

In your lectures this week Karen will have told you that she will not be returning as your lecturer after the break. We are conscious that this has an impact on you as one of her students and so wanted to give you some more information about this decision. As you know, confidentiality, safety and trust are core ethical principles in the areas of Counselling and Chaplaincy and so we ask that you practice these in relation to this news.

As some of you may already be aware, Karen is in a committed same-sex relationship. Recently her and her partner decided to formalise this commitment by getting engaged to be married. Over the past month or so, Karen, myself, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and our Principal [REDACTED] have met (together and in smaller groups) to discuss what this means for Karen's role at College. The decision for Karen to end her lecturing role was made by the Principal, with the knowledge and support of the Morling College Board and College Leadership Team. It was based on the position on same-sex marriage held by the College as stated in our Community Code as well as the Baptist Association's position and ongoing discussions.

In no way does this decision indicate that we question Karen's deep and abiding faith in Jesus and her desire to live with integrity and honesty. She is an excellent and committed educator. She has taught you to think deeply about your faith and be further equipped with skills which will impact many. She has made a significant contribution to Morling, particularly in the establishment and flourishing of the Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care programs over the past two and a half years. She has become a good friend, teacher and colleague to many of us. Karen will still be warmly welcomed on campus and we thank her for serving you and our community so well.

We are conscious that those who seek to divide could use this news to harm or vilify Karen or draw Morling College into unhelpful and unkind debates. We do not want this to happen. Therefore, please do not make public comment on this decision (on social media, in your Zoom chats or elsewhere). If you have questions, please raise them with [REDACTED], [REDACTED] or myself. Please keep Karen and her partner, and Morling College, in your prayers.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Karen and I have worked together on this announcement and Karen wanted to include these words:

*Same-sex attraction is not something that we've chosen. We wrestled with it and agonised over it – individually and together – because we both earnestly desire to love and serve Jesus first and foremost. But here's the thing: I don't love my partner in spite of the Bible, but because of it. I love Jesus better because of our covenant love. I love others better because of her.*

*I have loved teaching at Morling. I love seeing students equipped to serve Jesus with joy and passion. I love the staff; I cherish the acceptance and love I have felt, particularly from our faculty who have known and loved me as I am.*

*It hasn't always been that way. It has been a painful, costly journey. And yet, we find ourselves at peace, held in the love of Jesus and of friends who have journeyed prayerfully and graciously with us.*

*Whatever your reaction to this news, it's ok. We belong to Jesus – the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. And that will never change.*

*Karen*