

February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10am Worship – Pastor Yuri (Luke 6:20-26) 11:15am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	2	3 8am Men’s Prayer Meeting	4 6:30pm English Conversation Class 6:30pm Bible Study: <i>Habakkuk</i> 7:00pm Prayer Meeting	5 6:30pm College & Careers Bible Study	6 7pm Youth (Missionfest)	7 1-4pm Baking Club
MISSIONFEST MANITOBA						
8 10am Worship – Guest: Rev. Toe-Blake Roy (“ <i>On the Road with Jesus</i> ” – Mark 10:46-53) 11:15am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL MISSIONFEST MANITOBA	9	10 8am Men’s Prayer Meeting	11 6:30pm English Conversation Class 6:30pm Bible Study: <i>Habakkuk</i> 7:00pm Prayer Meeting	12 6:30pm College & Careers Bible Study	13 1pm Betty Campbell Celebration of Life 7pm Youth (Bible Study & Games)	14 VALENTINE’S DAY
15 Communion Sunday 10am Worship – Pastor Yuri (Luke 6:20-26) 11:15am Kids: Faith Formation   Adults: Congregational Budget Meeting 12pm BBYOL	16	17 8am Men’s Prayer Meeting	18 ASH WEDNESDAY 6:30pm English Conversation Class 6:30pm Bible Study: <i>Habakkuk</i> 7:00pm Prayer Meeting	19 6:30pm College & Careers Bible Study	20 7pm Youth (Bible Study & Games)	21 7:30pm UGM
22 10am Worship – Pastor Yuri (Luke 6:27-28) 11:15am Faith Formation 12pm BBYOL	23	24 8am Men’s Prayer Meeting 7pm Council Meeting	25 6:30pm English Conversation Class 6:30pm Bible Study: <i>Habakkuk</i> 7:00pm Prayer Meeting	26 6:30pm College & Careers Bible Study	27 7pm Youth (Games!)	28 9am Men’s Prayer Fellowship



Bethesda Church  
Newsletter

Congregational letter

February 2026

O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. –Psalm 139:1-3

My, but we’ve had a cold month. Lord knows all our New Year’s resolutions have been put to the test! And, clearly, he does know, since Psalm 139 is truth.

David continues in frustration, almost in despair: *You hem me in—behind and before [...] Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there [...] If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me” [...] even the darkness will not be dark to you...*

Maybe you’re feeling that way, too? What do you do when January’s just been brutal and February hits? In Manitoba (groundhogs notwithstanding) spring is still a long way off. After the Christmas break is over our prayers can dwindle down to silent moaning: *God, I’m just so cold. Can you please just go away for a little while so I can do what I want? Sleep in when I want. Eat what I want. Watch what I want. And snap at anyone who suggests something different (or just ...gets in my way.)* You know, the typical mid-winter grumpies.

I’m exaggerating of course. Your month has probably not been all that bad. For most of us, day to day life is a mix of ups and downs. We manage to eke out a few wins amid the losses. I hope you don’t mind if I share a couple of mine.

**My personal New Year victory:** I’ve managed to stick with my New Year’s plan to log all my meals, and bump up the amount I exercise from zero to ... more than zero! Physically, I’m feeling great (although cold!) and emotionally, I’m very happy!

**My personal New Year fail:** To log my body movement and caloric intake conveniently, I’m using an app. Which means (for me) that my physical wellbeing is coming with a spiritual cost: for the last two years I fought really hard to acquire better smart phone habits, and I cut my phone usage in half. But now I’m constantly looking at my phone again, partly because I need to, but also because...the app is fun! It turns health into a kind of immersive game. I get to use my shallower side for good! (It’s about as close to video games, AI, and virtual reality as I’m interested in going, i.e. not very.) Unfortunately, when I increase my phone usage I tend to use all my other screens more as well. But the phone itself comes with bigger temptations, too. First off, I get caught up in all the other smart phone “games” for over-the-hill workaholics like me: checking email (even though I know can do it more efficiently on a computer), reading articles online (which somehow feel so much more urgent on a screen than when I take the time to print them out). Eventually, if I don’t make a course correction, I know I will find myself wasting more and more time on YouTube videos. It always starts with useful ones, justifiable ones, but I know from experience that it’s easy to fall prey to that minefield of mindlessness.

Worst of all, the more I use my phone the less I pray, and the more inclined I am to



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cannibalize my devotional time to catch up on “important” work, with this inevitable result: I neglect time alone with the Lord.

That might not seem like a big deal. As I wrote before, I’m feeling happy right about now. And of course, it’s not like I’m not studying the Bible. One of the privileges of being a pastor is that I have to (really, I *get* to!) study the Scriptures every day for preaching and pastoring. Still, there is a big difference between studying God and *knowing* God. When God and his Word are merely subjects to master, our hearts puff up and then grow bitterly cold. Colder than the coldest January night. More bitter than any howling Arctic wind. Even privileges become chores when they are not animated by the Holy Spirit, and no ministry will last long unless it is surrounded, supported, and enabled by his power. So while I’m feeling happy, I’m also giving my head a bit of a shake.

