



All of this is us



## Uniting Church in Australia

Pastoral Statement

7 December 2017



### Changes to Australian marriage laws

Sisters and brothers grace, mercy and peace from God and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Since the 13th Assembly our Church has been involved in respectful conversations about marriage, holding a space for grace for each other. During this time and particularly in the past year our nation has also had a conversation and a poll. Sadly the broader conversation has often been disrespectful and has caused great hurt to many people.

This week the Parliament has passed legislation to amend the Marriage Act to make same gender marriages legal in Australia. The Assembly General Secretary has written to all ministers and authorised marriage celebrants of the Uniting Church in Australia to explain what this means for each of them legally.

Some members of our Church will greet this legislative change with great joy whilst others will be deeply concerned about what they see as the consequences of the change. We recognise there will be frustration and disappointment for some same gender couples who will still be unable to be married in our Church because our policy on marriage remains unchanged.

At the 15th Assembly in July 2018 we will consider marriage, including a report being prepared by the Assembly Working Group on Doctrine and recommendations from the Assembly Standing Committee. During the triennium we have had formal and informal conversations, and we will have further opportunity at the Assembly to discuss marriage in a respectful way. At that time I pray that God will enable us to truly hear one another and most importantly the leading of the Holy Spirit.

I appeal to you in the time between now and the rising of the 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly to please pray for wisdom and discernment for the members of Assembly who will gather as the body of Christ.

During my term as President I have often spoken from Romans 12 verse 5: "We belong to one another". The writer of Romans continues speaking about sincere love as: "Honouring one another above yourselves" (v10). In all we say and do, I appeal to you all, let us follow these encouragements to be Christ-like.

Whatever your personal response is to these changes of Australian civil law, the Church's call remains unchanged to be a "fellowship of reconciliation".

We are the body of Christ. Let us be witnesses to the transforming power of God's love in Jesus Christ at work in and amongst us.

Marrkapmirri,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart McMillan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Stuart McMillan  
President

*Marrkapmirri means deep affection, love as with a brother or sister, in the Yolŋu languages of North East Arnhem Land.*