



# DISCUSSION PAPER ON MARRIAGE

THIRTEENTH ASSEMBLY, UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

RESOLUTION 12.31

12.31

It was resolved to

- a) acknowledge that the current position on marriage is provided in the 8th Assembly Minute 97.31.12:

The Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia declares that:

## 1. Marriage

Marriage for Christians is the freely given consent and commitment in public and before God of a man and a woman to live together for life. It is intended to be the mutually faithful lifelong union of a woman and man expressed in every part of their life together. In marriage the man and the woman seek to encourage and enrich each other through love and companionship.

In the marriage service:

- the woman and man make a public covenant with each other and with God, in the company of family and friends;
- the couple affirm their trust in each other and in God;
- the Church affirms the sanctity of marriage and nurtures those who pledge themselves to each other in marriage and calls upon all people to support, uphold and nurture those who pledge themselves to each other in marriage

Where sexual union takes place the partners seek to express mutual delight, pleasure and tenderness, thus strengthening the union of their lives together. In marriage, children may be born and are to be brought up in love and security, thus providing a firm foundation for society.

## 2. Separation, Divorce and Re-marriage

- An inability to sustain the marriage relationship breaks the commitment to be together for life and may be painful for the couple, the children in their care, as well as for parents, friends and the Church community.
- In cases of the irretrievable breakdown of marriage, the Church acknowledges that divorce may be the only creative and life giving direction to take.
- The Church has a responsibility to:
  - (i) care for people, including children, through the trauma of the ending of a marriage;
  - (ii) help people where appropriate to grieve, repent, grow in self-understanding, receive affirmation, grace and forgiveness;
  - (iii) support them as they hear God's call for new life.
- The grace and healing of God are available to people who are divorced, which may free them to marry again.



- b) noting the desire for respectful conversation within the diverse community of the church and the current public debate about same-gender marriage to ask the Doctrine Working Group, after appropriate consultation across the Church and with ongoing liaison with the Standing Committee:

to prepare a discussion paper on the theology of marriage within the Uniting Church, and explore its implications for public covenants for same-gender relationships;

- to circulate the paper widely, and specifically to UAICC National Committee, synods, Chairpersons of National Conferences, presbyteries, UAICC Regions, Uniting Network, the Assembly of Confessing Congregations, congregations, agencies and institutions of the Uniting Church, requesting responses to the Working Group by a date to be determined by the Standing Committee;
- and to circulate the paper widely, and specifically to UAICC National Committee, synods, Chairpersons of National Conferences, presbyteries, UAICC Regions, Uniting Network, the Assembly of Confessing Congregations, congregations, agencies and institutions of the Uniting Church, requesting responses to the Working Group by a date to be determined by the Standing Committee; and
- to summarise responses and bring recommendations to the Standing Committee by November 2014, to enable the Standing Committee to bring a report to the 14th Assembly in 2015. (Agreement)