

A Vision of the Bethel College Mennonite Church

This vision for the Bethel College Mennonite Church (BCMC) was finalized by the BCMC Visioning Reference Group on Jan. 16, 2005, and forwarded to the Church Board. The Church board recommended and the congregation endorsed it on April 17, 2005.

The vision statement was developed following an extensive process of gathering stories from congregation members which expressed what we most deeply value in this congregation and to what we sense God is calling us. The resulting statement is a description of how we envision the future of BCMC, and will serve as a guideline for future ministry and programs at BCMC.

This vision statement has been used in a variety of ways since then. Here are some of them:

- *The Vision Implementation Task Force was appointed by the Church Board and functioned in 2005-2006 to move the vision forward.*
- *Reorganization formalized by the adoption of revised bylaws on January 24, 2010 gave increased emphasis on vision and mission.*
- *Church Board reviewed vision in context of each commission and board-appointed committee on February 3, 2011.*
- *Long Range Planning Committee used vision statement in preparing Long Range Plan (later know as Living Stones) approved by congregation on April 22, 2012.*
- *The Church Board reaffirmed the vision statement by approving the following on October 1, 2015: "The BCMC Vision Statement remains a vital document for our congregation. We believe that the BCMC Welcoming Statement is also a good representation of our vision"*
- *Lead Pastor Search Committee used the vision statement to prepare the Congregational Information Form. The CIF was affirmed by Church Board on December 3, 2015.*

Worship and Faith

Corporate worship at the Bethel College Mennonite Church (BCMC) is central to our experiencing the presence of Christ. Our Christian faith life is centered in the Mennonite/ Anabaptist tradition, proclaiming God's presence through music, prayer and word.

While we continue to appreciate thoughtful, coordinated worship services which use sacred and classical music, as well as meaningful art and drama as a core part of morning worship, our church increasingly values in worship:

- Experimentation, interwoven with tradition.
- The importance of nurturing the inner life.
- Intergenerational participation, with an emphasis on regular youth involvement in worship services.
- The use of a variety of musical instruments and musicians, as well as a variety of musical styles, including the singing of chorales, gospel hymns and jazz.
- Making known to worship participants the needs of the congregation.
- Our challenge in ministering to larger world concerns.

Members of the congregation are encouraged to be involved in worship planning and in the worship itself.

Our worship style continues to be an asset in maintaining long-term members, as well as attracting some new people, on Sunday mornings. But we are always evaluating worship styles and the scheduling of the Sunday morning program, and whether we are a welcoming church to the young and old alike.

Discipleship and Ministry

We are a large congregation and we value our Anabaptist heritage. We are a diverse congregation, and while we find this at times limits our ability to speak prophetically with one voice, this is offset by our appreciation of and support for each other in the faith community without expecting conformity to narrow theological principles. We take discipleship seriously and discuss with each other what it means to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

As a congregation and as individuals we support financially and have been or continue to be involved in activities and organizations relating to:

- Our relationship to the poor and marginalized and issues of discrimination.
- Conflict resolution and peacemaking.
- Issues of our natural environment.
- Engaging people of other faiths.
- Other ministries of the church.

The congregation is a witness to this kingdom work as we keep each other informed about our activities both formally and informally.

We are also in ministry to each other and intentionally work at strengthening relationships within the congregation in a variety of ways:

- We work to make warmth and caring evident in our worship setting by using our facility to:
 - Create a sense of community in worship.
 - Encourage personal interaction and fellowship before and after worship services.
- We schedule church activities, including morning worship, to encourage attendance of college students and to facilitate the genuine and comfortable welcoming of guests.
- We emphasize multigenerational involvement with children and parents.

We are committed to getting to know one another better to encourage nurture of and support for all members of our congregation. We work creatively at finding ways to meet congregants' desires and expectations of shared information without breaching any person's need for confidentiality.

Our Sunday school classes continue to be a source of personal support for many of our members as well as a place for people to discuss issues important to us.

We also develop other voluntary small groups and networks to address felt needs of congregational members and encourage mutual accountability.

Welcoming and Inclusion

Being a welcoming inclusive church is important to us, and so we:

- Graciously welcome new persons with friendship and information about the church.
- Recognize the importance of youth and young adults by routinely incorporating them into the everyday life of the church.
- Recognize that people respond to a variety of worship settings by periodically incorporating contemporary or alternative music into church life along with traditional music.
- Make sure young parents (both members and guests) can fully experience meaningful worship and fellowship by incorporating multigenerational responsibility for children during church activities.
- Encourage participation by community members in regular and especially-sponsored church activities (including toddler/parent playgroups and youth events) by advertising those activities in the wider community.
- Offer regularly-scheduled intergenerational gatherings for food and fellowship.

Community Relationships and Global Concerns

We value and affirm our long-standing connections with affiliated organizations, such as:

- Church conference related organizations.
- Historic peace churches.
- Community agencies and organizations.
- International agencies.

We also value our unique historic connection with Bethel College and the mutual sharing between us is a source of strength in our congregation. We know the connection benefits the church, and we work to benefit the college in a number of ways.

Kidron-Bethel Village is also a unique and valued partner. We enjoy the opportunity to minister to the needs of Kidron residents, many of whom have been long-time members of this congregation, and value the wisdom and support they bring to the congregation.

Process and Structure

Our church values diversity in membership and in ideas.

We demonstrate this appreciation for diversity through:

- Our intentional efforts to hear all voices, especially in congregational meetings.
- Striving for fair decision-making processes so that all members can honestly own the decisions made by the congregation.
- Using language in church documents that articulates that the primary responsibility of the church is to be in ministry and service.
- Reviewing and developing organizational structures to facilitate the church's vision.

Vision Reference Group - January 16, 2005

Congregational approval – April 17, 2005

Church Board reaffirmation – October 1, 2015

Revised introduction and history – April 21, 2016