

Redeemer Bible Church...A Beautiful Place, A Beautiful People

If we are true to our mission...

If we as Christ followers, individually and collectively, are prayerfully, practically and passionately engaged in living out our mission of 'leading people to passionately follow Jesus' what could RBC look like by our 70th Anniversary, May 2017? If we live this out through personal and collective engagement in the Three T's, what evidences of God's power, love and grace would we see and experience? What kinds of beauty would emerge, evolve and be personally experienced by more and more people?...people within the church family and those yet to come through the doors? (2 Corinthians 4:15) Beauty that nourishes and satisfies the soul, inspires godly practical living, and a passion to share the source of beauty with many others. We would see that connecting with God, others, and our community and world is indeed a beautiful thing. And so, what would we tenaciously pursue, create, participate, protect and invite others to experience?

THE TABLE: CONNECT

We would see more and more Tables being established throughout the region of Niagara. Remember what the Table speaks of: relational connectedness. We have learned from Acts 2:41-47 that the first church was deeply connected to God and one another. They would meet in large gatherings (our Sundays) and from house to house.(between Sundays)

God's Spirit has been working deeply in many hearts at a relational level through our Sunday morning service. This gathering time proves to be a 'table' opportunity for many, a setting for believers to grow more connected with God and to touch base with others. It also is a prime opportunity for spiritual seekers to explore what a relationship with Christ means and involves. Our Sunday morning gathering will be a setting where people are welcome, and wanted, whatever their spiritual state is.

A Practical Goal: let the number 355 take root in your mind and heart. That's about how many seats in this sanctuary. I believe God yearns to see each seat taken, with a precious life connected with us. What do you think? Do you think that that God is saying to us...@ 200 is cool, sit back and relax. No! The 'more the merrier' in God's family. Check out Luke 15 and 2 Corinthians 4:15. How can this happen? A mix of personal invitations and purposeful events that God uses to stir hearts, awaken curiosity, and bring to this place. Regular events such as 'Carnival on the Lawn' and 'Night in Bethlehem.'

I believe God yearns to see more and more people established in vital relationships, with God, through faith in Jesus Christ, and with other people intent on learning and growing spiritually. To this end, we need to strengthen and resource existing Journey Groups and thoughtfully, prayerfully and purposefully establish new Journey Groups through the region, in places where RBC attendees' live, with a renewed focus on Niagara Falls. This will require raising up new leaders and bringing all JG leaders into settings where they can be encouraged, equipped and reminded of the significance of the role they have.

Within JG's, God's Spirit will move and empower people to provide practical care, prayer support, biblical instruction and opportunities to serve others in Christ's name. Pastor Stephen spoke of this beautifully last Sunday, Sept. 7, 2014.

A Practical Goal: grow from @7 JG/Bible studies to 15-20 by our 70th Anniversary.

As we cultivate the Table events we currently offer...Sundays and between Sundays (eg. Guess Who's Coming to the table? and Sunday Potlucks) and 'build' more tables and set more chairs...a relational and spiritual beauty will continue to emerge. What might that look like? The addition of an alternative service? Exploring church planting? Who knows what God might have in mind for us! God yearns for this kind of beauty to radiate from local churches. Remember, we are the 'bride of Christ' and God's goal is to present a bride, "without stain, wrinkle or any blemish, but holy and blameless." Ephesians 5:27. We will experience and offer a richness of love, grace and forgiveness that more fully expresses the heart of Jesus, wonderfully and practically spoken of in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8. The prayer yearning of Jesus will more fully characterize us, a yearning expressed in John 17, a prayer plea for genuine unity and oneness. As we live out our mission together, in part, through engaging in ongoing Table opportunities we will mature and express a beauty that delights God, deeply nourishes fellow followers and attracts spiritual seekers.

THE TEXT: LEARN

'transformational instruction': God yearns to see people changed into the image of His Son Jesus, and living out this ongoing transformation of character in all realms of daily life. (Romans 8:29). Core to genuine life change is interaction and responsiveness to God and His Word.

As we continue to offer substantial, life related, biblical teaching on Sunday mornings and between Sundays, God's Spirit will continue to instruct and inspire people to action. We will see more people exploring faith and life, coming to

true faith in Jesus, and being baptised. And we will see believers maturing as passionate followers of Christ. We will be known as a community of faith that loves God and His word, and regards faith and obedience to God as the lifeblood of genuine and sustainable life transformation.

We will also see the offering of Life University courses become more highly publicised and prominent in our church calendar. Our courses will be focused on helping people mature as passionate followers of Jesus, engaged in living out the Three T's.

Offering other opportunities for growth in the knowledge of God's word and its application to life will occur more consistently and purposefully. This will include taking advantage of learning settings that we can bring into RBC or go to outside our walls.

THE TOWEL: SERVE

'purposeful service'. Jesus identified himself as a servant of others. Core to his way of living was the posture and behaviour of a servant. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45. He practised what he preached, day after day, including the day of the cross.

An uninvolved Christian is a walking contradiction. In the next year I see a more purposeful and thoughtful approach to involving people in ministry. We will also organizationally be more knowledgeable about current needs for active service and helping direct people in a timely way. There will be a stronger link of mutual communication between ministry leaders, administrative leaders and support staff. We need to be better at this to serve individuals within the congregation in a timely and accurate way.

