



## Between Horizons: Biblical Perspectives on Human Sexuality Assembly 2014 Discernment Guide

### Introduction:

The BFC process is now into its fifth year of discernment and conversation. We are very pleased with the response of congregations to this significant effort. To this point (April 15, 2014), 65% of our 218 congregations have responded in some way. The responses have been quite evenly spread across the church, from 44% to 71% in the five Area Churches.

There has been very good personal contact and visits to 16% of the congregations where English is not their primary language. More are scheduled in the near future. Several congregations have indicated that further responses are still pending. In addition, we have received responses from individuals, a circle of scholars, and various groups with special interests in the conversation.

A large majority of the responses affirm the process and support it.

It is important to note that what is reflected in this report is accurately descriptive of what we have received and heard – to the best of our ability.

### Responses to BFC 5: Biblical Perspectives on Human Sexuality:

To this point, we have received 82 responses to the BFC 5, the highest response rates to date. This level of interest and response is quite remarkable and very encouraging.

Congregations that did not participate in the BFC 5 process have identified various reasons:

- a) Lack of time in the annual schedule;
- b) Transitions of leadership in the congregation;
- c) Concern about causing conflict among congregational members;
- d) Other pressing agenda considered more urgent;
- e) The study was too similar to what they have already done in the recent past.

### Observations of Responses:

1. Much appreciation was expressed for the resource. Special mention was made of the link suggested between sexuality and spirituality, and the concept of living between the horizons.
2. Although there was some call for change, most responses reflected a lack of desire to change the historical understanding of sexuality as implied in the resolutions of Saskatoon (1986), Purdue (1987), and the Confession of Faith (1995). At the same time, there is also an expressed desire to strengthen our compassionate embrace of persons in same-sex attraction.
3. Many respondents hesitated to declare their submission as representative of their congregations. Rather they identified small groups, leadership groups, or individuals as responsible for the feedback. This indicates that within congregations we are not of one mind.
4. There is strong recognition that the church needs to respond in a Christ-like compassionate way to persons attracted to the same sex in our society. Several reasons were identified:
  - i. Increasingly, our society and culture view same-sex relations as a justice issue;
  - ii. Same-sex marriage has been legalized in Canada;
  - iii. Christian concerns are often viewed as compassionless and reactionary;
  - iv. Our youth often find the traditional view incomprehensible and see the church as out of touch with its time.
5. Some express the concern that this discernment should not overshadow the importance of our larger missional vision and work.
6. There is evident difference in biblical interpretation as related to matters of same-sex attraction and relationships.
7. There was again strong affirmation that Scripture and the leading of the Spirit are foundational in our discernment process.
8. There is a strong rejection of immorality and promiscuity in all our relationships.
9. There is a conviction that sexual union belongs in the framework of a life-long commitment.
10. There is a need to cultivate healthy, wholesome sexuality in our culture and church.
11. There are differences in understanding the medical/scientific data/evidence available to date.
12. Some would have preferred a less academic, simplified document.

