

Pastoral Guidelines re Same Sex Relationships and Marriage

1. We acknowledge that Biblical faithfulness for us in our cultural setting is complex, costly and challenging. Most contemporary media is actively pro same sex marriage and deeply disparaging of any who hold a contrary view. These views are now deeply embedded in our wider culture.

2. As a church we uphold the formularies of the Anglican Church of Australia, which are based on the Bible's teaching on marriage as being between a man and a woman. As it says in Genesis 2.24

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

The introduction to the Anglican Marriage Service classically states it this way.

Scripture teaches that marriage is a life long partnership uniting a woman and a man in heart, mind and body. In the joy of their union, husband and wife enrich and respond to each other, growing in tenderness and understanding. Through marriage a new family is formed, where children may be born and grow in secure and loving care. APBA Order 2

'Faithfulness in Service' is the guiding document of the Anglican Church of Australia in matters of life and conduct, especially for those who are licensed or authorized to minister. It states the formal position of the Anglican Church as

'faithfulness in marriage and celibacy in singleness.'

3. At present Anglican clergy are **protected** by the Marriage Act from performing same sex marriages.

(b) 'to allow ministers of religion to solemnise marriage, respecting the doctrines, tenets and beliefs of their religion, the views of their religious community or their own religious beliefs; and'

Anglican clergy are also **prevented** by performing same sex marriages because of the Canons of the church which uphold a traditional definition of marriage

3. In upholding biblical teaching on marriage we acknowledge that it involves a costly call for those who are same sex attracted.
4. We offer our assurance for all who are same sex attracted that they are loved, valued and fully welcome in our church.
5. We acknowledge that in our attempts to uphold the Bible's teaching on marriage that we have sometimes given the impression that same sex attracted people were themselves the problem. This is not the case and we apologise if we have given this impression.
6. We also acknowledge that homophobia has been a sin in our church and repent of it.
7. We acknowledge that this is an issue of significant pastoral tension for many in our faith communities as they respond to members of their own families, work colleagues and friends.
8. We commend all efforts to give active reflection to holistic pastoral responses that are compassionate and positive in supporting same sex attracted people.
9. We seek to increasingly be faith communities that offer loving friendships for all people. We encourage all marriages and families to both welcome and include single people as part of their ongoing life.

10. We recognise that not all in our church communities hold the same views on this matter and urge all of us to interact in a respectful and open manner. While we as a church uphold a traditional belief in marriage we will not exclude those who may have arrived at a different view on this matter.

11. As Christians living in a democracy we want to uphold our right, along with all citizens to express our point of view.

12. We encourage members to engage with friends, colleagues and family, respectfully and with grace modelling Christian engagement.

13. We urge any future legislation to uphold religious freedom and to enshrine appropriate protections for religious practitioners.