Hello Clyde,

I know these last few months have been filled with a plethora of concerns and issues within the VMC. I wanted to take a moment to affirm the integrity and work you do as Conference Minister within and for the Conference.

I read the letter requesting the reinstating of Isaac's ministerial credentials, and to practice forbearance. I would submit that the conference is practicing forbearance and love by engaging in dialogue and process with Isaac and the Raleigh congregation. This action was not done without considerable discussion, prayer and integrity.

Forbearance in my understanding is a mutual respect for each other but does not negate current understandings and practice of guidelines that help to maintain continuity, until such time that the denomination decides to change our documents. However, to use forbearance language by individuals and groups to usurp the current understandings held by the boarder church and denomination of performing ceremonies for same sex couples, creates undue and unfair pressure that undermines time honored tradition. To allow a select group or grouping of people to enforce their beliefs without honoring a church wide discernment process feels very hierarchical and premature. I believe the intent of forbearance was to hear one another and walk in love but not violate positional statements and understandings.

I am empathic towards the sentiments of persons who want to reverse the conference's current decision to suspend Isaac's credentials, but we must not neglect our responsibility to honor the decisions of those who forged these guidelines with the hope that they would unite us and give us direction in trying times. I trust we will honor the ancient landmarks which our fore-parents have laid.

Perhaps the day has arrived to review these guidelines for a body of believers with a different understanding. Therefore, my counsel is to begin the process without delay to do the hard work of reviewing or rewriting our understandings and bylaws. This process will require patience and endurance so that all voices can be heard, practicing forbearance that respects the myriad of views. Finally, my understanding of forbearance is not compromise, but rather, a mutual respect that allows God's love and Spirit to unite us while we feel the tension of honoring our documents that have guided us for years, until such time that those documents are amended.

I trust that both sides of this tension will respect and honor the decisions that have been made by the conference. In spite of the pain we each are experiencing, we remain one in Christ. Like Paul and Barnabas, misunderstandings happen but the ministry of the gospel continues.

Sincerely,

Bishop L. W. Francisco III