



# Why Did We Want to Get Married in the Uniting Church of Australia?

## The story of Cate Addis & Hannah Reeve's wedding.

Cate Addis and Hannah Reeve were one of the first couples to get married in the Uniting Church following the National Assembly's decision in July 2018 to add a new definition of marriage for two-people.

### How we met

We are one of those couples who met in a Uniting Church (UCA). At the time back in 2007, we were both attending our congregation's evening service, we were both youth group leaders and Hannah was on Church Council. We were so fortunate in those early years together because our church family was supportive from the beginning. Our minister and key leaders made it clear that we were welcome and affirmed, that our relationship wouldn't affect our membership, nor our leading youth groups, and where we'd once attended things at the same time, now we came together. We had the support and the space to get to know each other in a new relationship, and I figured out pretty quickly that this was a good match.

### The Proposal

Four years into our relationship Cate proposed. It wasn't legal for us to get married then but after a few years of being in a long-distance relationship while we were both studying at university, we were both about to be in Sydney together and were ready to settle down. This is the moment we were ready to get married and we wanted to celebrate our relationship with our family and friends in our church and make it "official" somehow.

### A Church Blessing

In November 2011, we had a relationship blessing ceremony. It wasn't a simple process to make that happen and to get permission to hold it in the church that we attended every week, as it would have been if we were an opposite-sex couple. The decision went to church council and then a full congregational meeting. It couldn't look too much like a wedding. With some conditions, only one person voted no, and we got the permission we needed. The day was an amazing celebration and was our "not-a-wedding" day where we gathered before our community and God and then had a big party.

We would have gotten married that day if it had been legal. A few weeks later we had a lawyer draw up paperwork to confirm all the things that would have been taken for granted if we were married - wills, Powers of Attorney – and we waited another 7 years.



## The public Vote

We watched our politicians talked about our rights and whether we deserved to be part of the hallowed institution of marriage, whether our families were as 'healthy' or as valid as every other family. We participated as the UCA consulted about marriage for many years. We saw the postal survey dreamed up and watched as our community struggled under the weight of so much judgment and intolerance. We rallied, and we cried, and we voted.

We wanted to get married as soon as Australia said YES, but we knew that for us it would be an even longer wait, because we wanted to get married in the Uniting Church.

## But why a wedding?

We've been UCA members our whole lives. We wanted to acknowledge the covenant of marriage, as not just a legal protection, but as a declaration of purpose and faithfulness in a relationship. We wanted to affirm our commitment to each other and to God and be surrounded by the same community that had known and loved us since we were teenagers and to feel the acceptance and support of our friends and family. We wanted to share our happiness. To share the next part of the journey. We'd watched so many of our friends get married – every time rejoicing and imagining the future that lay ahead for them. We wanted that too.

Hannah was a member of the 2018 Assembly. For her, presenting a proposal to the meeting and

advocating for an inclusive definition of marriage in our civil law and within our church was something she had to do. It was personal and it was for all couples like us.

Even as marriage has changed over time, from an inter-family arrangement to a loving commitment of two equal partners, it's place as something special in our culture and within the

Christian community has not changed. Marriage, for our relationship and for others in our church, was something worth fighting for.

## The Wedding

When the Assembly voted to allow ministers and congregations the freedom to marry same-sex couples, we were overjoyed. In September 2018, we finally got married. We walked down the aisle, hand-in-hand, with tears of joy that this our special day, our 'real' wedding, could take place. We got married in the church where we had met, where Cate's mother and grandmother had both gotten married, 68 and 33 years before us. Hannah's mother, a Uniting Church minister, performed the ceremony. Many of those who had been at our blessing ceremony came to our wedding, and of course there were new friends as well.

Now that the UCA has changed its definition of marriage, there are many more couples, like us, who may wish to get married in the Uniting Church and our hope is that ministers and congregations will carefully consider providing places where they too can celebrate.

**Cate Addis** and **Hannah Reeve** are members of North Ryde Community Church in suburban Sydney. Hannah has been a Co-Convener of Uniting Network Australia since 2018.

If you have any questions about the Open and Affirming process please contact the Uniting Network: [affirming@unitingnetworkaustralia.org.au](mailto:affirming@unitingnetworkaustralia.org.au)

