

Board of the Ordained Ministry
THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONFERENCE OF THE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
104 SOUTH 4TH STREET
STERLING, COLORADO 80751

February 20, 1986

Dear Colleagues in ministry:

On Tuesday, February 18, 1986, the Board of Ordained Ministry dismissed the COMPLAINT brought against the Reverend Julian Rush by the Reverend J. L. Penfold and the Reverend Ronald Kowalski. That "complaint" (not "charge" which has a different meaning in the Discipline) alleged that Rush's appointment to serve a United Methodist congregation violates the 1984 Discipline provision which prohibits the candidacy, ordination, or appointment of a "self-avowed practicing homosexual." The complaint alleges that Rush had made public statements that he is a practicing homosexual.

I am writing this letter to try to interpret the Board's action and to provide the rationale for its decision. The attempt is not to have everyone agree, but to have you understand the basis of the decision so that you might be able to answer questions and interpret the decision to members of your congregations and constituencies.

The decision was based in large part on the definition and the document providing guidance in applying the definition in the Rocky Mountain Annual Conference. That definition and document was accepted by the Executive Session on January 28, 1986. (That document is now the public property of the Annual Conference, and you may get a copy from the Conference Office if you did not receive one.) The definition states: "A SELF-AVOWED PRACTICING HOMOSEXUAL IS A PERSON WHO ENGAGES IN, AND OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGES, GENITAL SEXUAL BEHAVIOR WITH A PERSON OR PERSONS OF THE SAME SEX."

When the Board of Ordained Ministry met on Tuesday it discussed the various options listed in Paragraph 455 of the 1984 Discipline in the disposition of the complaint. We asked Julian Rush to be present that afternoon. The Reverend Rush declined to answer the question of whether he was a self-avowed practicing homosexual with a yes or no answer, stating that to answer at all "would be a violation of my personal life..." The document from the Advisory Committee which we have accepted for guidance in these matters states, "We urge against ... forms of questioning that invade unduly the privacy of persons." The document also states, "The Advisory Committee believes questioning of this nature in regard to ordained ministers should be reserved to limited confidential settings, and only when formal charges have been brought." Contrary to various reports which have misused terms, "formal charges" have not been brought; rather we are presently involved in a "complaint" process.

