Tribute to those Celebrating a 25th Anniversary of Ordination

*Rev. Richard N. Slater*, Associate Conference Minister, New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ provides a reflection on the Ordained Ministry of Authorized Ministers Celebrating a 25th Ordination Anniversary

**The Rev. John Hogue** was ordained to Christian Ministry on November 3, 1996, by the Western Reserve Association, of the Ohio Conference of the United Church of Christ, at the Claridon (Ohio) Congregational Church. John’s theological training was at Pittsburg Theological Seminary, which awarded him the Master of Divinity degree in 1994. John has served congregations in Ohio, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, and presently serves as the Pastor of First Church of Christ Congregational, United Church of Christ, in North Conway, NH. John writes, “I love the United Church of Christ’s inclusive spirit, and I strive to live this in my passion for the ministry of radical hospitality. . . The heart of (my) ministry is developing young people to be close to God through camp ministry, youth groups and taking several mission trips. . . I have witnessed the beauty of human learning and interaction through Immersion trips to DC and NYC.

John received two lifesaver awards for saving two church members from death while serving as pastor in Missouri. . . And, in Nebraska, John served for four years on the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing . . . advocating for and implementing Closed Captioning for movies, and sensitivity training for police officers. Thank you, John, for your 25 years of faithful ministry in the church.

**The Rev. Eleanor S. Kimball** was ordained to Christian Ministry in the United Church of Christ on October 6, 1996, by the Andover Association of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ. She received her theological training at Andover Newton Theological School, being awarded the Master of Divinity degree. Eleanor served in the Vermont Conference as Pastor of the East Barre Congregational Church, United Church of Christ and found that being pastor to the good people of East Barre was a rewarding form of ministry. After retirement in 2012, she has continued to
offer ministry through the Pension Board’s Annuitant Visitor Program, and her work as Dean of the Annuitant Visitors. Thank you, Eleanor, for your years of faithful ministry in the church.

The Rev. Sandra Pontoh was ordained to Christian Ministry on September 13, 1996, in the Christian Evangelical Church, a Reformed Church in Minahasa, Indonesia. She received her basic theological training in Indonesia, and later studied at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, MI, and Andover Newton Theological School in Newton, MA. During her time in Michigan she was approached by a young congregation in New Hampshire who asked her to become their pastor. She said ‘yes’ and continues to this day as Pastor of the Maranatha Indonesian United Church of Christ. Sandra’s ministry at Maranatha has been marked by deep care and compassion for her parishioners and the larger Indonesian community, and a commitment to walk with them even as they navigate the treacherous waters of our nation’s immigration system, serving as companion, translator, and pastor. "Defending the weak and helping the vulnerable," Sandra writes, “is the heart of my ministry.”

Foster’s Daily Democrat named her their Newsmaker of the Year in 2017, and printed tributes from her colleagues, as well as Senators Shaheen and Hassan. Sandra was honored for her ministry by the ACLU of NH in 2018, and in their presentation of the award they wrote: “As the pastor of the Maranatha United Church of Christ in Madbury, the Rev. Sandra Pontoh has . . . tirelessly advocated on behalf of community members threatened with deportation and to raise the profile of immigrant families in our state. The Rev. John Dorhauer, President and General Minister of the United Church of Christ wrote in a letter published in Fosters: “The Rev. Sandra Pontoh is a hero of mine. She is a kind, compassionate soul. Diminutive of stature she is nonetheless a giant in courage. She is selfless, humble, and willing to sacrifice much for the safety and dignity of others.”

Sandra writes, “I am very grateful that the Maranatha Indonesian UCC church, which I have served since 2004, has allowed me to help the Indonesian Community in NH with their immigration issues. It’s very tiring work, but also gives me great joy. Seeing them smile is the most beautiful reward of my life.”

For that, and for so many individual acts of mercy we say, thank you, Sandra, for 25 years of faithful ministry within the church of Jesus Christ.