

**St Andrew's on the Terrace Will Defy Church's Ban on Same-Sex Marriage
Tuesday 7 October 2014, 6:30 pm**

Media Statement: Presbyterian Church Decision

St Andrew's on The Terrace Presbyterian Church (Wellington) is deeply disappointed but defiant in the face of the news today that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church has voted to ban Ministers from performing marriages between same-sex couples.

"This decision is deeply disturbing and we strongly dissent from it" says St Andrew's Parish Convenor, Sonia Groes-Petrie. "The Presbyterian tradition is for ministers to have freedom to make decisions about whom they will marry. There is a range of opinions on same-sex marriage within the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and today's decision does not reflect that diversity."

Interim Minister Jim Cunningham says: "I'm appalled at the decision that has been made. We see sexual orientation and gender identity as irrelevant in the celebration of a couple's union. It is the quality of the relationship, the love and commitment that matters. St Andrew's has been blessing the relationships of same sex couples for over twenty years, celebrating civil unions since 2005 and marriages since August last year."

The national church has been debating the implications of same-sex marriages now being legal. It seems incredible that the church is legislating against love. It's embarrassing that religious organisations are the only stumbling block to full equality for same-sex couples," says St Andrew's Parish Councillor and General Assembly representative Paul Barber.

In the wake of this decision, St Andrew's on The Terrace restated their commitment to be an inclusive church, faithful to the gospel message of love and justice. "We have Ministers within our community who are registered as civil celebrants and we will continue to be able to provide a welcoming place for any couple who wishes to marry. Inclusiveness is of vital importance in the mission of our faith community. We will continue to work towards our vision for our national church where diversity is celebrated and where no-one is excluded."