



# Uniting Church in Australia

## PASTORAL LETTER

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Last weekend the newly elected Assembly Standing Committee (ASC) met in Sydney. During our meeting together, we shared information and stories from across the life of the church since the Fifteenth Assembly. We spoke of the signs of hope and the movement of the Holy Spirit we continue to see in and through our Church and the wider Australian society. We spoke of pastoral concerns and prayed for the life and mission of our Church.

It was the task of the ASC to make decisions in relation to a number of matters referred to us by the Assembly meeting, including authorising an additional marriage liturgy.

The ASC has faithfully considered the matters referred to it as requested by the Assembly, and the [Uniting Church in Australia Additional Marriage Liturgy 2018](#) has been released. The liturgy is posted on the Assembly website. The ASC has determined that authorised marriage celebrants within the Uniting Church in Australia may choose to use this liturgy in weddings from the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2018. By using this liturgy, or the previously authorised marriage liturgies, Uniting Church authorised marriage celebrants will be acting properly within the rites of the Uniting Church in Australia.

I reaffirm that the Assembly's resolution on marriage allows you to hold one of two positions on marriage, as a member, Minister or Church Council. The Assembly made this decision acknowledging the faithfully held positions across the life of the Church.

If you are still concerned about the position of the Uniting Church in relation to same-gender marriage, I would encourage you to talk to your Presbytery or Synod leaders to ensure you are acting on accurate information about the nature and impact of the Assembly's decision. Resources including [frequently asked questions](#) are also available on the Assembly website.

I have heard powerful and inspiring stories about the conscientious work of Presbyteries and Synods from across Australia. These Councils of the Church have been working with you in developing and maintaining the Uniting Church's missional strength and vibrancy. I am confident that both your Synods and Presbyteries are deeply attuned to the issues that are arising for you and have developed supports to allow you to stay focussed on the missional leading of the Spirit.

In the opening worship for the Fifteenth Assembly, I asked the question, how will we be shaped by God's abundant grace? I ask that question of us, the Uniting Church, now.

In the light of the Assembly's discernment to allow our Church to affirm two equal and distinct views on marriage, I have seen the grace of God reflected in many of our interactions with each other. Uniting Church congregations, individual members and leaders have sought to truly listen to each other, and seek to understand how we can live in community with one another, while seeing the Biblical witness and our theological foundations through different interpretive lenses.

Passionately disagreeing with one another is not unusual in the church. If we are to grow in maturity, as a follower of Jesus in the 21st Century, we will be deeply engaged in reflecting on Scripture and theology with others who may express their Christian discipleship in ways different to ourselves. Many of our Uniting Church members have been respectful and loving in expressing their passionately held convictions in dialogue with other members of the Body of Christ. It saddens me that some language and behaviour have failed to recognise that people who hold a different view, are also seeking to be faithful disciples of Christ.

I invite you to continue to pray for the health and flourishing of the Uniting Church in Australia. I invite you to pray for the reconciliation, renewal and unity that is Christ's call to us. I pray that our life and witness as the Uniting Church will continue to invite people to experience the transforming power of the Gospel of Christ in their lives and communities.

Yours in Christ's service,



Dr Deidre Palmer  
President  
Uniting Church in Australia