Crucial to 'leading people to passionately follow Jesus' is the need to be an 'equipping and mobilizing community.' Ephesians 4:11-16 speaks instructively about a key responsibility of pastors and teachers, that of "equipping believers for works of service." Instruction, both biblical and practical, needs to occur on a regular and scheduled basis.

During this coming year I envision the development of instructional courses and practical training opportunities that result in people moving from looking on from the ministry sidelines to becoming actively engaged in ongoing ministry. This initiative will require organizational leadership from the ministry and administrative staff. These courses would include: 'Identify', 'Membership Matters', and other related topics. A Practical Goal: offer core courses 2 times per year, once in the fall/winter season, once in the spring/summer season, before the end of the school year.

A Practical Goal: to develop and create a Leadership Development 'path' for existing and emerging leaders, men and women, younger and older.

A Practical Goal: to offer in print and online a current listing of ministry niches that need to be filled, and the role requirements and contact person made available. We speak of being a 'here we are' church that offers both 'spiritual hope and practical help' in Jesus' name. We will continue to explore and engage in appropriate partnerships that allow us to do this. We see God's hand in the evolving partnership with Project Share in Niagara Falls as well as partnerships with different Missions here and abroad, for example, Pace Ministries in Kenya.

As we equip and mobilize people we will also see meaningful projects embraced by teams or Journey Groups.

I envision that we will have a clearer grasp of how the different ministries of RBC complement each other and are integral in fulfilling our mission of 'leading people to passionately follow Jesus.'

Also, we will work closely with each ministry and identify its primary 'T' contribution to RBC and God's larger kingdom. Is this or that ministry primarily a Table, Text or Towel ministry? This will be very encouraging to ministries and help give a greater clarity of focus.

As we work together, with the Spirit of God guiding, enlightening and empowering us, a beauty will continue to emerge from this local church. This is exciting, humbling and invigorating! Ponder God's words with me:

"The Mighty One, God, the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets. From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth." Psalm 50:1-2 What an amazing passage! God yearns to see the beauty of His character, behaviour and heart radiate from His people. From you and me as we unite in oneness through Jesus Christ, as we live and love and in the ebb and flow of life. Link that passage with 1 Peter 2:9-10.

Beauty emerges on at least three 'fronts.' I have already spoken of 'relational beauty.' People yearn to experience genuine love, grace, encouragement and a sense of belonging. God yearns to see this happen in local churches like RBC...as we relate together, under the leadership of Jesus a relational beauty emerges, marked by oneness, forgiveness and grace.

Beauty also emerges 'organizationally and operationally.' As we work together at building stronger and clearer communication 'links', including utilizing social media for internal and outreach purposes, a cohesiveness emerges, and

that can be a beautiful thing! I also see us thoughtfully examining how our facility can be enhanced, adapted and renovated to better serve people and live out our Three T's.

Finally, as we work and relate together, with all sorts of towels draped over our arms, God's Spirit uses us to serve one another, and those outside our family, and 'a ministry beauty' emerges. Living beyond ourselves, for the glory of God and the good of others is a beautiful thing.

"God shines forth" and people, all sorts of people are drawn to Him, the God of beauty...the radiance of grace, truth and love. And we, that's me and you, become conduits of His stunning, nourishing and life changing beauty. What a privilege!

Protecting the Connection within the Family

Ephesians 4: Things of beauty must be wisely and tenaciously protected. You know that. You feel that. When we remember that the church family is God's idea, connecting people to Himself, one another, and the world outside our front door, we are moved to practical responses.

Treasure the church family: Understand that healthy, interdependent relationships within the church is God's unquenchable passion and intention for each of us and for those yet to come through our doors.

Protect, Participate and Strengthen the church family: In all of life, relational connections can be both incredibly resilient and mysteriously fragile. Dear friends of RBC...choose to protect and strengthen every relationship that makes up RBC...every single one, as you have opportunity to. How? As the Scriptures direct: nourishing words and constructive actions. Each of us has a part to play, read Ephesians 4. Let us resolve to live these sacred words out more fully, 7 days a week. Including 'at church.' Folks, it often comes down to...words, attitudes, and actions. Actions of service and financial service. Part of protection we contribute to is that of consistent giving. And then, your words. My words.

Paul was bold and explicit about this issue with a local church in the first century. Ephesians 4:27ff No 'trash talk' allowed. No complaining and cutting people down. No bullying or demanding of one's own way. None of that toxic and destructive relational nonsense. Rather, speak words and engage in activities that lift up, encourage, promote reconciliation and peace, foster hope in hearts and point people in the direction of the Lord of the church, Jesus Christ.

Speak words that challenge and inspire people to take more seriously the promises and directives of God's word. And all the while, traffic in forgiveness and truth telling. Be honest, with much grace, and keep short accounts with God and each other. Because hurts will happen, the emotional 'burn' of friction will be felt. Disappointment will be experienced. Yet, as we practice with the Holy Spirit's energy and insight, wonderful and life giving benefits flow...

Increasing relational health, life giving reconciliation occurs, the power and presence of Christ is experienced in our lives and the lives of others, largely because we...you, and me, are serious about treasuring, protecting and strengthening God's church through our 'nourishing words and constructive actions.'