



President: Rev Dr Andrew Dutney BA, PhD, EdD

General Secretary: Rev Terence Corkin BA, BTh, BLegS

99:TC:JB

12 May 2014

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings from the Assembly!

This discussion paper on marriage and same-gender relationships has been prepared by the Doctrine Working Group and is provided for distribution and consideration. It is also available on the Assembly website.

We have also provided a response form which is to be sent to the Assembly by 10 October, 2014 in order for the responses to be collated and provided to the ASC for its meeting in November this year.

The discussion paper comes in response to the request from the 13th Assembly (Resolution 12.31) as follows:

- a) acknowledge that the current position on marriage is set out in Assembly Minute 97.31.12.
- 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 the 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 the 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.

The Doctrine Working Group suggests that the paper be distributed and considered using the Response Form, as per the Assembly Minute, asking for responses by 10 October, 2014. Informing the discussion paper was a series of preliminary consultations with identified groups and networks within the church and with a sample of Presbyteries. The responses have been summarized and written up by Rob Bos in the consultation report, *Views of marriage in the UCA+*. It is provided as an appendix should people like to read it also.

We hope the Church's engagement with these important issues will not only help our own thinking and decision-making in this area but also contribute to the conversation in the wider community. We are all aware of the broad range of views on these matters within the Church and the wider community and we need no reminding to enter these discussions with respect and sensitivity.

Regards,

Rev Terence Corkin
General Secretary