

11th ASSEMBLY - STATEMENT SEXUALITY AND LEADERSHIP

SEXUALITY AND LEADERSHIP

Preamble

In the struggle to be the Uniting Church in Australia, we affirm that our unity is our oneness in Jesus Christ; we acknowledge a variety of theological perspectives and biblical understandings which we maintain in tension within our life as a church, recognising that variety is a gift to the Church which allows most people to find a spiritual home amongst our many congregations and faith communities:

1. to acknowledge and lament that even though the decision of the 10th Assembly regarding Sexuality and Leadership (*Assembly Minute 03.12.04, varied by Assembly Standing Committee Minute 03.69.03*) was made prayerfully and in good faith and according to UCA polity, it was a catalyst for the deep concern and disquiet present in some parts of the UCA.
2. to express its regret that following the 10th Assembly there were some faithful ministers and members of the church who believed that because of the decision of the 10th Assembly regarding Sexuality and Leadership (*Assembly Minute 03.12.04, varied by Assembly Standing Committee Minute 03.69.03*) they had no option but to withdraw from the Uniting Church altogether.
3. to express its regret that faithful Christian gay and lesbian people, on whose lives the Assembly deliberations have impacted, have continued to experience pain in our church.
4. to declare that the matter of Sexuality and Leadership is at heart a matter of faith and concerns our humanity in Christ.

The 11th Assembly

5. to acknowledge:
 - a) that Assembly members are not of one mind regarding the issue of the acceptance into the specified ministries of those living in committed same-gender relationships; and
 - b) that some members of the Assembly adhere to the traditional teaching and practice of Reformed and Evangelical churches in this matter, while others who also adhere to the Reformed and Evangelical tradition believe that God may be leading this tradition to a different understanding and practice; and

- c) and therefore, notwithstanding the hopes of many in the Church, that the 11th Assembly, having prayerfully sought to discern God's will and after much deliberation, is not prepared to exercise further its determining responsibility in this matter.

The Next Steps

6. Pursuant to clause 38 of the Constitution, to advise Synods and Presbyteries;
 - a) that congregations who resolve that they are unable in conscience to receive into ministry placement a person living in a committed same-gender relationship, shall not be compelled to do so; and
 - b) to respect the decision of a congregation indicating its willingness to consider calling a minister in a committed same-gender relationship.
7. to encourage Congregations:
 - a) to be aware that within many Congregations there is a diversity of belief on matters of sexuality and leadership and that some members do not feel free to express their beliefs;
 - b) to become safe communities where people may hold diverse beliefs on these matters and work together as the Body of Christ; and
 - c) to recognise that the possibility of living with difference is a gift which Christ offers to the world.
8. to encourage the whole church:
 - a) to commit itself to continue to grapple with the implications of the gospel of God's grace for our humanity, the church's life, and participation in God's mission in the world;
 - b) to call on all members of the church who hold different views to work at living together in peace as members of the Body of Christ; and
 - c) to hope, pray and work for that common mind in faith which is Jesus Christ's gift and will.
9. to request the Assembly Working Group on Doctrine to engage in further work that assists the Church in our ongoing consideration of the theological diversity of the Church on this issue and to authorise the Assembly Standing Committee to determine the terms of reference for such work.
10. to acknowledge:
 - a) that the Uniting Church is committed "to bear witness to that unity which is both Christ's gift and will for the Church"; and
 - b) that Christ continues to feed us with word and sacrament as we wait on God's living Word;

and to call the Uniting Church to re-commit itself to its primary purpose of “worship, witness and service” (Quotes are from the *Basis of Union*, Paragraph 1).

11. to request that the President consult with the Moderators in relation to a pastoral letter to the whole church.