

HopeNET



Response to Marriage Consultation Branches

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Response to UCA Assembly Papers on Marriage and Same Sex Relationships

The Branches Community Church (prepared by the Lay Ministry Team of the Branches)

We, the members of The Branches Community Church endorse the current position of marriage as stated at the UCA Eighth Assembly:

“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.

It is intended to be the mutually faithful lifelong union of a woman and man expressed in every part of their life together.

In marriage the man and the woman seek to encourage and enrich each other through love and companionship.”

This position is supported by Jesus’ clear teaching as recorded in Mark 10:6-9:

“At the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

This is the Biblical understanding of marriage as defined by Christ.

1. Identify any challenges or new insights raised for members of the group by the commentary on the theological dimensions of marriage service.

- The idea of so-called same-sex marriage is impossible to those who adhere to Biblical theology.

2. If the government were to legislate to enable same-gender couples to marry, what issues or questions would this raise for you?

- The Branches Community Church will continue with its prophetic and social responsibility to urge the government to retain marriage as defined in the Marriage Amendment Act 2004.
- But if the government was to legislate to enable same-sex couples to marry, then that is the government's decision.
- The church and its leaders have the responsibility to be a prophetic voice declaring the revealed will of God and encouraging the actions and behaviour of members to conform to Biblical principles, even if contrary to the State's position.

3. What would you see as appropriate responses by the Uniting Church?

– pastorally for its members and the wider community?

- Encourage members to support those pastors and ministers who refuse to conform to un-Biblical practice, including conducting same-sex marriages.
- Continue to teach and preach Biblical principles related to all areas of life, including marriage.
- The UCA has pastoral responsibility to support and maintain stable marriage between a woman and a man for the nurture and wellbeing of children.
- The UCA should prepare to address the detrimental social effects of same sex marriage in the wider community, including children's welfare, likely increase in disease, gender confusion, destabilising of marriage as the fundamental procreative unit of society and the impairment of individual liberties.

– in the church's practices concerning Christian marriage?

- Affirm the UCA's current position on marriage and related Biblical doctrine.

– in relation to the government and the church's role in conducting marriages?

- Reinforce that the church is under the authority of Christ and His Word, not under the authority of the State.
- The church's position should not be influenced even if the State tries to force ministers and pastors to conform to anti-Biblical legislation.
- If the state does try to impose an anti-Biblical position upon the church through a legal redefinition of marriage, the UCA must fully support those ministers and members who refuse to conform to the state's demands.

– in any celebration or blessing of same-gender relationships?

- The suggestion that God should bless sexual relations between people of the same sex is an heretical notion that defies Scripture and the character and purpose of God.

4. Should the Uniting Church reconsider its understanding of marriage at this time?**Why or why not?**

- No. It is Jesus Christ who defines marriage. If the UCA were to depart from His teaching, it would separate itself from Christ.

5. What other issues are important to you in relation to these matters?

- The support of the redefinition of marriage by the UCA would cause serious injury to ecumenical relations, and would be a betrayal of those who have gone before us, some even to the point of suffering and death.

6. Are there particular questions or insights into these issues that you want to share from your ethno-cultural community?

- It is not the right of cultural communities, nor even the church, to define marriage. The culture of the Kingdom of God should have the only influence.

Members of The Branches Community Church with their diverse ethnic background fully endorse this Response

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