

A STRONG FUTURE IN CHRIST

Introduction

The decision of the 15th Assembly to formally change the UCA's doctrine of marriage to that of same-sex (or genderless) marriage, marks a watershed in the life of the UCA, and confirms the Assembly's departure from the faith and practice of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. This has been despite what we believe are the vast majority of UCA members who hold to the Church's received teaching, that marriage is exclusively between a man and a woman.

This development has been a part of a long-standing and growing malaise within the life of the UCA, whereby certain sectors of the church have promoted a liberal, humanistic (existentialist) theology, which has undermined any real objective revelation of God in Jesus Christ and the Holy Scriptures, replacing it with an idea and practice of "truth" formed essentially out of human culture. This empties the Christian Gospel of its divine reality, power and life, and destroys its mission.

We do not accept the decision of the 15th Assembly on marriage, and will stand apart from it in whatever ways we believe are necessary in order to remain faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the teaching of Holy Scripture.

In adopting this position, we remain within, and adhere to, the theological foundation and framework of the UCA, enunciated in the *Basis of Union* (especially indicated in its statements around the 'rule' that Jesus Christ exercises in and over the life of the church, the 'nourishing', 'regulating', 'controlling' role of the 'scriptures' in shaping the church's life and message, and in the great emphasis upon ecumenical cooperation to which it commits the UCA.) By its decisions on marriage, the Assembly has now moved outside of this theological foundation and framework of the UCA.

The Current Situation

The passing of Resolution 84 at the 10th Assembly, allowing Presbyteries to elect to train and ordain avowed, practising homosexual people, surreptitiously "opened the door" to teaching and practices that undermined the Church's received teaching on marriage. Since that time, and before, orthodox and evangelical members, congregations and ministers across the UCA, have worked to counter the above theological malaise, and its undermining of the Church's received doctrine of marriage. This has been carried out through involvement in groups such as *The Fellowship for Revival, EMU, RA, ACC, EL250, 3D Network, Hope Network, PNEUMA, etc.* Since the passing of Resolution 84, involvement in these organizations and networks has been necessary for many of us in order to remain within the UCA, by maintaining sufficient distinction and separation from the sectors of the UCA affected by the above theological malaise, and in order to be nourished in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and carry out its mission.

However, the formal adoption of same-sex marriage by the 15th Assembly as UCA doctrine, and the clear and bold departure from Apostolic, Christian truth that this involves, means that this is no longer adequate. We need to claim a greater domain to clearly, publically define who we are and what we believe as the Church of Jesus Christ, to determine our practice and mission in accordance with this, and to stand apart from and repudiate, the erroneous decisions of the 15th Assembly on marriage.

Some have suggested that this can only be done through leaving the UCA. This option needs to remain open, depending on how the future unfolds. However, we believe that we should first explore possible ways to remain connected to the UCA, clearly stand apart from the decisions of the Assembly, and resolutely carry out the mission of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our communities.

A Proposal Non-Geographic Presbytery

We believe that the Presbytery structure within the UCA can provide greater capacity and scope to do this. For this purpose we propose to apply to the Synod of SA to form Hope Network into a non-geographic Presbytery. A number of other orthodox, evangelical networks across the UCA are currently considering moving in a similar direction. It is then possible that a number of such non-geographic Presbyteries across the UCA form a national network for the mutual support of church life, education and mission.

- **We propose that Hope Network apply to the Synod of SA to be formed into a non-geographic Presbytery, and become Hope Presbytery.**
- **We would then recommend to all Congregations of Hope Network that they make formal decisions (by a two thirds majority) to become Congregations of Hope Presbytery.**

Hope Presbytery would continue our strong affiliation with the ACC, working together with them, and other orthodox, evangelical networks, to forge a strong future together in Christ and His mission.

Hope Presbytery would continue to endorse and uphold the statements of belief and practice detailed in the *Memorandum of Understanding* of Hope Network.

This Proposal acknowledges and endorses the statements and decisions of the Hope Network Meeting of Aug 7th, 2018.

*Hope Mission Network Executive
September 3rd, 2018*