

Re: Statement of Public Apology

This apology is made by Mr David Fosdike and Mr Daryl Keen, as the current Elders of Wayville Baptist Church to the current and past attendees of Wayville Baptist Church. It is made on behalf of the Church we represent. We have the support of each of the surviving past Elders for this apology.

We acknowledge that we, as Elders, are responsible for the spiritual welfare and oversight of the environment within Wayville Baptist Church as stated in 1 Peter 5:1-3, *"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock."*

We have listened to many current and former attendees who have suffered as a result of unacceptable behaviour by others in the church. We have listened to some who have helped pick up the pieces of broken lives. We have listened to those who were witnesses to the disturbing behaviours.

We confess our failure in fulfilling 1 Peter 5:1-3 by not being the shepherds we should have been, lacking leadership in recognising and dealing with the oppressive environment within this local assembly. We did little to intervene or correct this. We note that, in general, the teaching of the church was sound, the pure Gospel was preached and many were helped to grow in maturity in Christ. However, there was also an unhealthy control wielded by a few over many people's lives within the assembly. For some of you, a place where the life of Christ is lived out became a place of trying to live up to enforced human standards. This was to your own detriment and to those around you.

We acknowledge that some attendees (current and past) may have experienced instances such as:

1. Lack of care for you as an individual, where your individual decisions were not respected, your abilities and decisions were criticised either publicly and/or privately, your reputation was attacked, your confidential information was revealed to others without your permission, and Scripture was misused to manipulate you.
2. Intimidation where you feared excessive challenge or correction in an overbearing and domineering way, even having your salvation unreasonably questioned.
3. Imposition of the views of others on you where you felt compelled to obey people rather than God, and you feared doing something different from what was expected or what others did. The desire to obey Christ, a noble aim, was in many cases subverted with a desire to hold you to a set of convictions not your own.
4. Interference in your family matters and undermining of parental authority and respect leading to strained relationships within your family or extended family.
5. Despair at being powerless to prevent or speak up against these things. Your attempts at resolving issues were unsuccessful, your requests for changed behaviour were fruitless, and when you spoke up you were isolated and unjustly vilified.

We are deeply distressed that individual instances or the cumulative effect of this controlling environment may have resulted in you feeling abused and traumatised, such as being:

1. Disturbed or wary in the presence of certain people, emotionally distressed, and losing your self-esteem and self-worth, even to the point of depression and suicidal thoughts or needing to seek counselling or other specialised help.
2. Driven down a path of legalism with the despair and uncertainty associated with that.
3. Directed into some poor decisions about finances, raising children, education, career, marriage, location and lifestyle choices.

4. Disturbed in your spiritual state resulting in adverse decisions about personal faith in Christ and a lack of spiritual stability. You may even have turned away from the Gospel of grace.

Therefore, firstly we confess our sin to God. We are answerable to Him for the state of the souls He entrusted to us and we have failed to lead and protect you in the way we should have. We repent of this past lack of leadership and care for the flock. We are thankful for God's forgiveness, but realise that this does not eliminate the consequences of our inaction.

Secondly, we sincerely apologise to you for what the failure of leadership caused in your lives. It was our responsibility to know what was happening and to take action to stop it and prevent it from recurring. We failed in this for which we are very sorry. We ask your forgiveness.

We next apologise to all the pastors and counsellors who have voluntarily spent much time and emotional energy to support and help those who have been troubled by their time in Wayville Baptist Church. We are thankful to you for your Christian love and concern and regret that this has taken you away from your other responsibilities.

Finally, we are sorry for the long delay in making this apology. This has only meant a prolonging of pain for some and that saddens us. We ask your forgiveness for taking too long to know the seriousness of the problems that you have experienced and to do something about it.

It may comfort you to know that we have taken steps to prevent the problems of the past from occurring in the future. We are committed to correcting future unacceptable behaviour. By God's grace, we have actively sought to improve the church life and culture at Wayville. The church's leadership and membership have changed. We are seeing encouraging outcomes.

We pray and trust God that you will see past these human failings to the One True God and to trust in Jesus Christ for salvation and healing. Wherever God has placed you, whatever hurt you feel, we pray that by the grace of God you can, in Christ, find rest for your souls. We understand if you find it difficult to be reconciled with us, but our great desire is for this to happen.

Please contact us by email (elders@wayvillebaptistchurch.org.au) or by telephone 8351 0133 so that we can listen to your experiences, understand the depth of your hurt, apologise to you directly and discuss how expenditure resulting from your time in Wayville Baptist Church might be handled. Our aim is to be reconciled with you. We have already been reconciled with some and pray that this can happen with you. We are committed to doing 'the right thing' before God and assist you wherever we can. We really do want to hear from you.

It is our great desire to help anyone who has been affected. Therefore, we would like to communicate this apology to those who would be helped by it. If you know people who would benefit, please tell them about this statement and the online video on our website (www.wayvillebaptistchurch.org.au/apology.html) or ask them to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Daryl Keen David Fosdike
Elders, Wayville Baptist Church