

14 July 2018

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The President of the Assembly, Dr. Deidre Palmer, has announced the decision of the 15th Assembly which has agreed to hold two equal and distinct views on marriage to honour the diversity of Christian belief among its members. The President's announcement is attached and the link is here <https://uniting.church/freedom-to-decide-on-marriage>

The Assembly was a comprehensive time of open, honest, listening and discerning. I saw the theological, geographic, demographic, and cultural diversity of the church in deep dialogue. I believe it was a place where the members could discern; we were wonderfully led in worship and bible study. We experienced the prayerful support of the church, including from our ecumenical partners from Asia, Africa and the Pacific.

I commend the decisions to you.

I refer to the decision to celebrate marriage for both opposite gender and same gender couples. I believe it is the prayerful and faithful discernment of the Assembly, which decided with a strong majority – significantly more than two thirds – to accept both definitions of marriage.

I realise that it will be difficult for some to accept, while for others it will be a time for which they have long waited. I encourage you to hear that the Assembly seeks to be respectful to the faith of the faithful, to scripture, and to reason and experience.

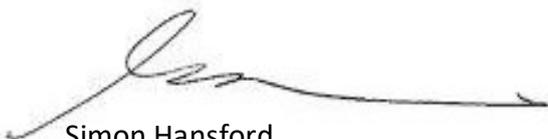
It is clear that different understandings on marriage in the church are sincerely and faithfully held. The resolution is a way we can find a place to be together; to be open to every faithful disciple who holds a view different from our own.

Our unity is founded on our being baptised into Christ. We are called to honour that, by receiving others in Christ, by being Christ-like to others, and to seek to build a community where the image of God in all of us is valued and celebrated.

In the weeks ahead, I am making myself available to congregations and presbyteries so that we can explore what this new, and challenging decision means for our whole church.

This is our hope.

With you in Christ,



Simon Hansford
Moderator, Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of NSW and ACT