David, too, expresses two apparently opposite sentiments. In his poetic prayer he obviously feels kind of suffocated by God, yet he also longs for more of him. **Christopher Harvey**, a 17<sup>th</sup> century English pastor and poet, was himself no stranger to conflicted feelings:

### SAID I NOT SO

Said I not so, — that I would sin no more?

Witness, my God, I did;

Yet I am run again upon the score:

My faults cannot be hid.

What shall I do? — Make vows and break them still?

‘Twill be but labour lost;

My good cannot prevail against mine ill:

The business will be crossed.

O, say not so: thou canst not tell what strength

Thy God may give thee at the length.

Renew thy vows, and if thou keep the last,

Thy God will pardon all that’s past.

Vow while thou canst; while thou canst vow, thou mayst

Perhaps perform it when thou thinkest least.

Thy God hath not denied thee all,

Whilst he permits thee but to call.

Call to thy God for grace to keep

Thy vows; and if thou break them, weep.

Weep for thy broken vows, and vow again:

Vows made with tears cannot be still in vain.

Then once again  
I vow to mend my ways;  
Lord, say Amen,  
And thine be all the praise.

Harvey wavers between hope and despair. He confesses his sin right off the bat. Like David, he knows his “faults cannot be hid”. (To be clear, he’s not necessarily talking about anything we would consider a big deal. By “vow”, he means the same thing as we mean by a resolution.) In the second stanza he’s in anguish: “What shall I do? Make vows and break them still?” In other words, he’s tempted to just give up. We often ask ourselves the same question: *What’s the point of trying if I know I’m just going to keep on sinning over and over again?*

But then he, too, gives his head a good shake: “O, say not so”! He remembers how often God gives strength at the most unexpected moments. So he determines not just to “weep for broken vows” but to lean on the God of grace, trusting that God will help him keep his resolutions. In faith, he will “vow again” and “mend his ways”. He knows that God will honour his renewed resolve, and he also knows that others will see his effort and will praise God. He is convinced, in other words, that giving God glory makes every effort worthwhile!

He doesn’t say this explicitly but it’s important to point out: though you will stumble, by God’s grace you will indeed improve your habits little by little if you keep on “vowing again” and trust God to help you. You will indeed bring God glory, and you will draw nearer to him in the process!

Do you struggle to believe that? In the next poem, 19<sup>th</sup> century Scottish pastor **Horatius Bonar** wrestles with bitter disappointment. He longs for, and ultimately finds, the fullness of God’s promises in Jesus himself:

### IS THIS ALL?

*Sometimes I catch sweet glimpses of his face,  
But that is all.*

*Sometimes he looks on me, and seems to smile,  
But that is all.*

*Sometimes I think I hear his loving voice  
Upon me call.*

And is this all he meant when thus he spoke,  
“Come unto me”?

Is there no deeper, more enduring rest  
In him for thee?

Is there no steadier light for thee in him?  
O, come and see!

O, come and see! O look, and look again!  
All shall be right;

O, taste his love and see that it is good,  
Thou child of night!

O, trust thou, trust thou in his grace and power!  
Then all is bright.

Nay, do not wrong him by thy heavy thoughts,  
But love his love.

Do thou full justice to his tenderness,  
His mercy prove;

Take him for what he is; O, take him all,  
And look above!

Then shall thy tossing soul find anchorage  
And steadfast peace;

Thy love shall rest on his; thy weary doubts  
Forever cease.

Thy heart shall find in him and in his grace  
Its rest and bliss!

Christ and his love shall be thy blessed all  
Forevermore!

Christ and his light shall shine on all thy ways  
Forevermore!

Christ and his peace shall keep thy troubled soul  
Forevermore!

“O, come and see! O, look and look again! [...] O, taste and see that his love is good [...] love his love [...] Take him for what he is; O, take him all, and look above!” I love that! Never give up! Keep on until “thy love shall rest on his”.

Here’s one more poem to round out my little exhortation—to myself and to you: **run hot with love for the Lord, and always be willing to change up whatever needs changing up to get more of him!** This one will be familiar to many, and of course **John Newton** needs no introduction. He knew what it meant to change, to give all to get Jesus and his *Amazing Grace!*



### HOW SWEET THE NAME OF JESUS SOUNDS

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer’s ear!

It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,  
And calms the troubled breast;  
‘Tis manna to the hungry soul,  
And for the weary, rest.

By thee my prayers acceptance gain,  
Although with sin defiled;  
Satan accuses me in vain  
And I am owned a child.

Jesus! my Shepherd, Guardian, Friend,  
My Prophet, Priest, and King;  
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,  
Accept the praise I bring.

Weak is the effort of my heart,  
And cold my warmest thought;  
But when I see thee as thou art,  
I’ll praise thee as I ought.

Till then I would thy love proclaim  
With every fleeting breath;  
And may the music of thy name  
Refresh my soul in death!