March 28, 2019

Dear Heidelberg Colleagues,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, it gives me great pleasure to announce the keynote speakers for our Commencement Weekend May 11-12, 2019.

This very special weekend in the lives of our graduates and their families will begin with our annual Baccalaureate Service at 4 p.m. Saturday, May 11, in Gundlach Theatre.  Our combined undergraduate and graduate Commencement Exercises will begin at 10 a.m. Sunday, May 12, in Hoernemann Stadium.

I am honored to announce that the Rev. Ken Daniel, president and CEO of United Church Homes, will deliver the Baccalaureate sermon, and that 1974 Heidelberg alumna, the Honorable K.J. Montgomery, judge of the Shaker Heights, Ohio, Municipal Court, will be the Commencement keynote speaker.

We are excited to welcome Rev. Daniel back to our campus for Baccalaureate.  He served his first church in Reading, Pennsylvania, and while there, he answered the call to serve on the board of Phoebe Homes, a UCC-affiliated facility in Allentown.  Rev. Daniel earned a master’s degree in public administration from Marywood University, a master’s degree in pastoral counseling from Moravian Theological Seminary, a master’s degree in divinity from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities and a bachelor’s degree in English from Kutztown University.  After moving up to vice president and serving with Phoebe for 18 years, he joined the staff at a senior living organization in Washington, D.C.  In 2010, Rev. Daniel became interim president of Lancaster Seminary for a year before being called to be the president and CEO of United Church Homes in Marion, Ohio, in 2011.  He joined the board of directors of Lancaster Seminary in 2017 and was named distinguished alumnus from United Theological Seminary that same year.

Rev. Daniel has guided United Church Homes through financial recession, overseeing board mandates for internal reorganization and brand rebuilding.  Today, UCH remains one of the top providers of affordable housing, health care, support services and pastoral ministry to 4,300 seniors and individuals with disabilities in 69 affordable housing communities in 14 states and two Native American nations.

In the past five years, UCH has provided about six internships for Heidelberg students and students from other area institutions.  He strongly encourages his staff to be involved in partnerships with local schools and universities to provide students the opportunity to learn about careers with older adults.  Rev. Daniel has been a guest speaker on two occasions in the Philanthropy in American Society Honors Program seminar that Dr. David Hogan and I co-teach in the fall.

It’s always a special time when we can welcome one of our distinguished alumni back to address our graduates-to-be.  After her graduation from Heidelberg and then Cleveland Marshall College of Law in 1977, Kathy-Jo “K.J.” Montgomery embarked on a successful and distinguished career of public service.  First working in private practice, as a prosecuting attorney, law director and tax administrator, she was elected to her first judicial term as municipal court judge in Shaker Heights in 1993. Currently in her fourth six-year term, she handles about 14,000 cases annually for five suburban Cleveland communities.

Throughout her time behind the bench, Judge Montgomery has found innovative ways to enhance the judicial system with specific emphasis on the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault prevention, alcohol and drug treatment, and access to mental health care services.  She forged close working relationships with the Domestic Violence Center, The Bellefaire Jewish Children’s Bureau, and the Northeast Mental Health Center and Recovery Resources.  She also works closely with domestic violence abuse programs and is a two-time recipient of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill Leadership Award for her work to establish the model suburban mental health court system for mentally ill offenders.

The mother of two sons, Judge Montgomery is a frequent speaker to police, civic, women’s and other community organizations.  A music performance major at Heidelberg, she was a highly involved student, participating in music ensembles, cheerleading and the Philalethean Society.  Currently, she is a member of Berg Bravo! and the “H” Association and has supported annual giving and her special interests, primarily music.

I hope you share my excitement and anticipation about the positive and important messages that the Rev. Ken Daniel and Judge K.J. Montgomery will bring to our students, faculty and staff, families and friends.  I look forward to celebrating our treasured Commencement traditions with all of you on May 11-12 – with great weather!

Sincerely,

Rob Huntington
President