



“GRACE IN ABUNDANCE, HOPE LIBERATED”

The 15th Triennial Assembly of Uniting Church of Australia was held in July 2018 at Box Hill Town Hall in Victoria, attended by approximately 265 members.

Decisions made by the Assembly are as follows (précis). Full text is available at <https://assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/2855-grace-in-abundance-hope-liberated>

MARRIAGE AND SAME-GENDER RELATIONSHIPS

After six years of formal consideration, more than 30 years of conversation and meeting for the first time since the change to Australian marriage laws, the 15th Assembly resolved to allow Uniting Church ministers and authorised celebrants the freedom to conduct, or to refuse to conduct, same-gender marriages.

Two equal and distinct statements of belief on marriage to honour the diversity of Christian belief among members were adopted.

“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”. (The existing statement.)

“Marriage for Christians is the freely given consent and commitment in public and before God of two people to live together for life.”

Church councils will have the right to determine whether marriage services take place on their premises or not.

An additional liturgy will be developed for the new statement of belief.

A resource including frequently asked questions about the implications for authorised celebrants, church councils and congregations is being prepared.

An approved marriage liturgy is expected to be available for same-gender weddings in Uniting Churches by the end of September 2018.

SOVEREIGNTY FOR FIRST PEOPLES

The 15th Assembly affirmed Australia’s First Peoples as the sovereign peoples of Australia. After consultation the proposal reached a definition of sovereignty as the “way in which First Peoples understand themselves to be the traditional owners and custodians of the land.”

Uniting Church members will also be asked to observe a Day of Mourning on the Sunday prior to the 26th of January every year, with reflection on the profound effect of invasion and colonisation on First Peoples during worship services on that day.

Later proposals on the recognition of UCA languages including Aboriginal languages and National Conference conversations with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Conference were referred to Standing Committee.

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE STATEMENT

The 15th Assembly adopted a statement that commits the Uniting Church to repudiating all teaching and theologies that justify domestic violence.

The Assembly Standing Committee was asked to create educational, theological and liturgical resources for distribution to the wider church and encourage UCA councils and members to carry out the commitments found in the Statement.

A NEW CLIMATE

The 15th Assembly continued the Uniting Church's tradition of taking strong environmental action to address climate change.

Uniting Church members, synods, presbyteries, congregations, agencies and schools will all be encouraged to:

Inform themselves and their communities about climate change; advocate for government policies and political action; listen to and learn from the voices of vulnerable people across the world who are experiencing the impact; consider ways to reduce their own contribution; tell stories of best practice in remote, rural and urban areas.

DISABILITY ACCESS

The 15th Assembly adopted a Statement of Access and Welcome to guide conversations about justice and equality for people living with disabilities.

The Church is asked to embody a community life that in its theology and practice is accessible to all people; to ensure that within its own life people with disability are treated justly and to advocate for justice and equality for people with disability in the wider community.

WORKING AND PRAYING FOR PEACE IN KOREA

The 15th Assembly committed its support to the peace process on the Korean peninsula.

The Uniting Church pledged to support moves towards a peace treaty by prayer, through partnership with Korean churches and the World Council of Churches and by engaging with the Australian government and the Leader of the Opposition.

VOLUNTARY ASSISTED DYING.

No decision was made on a Church consultation process on the issue of voluntary assisted dying.
