

10TH ASSEMBLY (2003): RESOLUTION 84 (AS AMENDED)

***Proposal 84* as amended by the Assembly Standing Committee – August 2003**

(in light of concerns expressed on Assembly *Proposal 84*)

The Assembly Standing Committee joyfully acknowledges that:

‘The Church as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit confesses Jesus as Lord over its own life; it also confesses that Jesus is Head over all things, the beginning of a new creation, of a new humanity.’ (*Basis of Union*, para 3)

We further gratefully acknowledge that:

‘in his own strange way Christ constitutes, rules and renews [us] as his Church.’ (*Basis of Union*, para 4)

Having prayerfully met in retreat from 22 to 24 August 2003, seeking God’s will and believing this to be God’s guidance, we resolved that the Assembly Standing Committee:

Statement of Apology and Regret

Acknowledges with regret that *Proposal 84* and the way it was reported has evoked depths of shared suffering among members of the Church, leading to many members experiencing pain, hurt, confusion and anger.

Apologises to members and ministers that more was not done to make them aware in advance of the Tenth Assembly that matters of membership, ministry and sexuality would be considered by the Assembly.

Clarifying *Proposal 84*

3. (a) Notes that ‘Celibacy in singleness and faithfulness in marriage’ and ‘Right relationships’ referred to in parts 2 (ii) and (iii) of *Proposal 84* were intended to illustrate some differing views held by church members and have never been endorsed or approved by the Assembly or its Standing Committee.
- (b) Celebrates that in the Uniting Church we have already agreed on and affirmed important matters regarding marriage, marriage preparation, marriage counseling, divorce, re-marriage, sexuality and sexual ethics (Assembly minutes 97.31.5-97.31.13) and we have adopted the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice which gives clear guidance about the appropriate conduct and accountability of ministers.
4. In order to clarify the meaning of *Proposal 84* in accordance with the rationale presented to the Assembly, determines to act under its powers stated in Constitution clause 47 and Regulation 3.6.26 to vary *Proposal 84* as attached.

5. Informs the Church that congregations and councils of the Church who wish to state a sexual ethic may elect to do so after prayerful consideration and study of the Scriptures providing that there is respect for and acknowledgment of those who hold a different view; such statements do not prevent the consideration on a case-by-case basis of individuals related to candidature, ordination or commissioning, and placement, according to proposal 84.3.

Ministry and Membership in The Uniting Church

Proposal 84 as varied by the Assembly Standing Committee, 24 August 2003

This wording of *Proposal 84* is to be used in all future discussions on this matter.

The Assembly Standing Committee, acting with the powers of the Assembly, resolved: To note the following extracts from Assembly minute 00.25.03:

- (a) we celebrate that the Church's faith is in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that the Church's work and unity are built upon the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ;
- (b) we affirm the authority of the Scriptures as defined in the *Basis of Union*, acknowledging that within the Church there is a range of views on questions of Biblical interpretation on various matters of Christian faith and practice;
- (c) we affirm we are bound together by Christ, and because we love the Uniting Church as part of the one holy catholic and apostolic church we will continue to work together in our diversity as servants of the living God.

Noting that:

- (i) within the Church people of faith have wrestled with integrity to interpret Scripture in relation to the issue of Christian sexual ethics and have on some issues come to mutually exclusive positions;
- (ii) membership of the Uniting Church is open to all persons subject only to the guidance of the *Basis of Union*, the Constitution, the Regulations and policies of the Assembly,
call upon members of the Church to seek to live together in peace as people of faith, notwithstanding differing views in the matter of same gender relationships.

To remind Presbyteries of the decisions of previous Assemblies that:

- (a) in considering issues related to candidature, ordination or commissioning for specified ministries, and the placement of persons in specified ministries, decisions should only be taken on a case by case basis; and
- (b) a decision on the suitability of an applicant or candidate depends upon a wide range of criteria and may include consideration of the manner in which the applicant's or candidate's sexuality is expressed.

To request the Standing Committee:

- (a) to provide guidance for Congregations and Presbyteries on how to conduct discussions on contentious issues in ways that comply with the Church's policy on vilification and harassment;
- (b) to seek advice for the Church on the legal implications of the relevant legislation, eg anti discrimination legislation, anti vilification legislation, etc; and advise councils of the Church of this advice; and
- (c) to amend, on the advice of the Legal Reference Committee, Regulation 2.7.16 (l) to make more explicit the role of presbyteries in the placement of people in specified ministries.'

Notes of the variations made by the Standing Committee to *Proposal 84*

in part 1(a) the words 'We celebrate' have been added, in order to be fully consistent with the resolution of the Ninth Assembly;

in parts 1(b) and (c) the words 'we affirm' have been added, in order to be fully consistent with the resolution of the Ninth Assembly;

in part 2 line 1 'Recognising' has been replaced by 'Noting';

in part 2 clauses (ii) and (iii) have been deleted;

in part 2 clause (iv) has been renumbered as clause (ii);

in part 2 last line 'same sex' has been replaced by 'same gender';

in part 3 line 1 the words 'of the decisions of previous Assemblies' have been added.

Terence Corkin

Assembly General Secretary

24 August 2003