

HopeNET



Response to Marriage Consultation; Port Pirie Lighthouse UC

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Lighthouse UCA Port Pirie: Response to Marriage Consultation

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

We are deeply concerned by the changes made already to Uniting in Worship 2. Our Congregation was not aware of these changes being made, and the total reliance on these in The Discussion Paper on Marriage, rather than referring to Uniting in Worship 1.

- The introduction of “two partners” and “Two people” is unacceptable to us as a biblically based church.
- The Christian marriage service “is to take place liturgically in the presence of God and publically in the presence of a human community”. God is first not second to the community.
- We strongly agree that marriage is a gift from God, not from man.
- The stated doctrines of Creation, Falleness, and Redemption have all been manipulated to fit the changed agenda and completely lose sight of their true meaning in Genesis, Hebrews and Ephesians.
- The entire argument presents the law of the land and not the law of God. God’s word is firm and not to be diminished or changed by worldly practices

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

The main reason for the state legislating about relationships at all is for the protection of children. Self-evident public wisdom has always recognised that the best environment for a child to grow up in is in a household with their mother and father, whose mutual love and long-term covenant union is the foundation of the child's familial identity and security.

The marriage law has stood to recognise and protect that identity and security.

Because the right to marry and the right to have children are recognised internationally as a compound right, legislating for same gender couples to marry is also legislating to normalise single gender parenting. Unlike other single parenting which is often the result of difficult or tragic circumstances, this innovation would legislate to deny the right of each child to have a mother and a father.

In overseas countries where same-gender marriage has been introduced, corresponding school curriculums have been changed to emphasise the claimed goodness and normality of same gender relationships, sexual activity and parenting. At the same time statements to the contrary are deemed antisocial or even unlawful.

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

– pastorally for its members and the wider community?

The Uniting Church should continually draw people's attention to the words of the Lord Jesus who referenced Scripture when he said 'from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.'" Mark 10:6-9 (ESV)

– in the church's practices concerning Christian marriage?

The Uniting Church should reaffirm its current biblical doctrine of marriage, holding fast to the true nature, purpose and splendour of traditional marriage and family. It should therefore instruct its members and interested others in the beauty, sanctity, function and importance of Christian marriage. And it should continue to solemnise such marriages in the name of God, blessing those whom God has joined together.

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

If the government were to legislate to enable same-gender couples to marry, that would change entirely what marriage is according to that law. It would no longer be the clear recognition of a natural given—the love-union of a man and woman resulting in children, and would, instead, simply be a covenant bond between any two persons. This is not what the Christian church has been solemnising and blessing in the past, and most Christian churches and their ministers would struggle with being the authorised celebrants of such covenants and with declaring them to be marriages contrary to Scripture. Our church may choose to take no part in this legal registration of relationships. We may simply solemnise and bless man/woman marriages before and in the name of God and leave legal registration to others.

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

The blessing of the man and the woman (*Genesis 1:27, 28*) is related to their male-female creation in the image of God, and to the commission to ‘be fruitful and multiply’. The idea of God ordaining and blessing sexual relations between two men or two women defies scripture and all that we believe about God. We very strongly reject the proposal of ‘any celebration or blessing of same-gender relationships’ within the Uniting Church.

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

It is Jesus Christ who defines Christian marriage. If the Uniting Church were to depart from his definition it would separate itself from Christ. If the Uniting Church in Australia decided to depart from this biblical doctrine this congregation would almost certainly hold fast to Christ and separate us from the Uniting Church in Australia.

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

Participants in this discussion process have been told to ‘trust ambiguity. This is not a debate who is right or wrong.’ As important as it is to listen to others and test our own beliefs, the ultimate purpose of Christian conversation is to ‘respect’ God’s Word as it has been embodied in Jesus Christ, attested in Scripture and disclosed by the Holy Spirit. Worldly practice should never replace or diminish the word of God.

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

As far as migrant communities are concerned it is Christ who defines Marriage not the Uniting Church. We are very concerned that our UCA wants to know “our opinion” and “cultural experiences” of Marriage.

The premise of these questions fails to take seriously our deeply biblical understanding of Marriage as instituted by Christ and reflective of his relationship to His church.

7. General Comments on “Views of marriage in the UCA”

- The author doesn’t distinguish between cultural and liturgical traditions and social roles that recognise the union of a man and a woman in marriage, and those that do not. By linking two completely different forms of diversity – one ethnic and cultural, the other theological and biological – he gives the impression that same-gender marriage is simply another form of marriage.

- Despite the appearance of objectivity, the Report follows the consultation process in committing two serious logical errors:
 - o It assumes that describing things as they are is reason to affirm their truth and goodness.
 - o These errors render the Views of Marriage Report useless in assisting the church to determine this matter theologically.
 - o The unstated assumption that theology is primarily the outworking of our diverse personal and social experience, rather than the articulation of the reality of God attested in Scripture, is incorrect.
 - o Biblical texts and comments are simply listed (somewhat repetitively) rather than being reported in a coherent way, allowing the writer to interpose his own position at length.

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