Salary is
260 estimated using a variety of average wages in Ohio reported by the Department of Labor. The Benefits
261 are based on the Standard plan from the Pension Boards for a person who is married and over 40,
262 including Vision and Dental. Pension contributions are 14% of salary.

263 • An additional temporary staff is added during summer camp for a total of three. This will provide
264 additional support as camp is transitioned to a new site. Further additional funding is added in 2020
265 due to increased numbers of campers. This may cover an additional week of summer camp or a fourth
266 temporary staff person.

267 • \$1500 for travel expenses is added beginning in 2019.

- 268
- Added \$10,000 for Marketing in 2018, with inflationary increases thereafter.
- 269
- 2% annual inflationary increases for most expenses. Program expenses are projected to increase by 8%
- 270
- annually to allow enhancements. Benefits are increased by 5% because of pressure on health
- 271
- insurance.

272

273 OTHER

- 274
- The projection assumes that the conference administrator will continue to perform essential work
- 275
- including communications and managing the reservation system for summer camp and other
- 276
- conference events. Those personnel costs are not included here.
- 277
- The Conference Board has passed a resolution that an endowment of at least \$1 million be established
- 278
- with a portion of the proceeds from the sale of Pilgrim Hills. This endowment will produce income of at
- 279
- least \$45,000 annually. No portion of this income is included in this projection.

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