



15 September 2017

The peace of the Lord be with you.

I am writing to you about an issue of great sensitivity. At our recent Synod meeting on Saturday evening, 9 September, I led a conversation with the members of Synod on same gender marriage.

Using the model recommended by the Assembly of “Space for Grace”, I invited the Synod to engage in a time of deep listening to each other. There were no debates, proposals or seeking of consensus. Rather, the process was designed to enhance respectful listening with an encouragement for each of us to find extra grace towards those with whom we may disagree.

I acknowledged on Saturday evening that while we're held together by our love of Christ, the teaching of Scripture and our 'Basis of Union', there exists a rich diversity of theological opinions within the Uniting Church. None of us sees the will of God with 20/20 vision, rather at times we “see but a poor reflection as in a mirror” (1 Cor 13: 12).

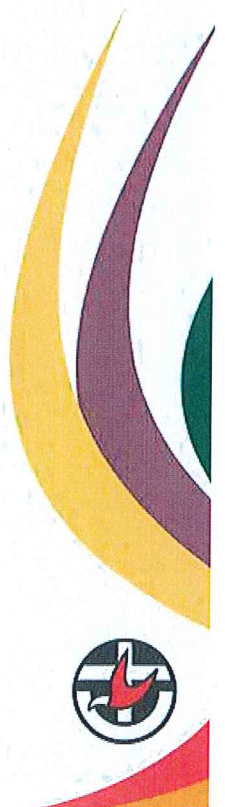
I also acknowledged that the issue of same gender marriage had caused a great deal of pain. I have received feedback from LGBTIQ members of our church and the wider community that they have been very damaged by some of the comments made in the media and beyond. We need to recognise that for many years this community has been judged, stigmatised and very harshly treated. As a church we must uphold these vulnerable people in our prayers and guard against any traces of homophobia.

I also want to recognise that in recent months a number of upholders of traditional marriage have been threatened and vilified, and at times felt afraid to express their viewpoint. This is lamentable in a democratic society.

As a church, we will not be telling people how to vote in the forthcoming postal survey. Rather, we are encouraging all our members to seek to live as faithful disciples of Christ, learning from Scripture and theology, reason and research, history and tradition, experience and the leading of the Spirit.

My prayer is that we will be very careful about how we speak about others who hold a different view to ourselves. I also urge you to be well informed and prayerful about seeking to discern God's will on this matter.

We have some excellent resources on the Assembly website that give us insight into some of the issues. In a few months, an Assembly working group will provide us with a comprehensive report. At our July 2018 Assembly, same gender marriage will be discussed.



In the meantime, I want to encourage all our members to set an example of respectful and gracious conversation. Let not this issue divide us, rather may we treat each other with great dignity and care.

Blessings in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Steve Francis
Moderator
Uniting Church, W.A Synod.

