

**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.



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The Board of Ordained Ministry did not force Julian Rush to answer that particular question. However the Board did ask if he understood and could abide by the law of the church, and specifically, did he understand the church law barring "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" from candidacy, ordination, and appointment, and did he understand our Annual Conference's definition concerning that, and could he abide by that. Julian's answer to both questions was immediate: "yes".

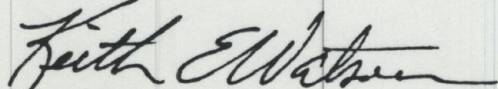
The statement of complaint against the Reverend Mr. Rush provides no statement nor evidence concerning specific "genital sexual behavior" at all. The complaint states that Rush has made "public statements both in the media and directly to us that he is a practicing homosexual." But the one media reprint attached to the complaint did not make any reference to his practice of homosexuality as the Conference has defined it, and Rush denied that he had made any such statement to the complainants.

There was lengthy discussion and debate within the Board of Ordained Ministry as to whether there was sufficient grounds for sending the complaint on to a Committee on Investigation, and the final vote was far from unanimous. But the decision that prevailed was for dismissal of the complaint. The Board felt that to send the complaint on to a Committee on Investigation (one of the options open to it "on rare occasions") was not warranted because there was no specific evidence to show that Julian Rush is a "practicing" homosexual. And, while he has "self-avowed" that he is homosexual in orientation, Rush has certainly not "openly acknowledged genital sexual behavior with a person or persons of the same sex."

This decision ends the complaint process in which the conference has been involved for the last eight months. It is still possible that formal charges could be brought. That would involve a different process, and a Committee on Investigation would be called in that instance.

I hope that this helps answer a few of the questions that you may have or that others bring to you. The Board of Ordained Ministry has attempted to do the best it could in holding up the rights of individuals and the law of the church in this proceeding.

Sincerely,



Keith E. Watson  
Chairperson