



President: Mr Stuart McMillan

General Secretary: Rev Terence Corkin BA, BTh, BLegS

12th August, 2015

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

When we gathered as the body of Christ for the 14th Assembly in Perth this passage of Scripture was in my mind: "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4: 2, 3).

At the 14th Assembly meeting we received the Report of the Task Group on the Theology of Marriage and Public Covenants for Same-Gender Relationships within the Uniting Church. This work was commenced by the Doctrine Working Group on referral from the 13th Assembly in 2012. A challenging, at times difficult and emotional discussion of the report and the proposals arising from the report took place over a number of sessions. The Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress exercised their right not to participate in the discussion, but remained in the gathering. The National Multi Cultural Ministry Reference Committee urged us through their paper to make 'space for grace'. I now write to you as members of the Uniting Church expressing the pastoral concerns of the gathering for the whole church.

Friends, we continue as a community of culturally and linguistically diverse people to have respectful conversations. We will employ culturally sensitive processes, to be determined by the respective First and Second people groups within our church. We have been encouraged by the National Multi-Cultural Ministry Reference Committee to allow the space for grace. In this space different communities will firstly, be able to engage with the concept of marriage and secondly, they may engage with the concept of same gender relationships.

We seek to be an inclusive church that celebrates diversity and embraces LGBTIQ people as full members of the church community. For the times we have failed to be this loving community of Christ and caused hurt, we apologise, ask forgiveness and pray for healing and reconciliation for us all.

Christian community modelled on Jesus' unconditional love and acceptance is what we strive to attain. We know that the world is watching to see how we treat one another. Paul says in Romans we belong to one another, the commandment is to love, to put the interests of others ahead of our own interests.

In this next three years my prayer for us all is that we might listen deeply to one another, with our heart and to the Spirit who grants us understanding beyond human wisdom.

Shalom,