

Subject: Statement on the family

Date: 1994

We believe and affirm that:

The Bible speaks of the principles and patterns of relationships which underlie and guide family life, rather than defining the term 'family.'

For Christians, the primary foundation of family life is marriage, as taught in the Bible, ... a man and woman covenant to live together in a life-long relationship of love, fidelity, companionship, and devotion to each other. As the Christian view of marriage is still enshrined in Australian law, i.e. "... the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life," we as Christians should support the retention of this definition.

While we accept the above as foundational, the Bible also provided other models of people living in family relationships. We note the following by way of example. Jesus refers to his disciples as his family (Mark 3:35); Paul's relationship with Silas, Barnabas, and Timothy, whom he refers to as his son (1 Tim.1:2). The generational family of Lois (2 Tim. 1:4-5) and others (1 Tim 5:4); the single person family of Lydia (Acts 16:15).

As Christians we seek to proclaim in word and deed the many benefits of living according to God's perfect pattern as that which has been revealed to us in Jesus Christ

We stand with all people and celebrate the many opportunities as communities and individuals to express recognition, encouragement, acceptance, love, care and support of families for whom life stage issues and external pressures are very real.

We as Churches have a healing, supporting role to play as God's family, providing communities of forgiveness, love and acceptance.

We also celebrate and proclaim the greater family made possible through the gift of Jesus through whom, by repentance and faith, we are able to call God "Father" and thus, through whom we may all – from whatever background and circumstance – become one family.

Adopted by the NSW Council of Churches in 1994; ratified by the Annual Assembly of the Baptist Union of NSW, see BUNSW Annual Reports 1995, p. 73.