

**STATEMENT READ TO THE ST. MARGARET'S
CONGREGATION ON 11/11/18 .**

Following the decisions of the 15th Assembly in July this year re Same Sex Marriage two major decisions needed to be made. Members of the clergy needed to make a decision about whether they were prepared to marry same sex couples and Church Councils needed to make a decision as to whether or not Marriages between Same Sex couples could take place on Church Property for which they were responsible.

St. Margaret's Church Council commenced discussions on this question at our September meeting. It was important as we moved into a vacancy that we could give advice on this issue as part of the Congregational profile. We spent some time sharing ideas and experiences .Biblical references were discussed. Changes in cultural practices within our lifetimes were discussed and they are many. For example, significant changes on attitudes to divorce, to the fact that the majority of couples co-habit now prior to marriage, to the almost forbidden situations in families when we were growing up when a catholic and a protestant couple wished to marry.

We looked at marriage statistics at St. Margaret's in the last 11 years when only 10 weddings are recorded in our register but only 5 in that period were actually held in our buildings and these all had a link of some kind to our congregation.

As three members were absent at this Council meeting it was agreed that we should continue the discussions the following month when they would be present.

At the October Council Rev. Arnie reminded us that marriage had already been defined by the State and our challenge was to work out how to respond as a Christian community. He suggested we could be open and accepting because that is what Jesus would be; he noted that we were being challenged to overcome previous understandings about such matters and that these beliefs may go against what we believed when we were growing up . Being a Christian is about being relational, welcoming and compassionate. Again members were all given the opportunity to express their beliefs and experiences. It is important to note that at no time was a voice raised in anger and all members listened and were respectful to what others were saying.

As Chairperson at this stage I tested the feeling of the Council with the proposal “*That Church Council should allow the use of St. Margaret’s buildings for same sex marriages.*”

Using our consensus model of displaying cards, several members displayed cards to show they were not in favour of the proposal. Further discussion followed, then I as Chairperson explained to members that this was a difficult question to try to come to consensus as either people agreed or they didn’t and there was no opportunity to adjust the proposal.

I then moved to the next step in consensus decision making under the Manual for Meetings 6.6(E) procedure, with the following proposal “*Who does not support the proposal as your first option but is prepared to accept it ?*”

At this point when cards were displayed agreement was reached. *The proposal was therefore accepted by agreement.*

That is – “*That Church Council should allow the use of St. Margaret’s buildings for same sex marriages.*”

*Marjorie Hookey.
Chairperson.
St. Margaret’s Church Council
11/11/18*