

September 26, 2012

Emmanuel Christian Seminary  
1 Walker Drive  
Johnson City, TN 37601

To Whom it May Concern:

I am glad to write this letter to express my appreciation for the work and ministry of Rev. Christopher R. Rollston, Ph.D.

I was one of Dr. Rollston's students at Emmanuel from 2001-2005, where I received the Master of Divinity degree, and had the pleasure of ministering to/with him and his family while I was the Associate Minister at Boones Creek Christian Church during those years.

As a professor, Dr. Rollston was thorough, professional, sensitive, and attentive. He exhibited a concern for the seriousness of the subject matter and students' responsible interpretation of sacred texts for communities of faith. Though the area of Old Testament was not my area of concentration, his work helped me experience a full range of academic rigor across the theological disciplines, contributing to the strong habitus of *theologia* (as described by Edward Farley, 1994) I developed while a student at Emmanuel. His appreciation of the histories and cultures of Northwest Semitic peoples in particular, and those of the Middle East as a whole, broadened my world and helped me place the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament in global, historical, literary, and theological contexts.

I remember with particular acuity showing up early for an Old Testament Introduction lecture on the morning of the World Trade Center attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. As I sat in the hall waiting for class to begin, a professor's radio clued me in to the news of the attacks as they unfolded. Though I had pondered returning home, I was grateful that I did not miss Dr. Rollston's pastoral sensitivity which helped us make sense of those moments during that class session.

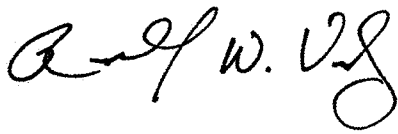
As I progressed through my studies and began to sense a call to further study in the area of Homiletics, Dr. Rollston was a positive and encouraging voice. In 2006, with his letter of recommendation as part of my application materials, I was accepted into the Ph.D program in Homiletics and Liturgics at Vanderbilt University's Graduate School of Religion, a program I completed in 2011. In my interaction with students and faculty at Vanderbilt, Dr. Rollston's name and work carried a sterling reputation.

Amid his relentless commitment to teaching and research, he generously gave his time and assistance to me as I sought ministerial standing in the Tennessee Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and I am happy to have been an active minister in this stream of the Stone-Campbell Movement since 2005. At the time I was at Boones Creek Christian Church, he was

an active member, sometimes preaching in another setting before attending church with his family on Sunday mornings. On more than one occasion he taught for midweek services to help foster learning and understanding for laypeople. I had the privilege of ministering to/with his two youngest daughters, who have blossomed into intelligent, thoughtful women with a heart for Christian service due in large part, no doubt, to his role as a parent and spouse.

Since my time at Emmanuel, I am glad to be able to call Chris a colleague in the academy and partner in ministry (and the felicitous intersection of those two), a trusted source for reflection on ancient texts, mentor in faith and life, and friend. I am happy he is a part of the Emmanuel community, which was such a formative part of my life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rev. R. W. Voelz". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a large, looping final flourish.

Rev. Richard W. Voelz, Ph.D.