

Golden Grove Uniting Church

Mission statement: To draw people to our Lord Jesus Christ and nurture them through this church



Uniting Church SA

An Open Letter
Colleen Geyer
The General Secretary of the Assembly of the UCA

Ref. GGUCASSY190418.

Rev.
Jonathan Button
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19 April, 2018

Dear Colleen,

On behalf of the Golden Grove Uniting Church, we write to express our deep concern regarding suggested possible changes to the Uniting Church's received doctrine and practice of marriage at the forthcoming Fifteenth Assembly of the UCA, from that defined as exclusively between a man and a woman, to that defined as between two people regardless of gender. We urge the Assembly to resist any such changes.

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We write for the sake of the honour of God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ – as He has revealed Himself according to Holy Scripture, the integrity of the Christian Gospel within the UCA, and for the welfare of all members of Australian society who receive that Gospel.

We urge the UCA Assembly to continue to unswervingly uphold the received doctrine of marriage of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, based on Holy Scripture, as per its iteration at the Eighth Assembly of the UCA – i.e., "*Marriage for Christians is the freely given consent and commitment in public and before God of a man and woman to live together for life*" - and to ensure that the UCA's practice is entirely consistent with this doctrine. This doctrine and practice are vital to the life of the UCA, and of the substance of the faith, by virtue of the following:

1. It is the received doctrine of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.
2. The *Basis of Union* of the UCA binds us to Holy Scripture.
3. Holy Scripture exclusively supports male-female marriage.
4. The UCA sees marriage as a foundational-redemptive gift for human society.
5. Male-female marriage uniquely images God's being, and His saving relationship with humanity.
6. Upholding this doctrine is essential to our ecumenical mission.

Upholding this doctrine and practice of marriage is vital to the UCA's mission of the Gospel of Christ, offering to society a true understanding of God and His love, and His gift of the redemption of true human relationships and society.

Being a matter vital to the life of the church, and of the substance of the faith, if the Assembly of the UCA were to contemplate any alteration to its received doctrine or practice of marriage, it is obligatory for it to seek the concurrence (*plain agreement*) of the other councils of the church, under paragraphs 14 and 15.(e) of the Basis of Union, and clause 39.(a) of the Constitution. Given the high significance of this vital matter, and the primary place of the Congregation within the life and mission of the UCA (*Const. 3.22*), all congregations need, and would expect, to be included in the concurrence sought.

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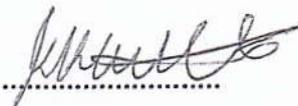
A member of the Assembly of Confessing Congregations within the Uniting Church in Australia

We further point out that, any change to the *practice* of marriage that contradicted the church's received doctrine – such as the “blessing” of a same-sex relationship, or a Minister officiating at a same-sex wedding – would implicitly change the church's *doctrine*.

If the Assembly changes its received doctrine and practice of marriage, we cannot accept this. We maintain that the doctrinal position we hold to in this matter is that obligated upon the UCA by the *Basis of Union*, its founding document – the “DNA of the Uniting Church” (Davis McCaughy). Consequently, if the Assembly of the UCA changes or undermines the received doctrine and practice of marriage, it would have moved itself outside of the UCA's doctrinal foundation. This would place the Assembly in unprecedented and contradictory cross-purposes with the foundation of the UCA, with the life and mission of our congregation, and all other congregations that hold the same position.

We pray for the Spirit, grace and wisdom of Jesus Christ, Lord of the Church, to be with all leaders and members of the UC Assembly in dealing with the matters before it, according to His good will and purpose.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Wheatcroft', written over a dotted line.

John Wheatcroft, Chairperson,
for the Church Council of the Golden Grove Uniting Church.

[*signed by 59 members of the congregation - details withheld]