

# Being A Faithful Church 6: A Response From Breslau Mennonite Church

What does it mean to be a faithful church? This is the question that we asked ourselves, repeatedly and deliberately, at Breslau during the 2013-2014 church year.

The question arose in our second hour Sunday mornings, led by our pastor and laypersons, where we studied the BFC 6 material. But the question of how to be a faithful church was also at the heart of a vision discernment process that we initiated. As a congregation, we felt the need to renew and revitalize our vision. Who are we? Who are we called to be?

To engage these questions, we met monthly. Visioning meetings included everyone, from junior youth to seniors; several times we sought feedback from younger children. Levels of participation and enthusiasm were high.

Our work resulted in the following vision:

*We strive to be a welcoming community of faith and worship  
Supporting each other as we learn and grow  
Extending Christ's love, peace, and justice  
With our community  
With the world.*

In an effort to fill out the meaning of each of these phrases, we also created an amplified version of our vision statement. Here is what we think it means to nurture a welcoming community of faith and worship here at Breslau:

*We strive to create an open, caring community of faith and worship; comprised of members who care for each other and are actively involved in our surrounding community. We welcome all regardless of age, gender, beliefs, social status, race, or sexual orientation; all are invited to participate and explore.*

*We build intentional community by affirming, caring, and seeking common ground with each other and with our neighbours across all generations; we challenge ourselves and encourage each other to be inclusive, inviting and truly open.*

Although our vision statement did not grow directly out of the BFC context, it does show, in the words of Question 2 of BFC 6, that we find ourselves “pushing up against the traditional understandings of sexuality (as defined in the denominational documents) and feel led by the Spirit and [our] study of Scripture move to a new place of greater acceptance of same-sex relationships.” Many in our congregation are embarrassed that secular society, in this instance, is setting a better example than the church in allowing for the full participation of all people.

BFC 6 asks us to think about unity. While not everyone at Breslau thinks in the same way about diversity in sexuality or same-sex relationships, there is a high level of unity around our vision statement. Our vision gives us a communal lens through which we can see things anew. It helps us to interpret the central message of God's searching and inclusive love in the Bible. It helps us to focus our sense of mission (individually and corporately) on welcoming, supporting and extending love, peace and justice. Finally, it helps us to evaluate our life together (e.g., “Should we start a community garden?” or “What should be the purpose and shape of our annual Summer Children's Camp?”) in a way that is faithful to our deepest understandings.