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PASTORAL STATEMENT

AUSTRALIAN MARRIAGE LAW POSTAL SURVEY

10 November 2017

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus.

The week ahead will be challenging for our community and our church, as the results of the Government's voluntary postal survey on same gender marriage will be released.

We are in challenging times facing a range of disturbing issues all of which go to our common humanity – our inherent worth to God and to each other. This affects how we speak and act and, as disciples of Jesus, we are called to reflect upon what the gospel asks of us.

This week we have been meeting together in Sydney and sharing our heart for the Church, the whole people of God.

Every human being is of equal value to God. From the creation story, to the birth of Jesus and our own baptism, we assert that every person is created in God's image, and our worth is without question. Our humanity is made whole in Jesus Christ.

Whatever the result of the postal survey, many people in our community will feel hurt, some deeply. Our families and friends who are LGBTIQ have found the whole survey incredibly difficult, and indeed unsafe. Many of our families and friends in the broader community have also found this time disconcerting.

There has been a great deal of anger, fear and hurt, for which we grieve.

The question for us is how we will act as the church now, and in the weeks and months ahead. We must care for each other, acknowledging that most of our congregations will host a diversity of opinions, as does our community. We cannot use our roles in the church to tell people what to think, to criticise, or to abuse, others.

Ministers and those in specified ministry have particular responsibilities to demonstrate leadership that all with whom they engage, whether directly or through various social or other media platforms, hear and experience the witness of the gospel to the God given dignity of all people.

We are the Uniting Church, a wonderfully diverse community of faith, which is founded in the grace of God's act in Jesus Christ.

We are responsible to, and for, each other. We need to pray for wisdom, courage and discernment. In this difficult season, we will look towards Christ and encourage others to do the same.

"God has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation. The Church's call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation."(Paragraph 3 Basis of Union).

Friends, when we allow the Spirit to shape us then our witness and love counters the hostility of the world and testifies to the reality of the risen crucified One.

If you need support please make contact with your Presbytery or Synod.

Be assured that we are praying for our whole church, and for the community in which we live.

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stuart McMillan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stuart McMillan, President

Rev. Sharon Hollis, Moderator, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Rev. Simon Hansford, Moderator, Synod of NSW and the ACT

Rev. David Baker, Moderator, Synod of Queensland

Rev. Sue Ellis, Moderator, Synod of South Australia

Rev. Thresi Mauboy, Moderator, Northern Synod

Rev. Steve Francis, Moderator, Synod of Western Australia