

October 28, 2010

Jon Furlow, Chair of the Committee on Investigation

Rev. David A. Busker, Counsel for the Church

### **Response to Judicial Complaint**

Although I knew the day was coming, I am still startled to see my life and my ministry framed as “criminal” by the Church I have loved and served for many years. While I willingly submitted all of the supporting paperwork to Steve Polster at the time of our initial meeting on February 23, 2010, it is still unsettling to see my Domestic Partnership document and the thank you note written by the couple I joined in Holy Union, used as “evidence” against me.

These are precious documents, signs of a love and a ministry guided by the Gospel of Jesus Christ that I attend to with the deepest sincerity and commitment. The first is, of course, a written, legal symbol of my partner’s and my long-time, faithful, monogamous, loving relationship. The other is a note of appreciation by two children of God who were (and still are) deeply grateful for my ministry to them. In my ordination, I answered the call to be in ministry to all people. How could I, in good faith, have not responded to their need for pastoral care? In both instances I am being charged with the offense of carrying love beyond the limits within which the church seeks to confine it.

Nonetheless, these documents, and many more, are before you and comprise the foundation for the charges which have been filed against me. I will respond to each charge individually, but in reverse order.

**Charge Number Three:** (That I have been disobedient to the order and discipline of the church.)

I request that this charge **be dismissed** on the following grounds:

This charge is based on ¶ 304.3 which specifies that “self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.”

I have not certified anyone, ordained anyone or appointed anyone. This paragraph does not apply to me. It is intended to instruct those who certify, ordain and appoint. There might well be grounds to charge someone under this paragraph, but not me.

Additionally, my refusal to surrender my credentials is not disobedience to the order and discipline of the church. The Constitution of the church specifically guarantees the right of all clergy to due process

and to a trial, if that eventuates. The charge makes a chargeable offense of my refusal to surrender my credentials, and with those credentials, my right to due process. This is a coercive demand: in order to avoid committing a chargeable offense, I must impose upon myself a sanction the church could impose only after a trial. By this charge, I am compelled not merely to be a witness against myself, but to convict and sentence myself. What then becomes of the rights our church constitution guarantees?

Finally, disagreement with the rules contained in the Discipline does not constitute disobedience to the order and discipline of the church. Rev. Busker cites the General Rules of the church as if they were binding. I wonder whether he or any of the members of the Committee on Investigation wear wedding rings despite Wesley's prohibition in the General Rules against wearing gold? Do any of you participate in the retirement system of the United Methodist Church, contravening his rule against "laying up treasure on earth?" Have any of you ever sung a secular song or read a book that did not "tend to the knowledge or love of God?" It is clear that the General Rules cannot be considered binding in the modern context.

Nothing with which I have been charged relates to trying to change our form of church government or polity. And it strikes me as more than a bit strange that the church would conclude this charge by appealing to conscience rather than wrath in the midst of a process that is attempting to control my exercise of conscience by initiating a punitive and wrathful response.

**Charge Number Two:** (That I am a self-avowed practicing homosexual)

I will respond to this charge at trial.

**Charge Number One:** (That I performed a Holy Union)

I will respond to this charge at trial.

The Word of God and the Flesh of Jesus bind together my being and my doing. May you discern well what it means to uphold the Discipline of the United Methodist Church and the Gospel of Jesus Christ – both of which call us to stand on the side of justice, to be in ministry with and for those whom society and religion reject, and to renounce every semblance of discrimination.

Witnessing to God's Expansive Love,

Rev. Amy E. DeLong