

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10am Worship – Pastor Yuri (<i>The Story 2—“Wrestling”</i>) 11am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	2	3	4	5 6:30 pm College & Career Bible study	6 7pm Youth	7 1-4pm Baking Club
8 10am Worship – Pastor Yuri (<i>The Story 3—Joseph</i>) 11am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	9 NO MONDAY NIGHT SERVICE PASTOR YURI AWAY	10 7am Men’s Prayer Meeting	11 6:30pm Bible Study Topic: <i>Joseph (Genesis 37-50)</i> 7:15pm Prayer Meeting	12	13	14 8am-12pm WORK DAY: <i>clean up, landscaping, gardening, windows, etc.</i> Bring gloves, tools, etc.
15 10am Worship – Pastor Yuri (<i>The Story 4—Deliverance</i>) COMMUNION 11am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	16 NO MONDAY NIGHT SERVICE	17 7am Men’s Prayer Meeting	18 6:30pm Bible Study Topic: <i>Deliverance (Exodus 1-17)</i> 7:15pm Prayer Meeting	19 6:30 pm College & Career Bible study	20	21 8:30pm UGM
22 “ONE WITH THEM” SUNDAY 10am Worship – Pastor Yuri (<i>The Story 5—New Law</i>) 11am Faith Formation (Adult Prayer Meeting) 12pm BBYOL	23 NO MONDAY NIGHT SERVICE	24 7am Men’s Prayer Meeting 7pm Council Meeting	25 6:30pm Bible Study Topic: <i>The Giving of the Law (Exodus 19-40)</i> 7:15pm Prayer Meeting	26	27	28 8:30 am Men’s Breakfast
29 10am Worship – Pastor Yuri (<i>The Story 6—Wandering</i>) 11am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	30 NO MONDAY NIGHT SERVICE	1 CANADA DAY	2 6:30pm Bible Study Topic: <i>The Wilderness Wandering (Numbers, Deuteronomy)</i> 7:15pm Prayer Meeting	3 6:30 pm College & Career Bible study (TBC)	4	5 1-4pm Baking Club



Bethesda Church

Newsletter

Congregational letter

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.”
–1 Peter 4:10-11

This year’s Annual General Meeting on May 14 was a good opportunity to think back over the past year of ministry at Bethesda. God was good to us this year! He has brought quite a few people to us. Some have come for awhile and then moved on, others have come for weeks or months and then moved on. And that is OK! Each one is in the Lord’s plan! But many have stayed with us, week in and week out seeking to know more about Jesus and his “gathered ones” (what we call his Church). Most exciting of all, some of you have put your trust in Jesus for the first time! On Easter, six of you publicly professed your faith in him and showed your commitment to obeying him by being baptised!

What we call his church, Jesus calls his “Body”! (See Romans 12:4-8 and 1 Cor 12:12-31.) And as things are winding up for the year it’s the also perfect time to start thinking about how he wants to work through his Body—that is, through YOU—in the coming next year...

The verses above leave us no wiggle room. We don’t wait to serve in the church until the perfect situation arises. Every person who has put their

trust in Jesus is required to use the gifts he has given them for the good of his Body. Of course, some gifts are highly specialized in ways that are of obvious use to the church. In those cases, a person’s calling will usually be to use their specialized aptitudes for the building up of the church. (The gift of “speaking” that Peter mentions would be one such gift.) But that is relatively rare. But there are many gifts and callings which we all share and which are of vital importance. We are to use those gifts as well. We are each called to serve wherever and whenever there is a need in the Body, even if it doesn’t perfectly match what we see as our particular skill set. In other words, God isn’t pleased if we hold back our gifts until we see the perfect niche open up for us.

(continued on next page)

JUNE 14 is a
BETHESDA
WORK DAY!
Bring gloves,
tools, etc.



BETHESDA
CHURCH

Bethesda Church Office Information
Hours: Tuesdays (10-3) & Fridays (9-3)
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God is also not happy if all we do is “freelance”. That is, he doesn’t want us to serve only when it’s convenient for us: he isn’t willing that we should wait until we are older, and he doesn’t consider it a valid excuse when we say that we don’t have enough time. Nor does he want us to limit our focus to serving outside his Body. Because *The Church* is the way that God chose to reach the world. The church is his idea, his strategy, his means...his Body! Now, if a church only looks inward, only serves itself, that is a serious problem which needs to be addressed. And yes, there are countless legitimate ways to serve God that are, strictly speaking, outside the organized church. I am not minimizing their importance. Still, that does not release anyone from the responsibility of serving at church, too.

There are ways to serve—areas of distinct need—which do not require that you have an uncommon gift or a particular calling. As we are growing, we have two areas you ought to consider: Faith Formation (Sunday School), and Hospitality Team. God calls *everyone* to teach the next generation (Deut 6:7, etc.) God calls *everyone* to welcome people, new and old (Heb 13:1-2) If you are not involved in other ways at Bethesda, I would urge you to serve as a teacher or a greeter this fall, to take the summer to figure out how to make serving Jesus’ Body your priority. You can trust God to “supply the strength”!

