



In 2018 there was some urgency to the Uniting Church acting to permit same-sex marriages.

Significant numbers of same-sex couples are ageing, and some wish to spend their final years married, with the blessing of God and their faith community. With the July 2018 policy change, that is now possible. Growing numbers of same-sex couples now have children. It is now possible for the couple to be married in a Uniting Church if that is what they seek.

It can only be hoped that the change in the Uniting Church policy will contribute to a wider societal acceptance and welcome of LGBTIQ people, couples and rainbow families.

Marriage and other relationships

Not all individuals and couples decide to get married. The church has never taught that marriage is necessary for human fulfilment, though sometimes single people have not been fully welcomed in congregations. The reasons why some people might choose to not get married vary. For some same-sex couples, they have already been in a relationship for a number of years and so the “need” to get married is not important for them. Some others might regard marriage as still being associated with patriarchal ideas about property and ownership, and thus seek relationships of mutuality, love and fidelity other than marriage. The Uniting Church should also bless these relationships.

Resources

These provide some background for the Uniting Church decision and recent discussions.

Australian Christians for Marriage Equality.

<https://www.facebook.com/AustralianChristiansforMarriageEquality>

Australian Marriage Equality.

<http://www.australianmarriageequality.org>

Jenski, Leanne, Robert Stringer, Warren Talbot and Susan Wickham, 2010, *Sacred Union Ceremony: towards pastoral and liturgical recognition for gay and lesbian couples in the Uniting Church in Australia*, Adelaide, Uniting Network Australia, 2010.

<http://www.unitingnetworkaustralia.org.au>

Mayman, Margaret, 30 June 2015,

<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/marriage-equality-would-be-a-victory-for-ordinary-christians-20150626-ghyt4q#ixzz3lfojNrV6>

Teece, Elizabeth, and Ian Pearson, 2008, Submission to the Same Sex Inquiry, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Sydney.

Uniting Church in Australia, circa 2013, National Working Group on Doctrine, *Discussion Paper on Marriage*, <http://assembly.uca.org.au/marriage>



www.unitingnetworkaustralia.org.au

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UNITING
network

Uniting Church LGBTIQ Network

Marriage Equality and the Uniting Church

(Update – July 2018)

*welcoming and celebrating
lesbian, gay, bisexual,
transgender, intersex and queer
(LGBTIQ) people, friends,
rainbow families and allies
in the Uniting Church*



Marriage equality - achieved in Australia

In December 2017 the Australian Parliament voted overwhelmingly to amend the Marriage Act so that same-sex couples could be legally married. The weddings are happening! Members of Uniting Network Australia supported this important reform as a major step towards full equality for LGBTIQ people. We are now active, as members of the Uniting Church, to seek the Uniting Church to change its policy to allow religious marriage equality.

Christian support for religious marriage equality

Support for religious marriage equality is based on the grounds of faithfulness to the Gospel, pastoral care and justice. This is not only a matter of responding to changes in society, but being faithful to the love and grace of God seen in the person of Jesus.

The fundamental imperative for change arises from:

- an understanding of the Gospel which upholds an ethic of mutual relations built on compassion, grace, and respect for the dignity and participation of all.
- the example and recorded teachings of Jesus. The Gospels record Jesus' ministry as being concerned for the poor, the outcast, and those rejected by society.

- the overwhelming weight of Jesus' ministry was towards inclusion rather than exclusion.
- values in the early Christian communities, exemplified by Paul when writing to the Galatians ("In Christ there is neither Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female", 3:28).
- deep respect for the many LGBTIQ people who are members of the Uniting Church. This has included learning about the lived experience and particular journeys of LGBTIQ people.

Same-sex marriage now permitted in the Uniting Church

Following many years of discussion and consultation, in July 2018 the national Assembly of the Uniting Church resolved to formally recognise different understandings of marriage in the Uniting Church. This decision now permits Uniting Church clergy who decide to marry same-sex couples to do so - and for clergy who do not support same-sex marriage to not do so.

This change is Good News for LGBTIQ people in the Uniting Church and the wider Australian society. The Uniting Church joins the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and the Metropolitan Community Churches as a Christian denomination which permits marriage for same-sex couples.

Uniting Network Australia welcomes this change and looks forward to many same-sex marriages taking place in Uniting churches and officiated by UCA ordained ministers.

Marriage, Uniting Network Australia and full equality for LGBTIQ people, couples and rainbow families

Uniting Network members have worked for many years to achieve LGBTIQ equality in the Uniting Church. The changes to the definition of marriage, and the permission for same-sex marriages to take place is welcome. But it is not full equality for LGBTIQ people in the area of marriage or many other areas in the life of the Uniting Church.

At our June 2018 national conference UNA members called for full equality in all areas of church and society. The statement can be read at www.unitingnetworkaustralia.org.au

The long-term approach of Uniting Network Australia to marriage was summarised in a 2010 publication called *Sacred Union Ceremony* (see below). In the words of the editors:

"...for the Church to not bless those whom God has called to be together in a relationship of mutual love and unity is a serious dereliction in the Church's call to worship, witness and serve all people in the name of the One who died for all."

