**Keith Karau  
Celebrating 50 Years  
Ordained 1971**

It’s really hard to imagine that it is 50 years since graduation from Eden and ordination in Merrill, Wisconsin in 1971. The world has changed so much as has our thinking about the world around us. Over the course of 40 years of ministry, I have served 5 congregations in Missouri and Illinois, retiring in 2011. I began ministry in a small Kansas City congregation and finished full time ministry in a larger congregation in St. Louis. After retirement, I filled two short term interim positions. Since those interims, I have enjoyed volunteering with the association and Samuel UCC in Clayton, the congregation I fell in love with during 2 years of “field work” from 1969 to 1971. Imagine sitting behind your mentor and friend, Hale Schroer, in worship 50 years later.

Of all ministry experiences, I have found the pastoral moments of special significance, the most meaningful around a death and funeral. While serving two larger congregations, there were times those experiences seemed like weekly occurrences.

Involvement in church camping and youth ministry events in a wide range of leadership roles has also been among those special moments. It was a joy to direct camps (beginning at Camp Aurora and Western Hills), serve on their committees and chair a committee to plan for the renovation of Camp Moval (culminating in the renovations of cabins, a maintenance building that became the offices and the new pool).

Mission trips to Romania, Hungary, Jamaica, Honduras, Costa Rico and El Salvador expanded a vision of ministry I acquired while a member of the United Church Board for World Ministries. All in all, the church is mission, whether locally or reaching out to the world around us.

And so 50 years later, Gene Wehrli, Allen Miller and Walt Brueggemann, professors at Eden, are among the giants who challenged so many of us to think in new and different ways from the first moments of coming to Eden in early 1969. They encouraged us to think about the world, to stand against racism and the war in Viet Nam. They expanded our vision of the church from the congregations of our youth. If only some would remember us in the same challenging way.

And lest I say more, 40 years ago we joked about long winded pastors who spoke or prayed far too long on their 50 year anniversaries.