Our gifts—whether they are common or uncommon—are the grace of God to others, grace we share with other believers as well as with people in the broader community. By serving, we “administer” his grace “in its various forms”. To what end? “So that in all things God may be praised”. God’s glory is the whole point of our existence. And stewardship of his Creation (which includes all our gifts of “arm and heart and brain”, as well as time) is among the first commands he ever gave us!

In his service,


HEAVEN & HEAVENLY THINKING...

We don’t meditate on Heaven nearly enough. We tend to think of it only while contemplating death. Which, for obvious reasons, we prefer to avoid. In that line of thinking, Heaven may be preferable to the alternative, but we’d prefer if it doesn’t become “real” too soon! And “real” is the things which we can see, hear, taste, smell, touch, and unmistakably feel. The Bible, however, teaches that Heaven is not merely some disembodied end state. Indeed, the Bible says that Heaven is where the spirit of Christians resides right now! “...*God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...*” (Eph 2:6) Notice the past tense: for the Christian, this has already happened: “...*your life is NOW hidden in Christ with God*”! (Col 3:3) But here’s my personal favourite: “...*you have come* to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly [...] to God [...] to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus...*” (Heb 12:22ff)

SO...If you are “in Christ”—that is, if you have put your trust in Jesus—Heaven is not some place your soul is shipped when you “shuffle off this mortal coil”. Heaven is your current address! That is why the Puritan pastor Richard Baxter instructed his flock to “*be convinced* that Heaven is the only treasure and happiness” and to “*labour to know* what a treasure and happiness it is”! That is, since Heaven is something that we can enjoy right now, Heaven is something we should contemplate frequently. We should put all our effort into being aware of it as a present reality, a reality which will only grow more wonderful the moment we die or Jesus returns, since then “*we shall see face to face [...] and know fully, even as [we] are fully known!*” (1 Cor 13:12)

I hope you enjoy the following, which is a little taste of Baxter, adapted and heavily paraphrased from his classic book:

“*The Saints’ Everlasting Rest*”...

* the tense tell us that it’s an action that is completed

HEAVEN (continued)

“Be convinced that Heaven is the only treasure and happiness, and labour to know what a treasure and happiness it is. If you do not believe Heaven to be the chief good, you will never set your heart upon it.”

Just let that sink in for a minute...

Heaven must be what moves you, attracts you, motivates you. If Heaven is only a vague idea, its work in you will be weak. If forbidden fruit appeals to you more than loving and enjoying God does, is it any wonder that it holds more of your attention? Is it a surprise that it determines how you act? Or that you feel distant from him? If, instead of delighting in the presence of God, you opt for the nice sensations you can get from your body, how will your heart ever perceive the reality of Heaven?

Why do we value the things in this world so highly? Because we are ignorant of how empty they truly are compared to the things that will last. Conversely, why do we turn away so easily from thoughts of Heaven? Because we are ignorant of the intense pleasure they hold for us. If only we worked a little harder to lay hold of the reality. The more we know of Heaven, the more we can taste it and long for more of it!

As Richard Baxter put it:

“It is not the real excellence of a thing itself, but its known excellence that excites desire.”

What does that mean?

Think of it this way: If someone were to offer you a digital wallet full of cryptocurrency, you may or may not be impressed—most of us wouldn’t even know what to do with it. But an envelope stuffed with hard cash that you get to keep and spend—that will get anyone excited!

HEAVEN (continued)

You see, it’s not the real excellence of a thing that matters (assuming that crypto actually has value) it’s the *known* excellence of a thing—having a clear understanding of its value and how to enjoy it—that will make your eyes light up.

To use another example, today we see governments scrambling to be leaders in AI innovation, redirecting massive shares of resources and effort—potentially even putting people at risk!—because they think it is the only way to maintain (or assert) global security dominance and stay influential and prosperous. It’s doubtful that AI will produce much for humanity that is of lasting value. Quite the opposite, in fact. Still, that is the gamble governments are willing to make because they “know” it is the only way to chase after a kind of heaven on earth.

“It is not the real excellence of a thing itself, but its known excellence that excites desire.”

Unlike AI, Heaven is no pipe dream. Heaven is excellence itself. And Heaven is present to those who seek it in Christ. Still, it will only be sought and enjoyed if it is known to be excellent, perceived to be excellent, apprehended as excellent. Therefore we must set all of our heart and mind upon it. It must be our “chief good”. Remember: the Messiah was killed by people who most keenly desired him...theoretically. Just so, the world cries out for “rest” even as it kills itself with activity in the pursuit of it. The world does not know him, so the world does not know rest. People seek their highest pleasure: they seek happiness. But they don’t look for it—for him—in the right place! They don’t even know what happiness is, who they are missing. If they did, if they *knew* what excellence truly was, they could not turn away from him. Let’s make sure *we* don’t miss our Everlasting Treasure through ignorance, indifference, or neglect! —YH