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December 9, 2015

Joseph P. Carson, PE
10953 Twin Harbor Drive
Knoxville, TN 37934

**RE: Complaint of Joseph Carson against Pastor Larry Trotter, Concord United
Methodist Church**

Dear Mr. Carson:

I am writing to respond to your recent letter of December 2, 2015, addressed to Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor. I write as the attorney for the Holston Annual Conference and Bishop Taylor.

I have reviewed your December 2 letter to Bishop Taylor and do not find your comments to be well taken. Specifically, your interpretation of Paragraph 363 of *The Discipline* is misplaced.

Paragraph 363 talks about a "just resolution" and goes on to say that it is "one that focuses on repairing any harm to people and communities, achieving real accountability by making things right insofar as possible and bringing healing to all parties." I read that paragraph as a directive addressed to correcting a wrong, a particular wrong within a congregation. The wrong you claim of Pastor Trotter is that he has refused to write a letter on your behalf to address what you call "decades-long, compounded, continuing, redemption of the world threatening, law breaking in federal agencies Office of Special Counsel and Merit Systems Protection Board."

Your complaint against Pastor Trotter has nothing to do with the congregation and his duties as a pastor to his congregation. Rather, it has to do with your claim that he is in violation of his duty as a pastor for not sending a letter in support of your grievances with the federal government.

More to the point, Paragraph 363 of *The Discipline* is aimed at wrong doing by a clergy person. The refusal of a clergy person to write a letter in support of one of his congregants personal battles with a government agency(ies) is not wrongdoing. In short, even if everything you claim is true, your complaint does not state a claim for which *The Discipline* provides a remedy.

Paragraph 363 of *The Discipline* outlines a procedure **IF** the Bishop feels that the complaint merits further review. There is no legal requirement in Paragraph 363 that obligates a Bishop to follow through with some kind of hearing. The "supervisory response" of Section (b) of Paragraph 363 does not command a Bishop to hold a "hearing". Rather, it provides direction to a Bishop when that Bishop decides that a further review of a complaint deserves a hearing.

* Certified as a Criminal Trial Specialist by the Tennessee Commission on CLE and Specialization and the National Board of Trial Advocacy

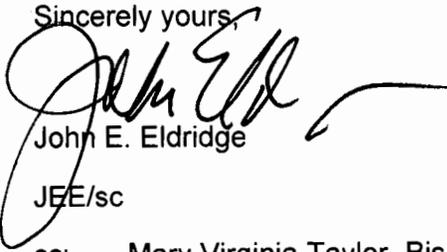
† Rule 31 Listed General Civil and Family Mediator

In other words, your reading of Paragraph 363 as directing a Bishop to hold a hearing and give you the opportunity to be orally heard by at least one other person is not required; it is only allowed if a Bishop so determines.

In the United Methodist Church, Bishops are given great discretion, and with good reason. The ministry of the United Methodist Church must go forward, and the going forward of that ministry is the reason that Bishop Taylor gets up every day. Be assured that she has considered your complaint, and determined that on its face, it did not merit further review. Thus, in consultation with the Cabinet, she did as *The Discipline* required, and dismissed it.

She then notified the Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry, the Reverend Kim Goddard, of the complaint and its disposition. The matter is over; the Bishop's decision is final.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John E. Eldridge", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John E. Eldridge

JEE/sc

cc: Mary Virginia Taylor, Bishop