



MARKDALE BAPTIST CHURCH

To God be the glory

Dear MBC Family,

This letter seeks to share the back story and purpose for our launch of an evening service and also to encourage you to prayerfully consider making it a part of your weekly routine – we'd love to see you there! I had shared this vision as something I was passionate about with the Deacons as part of "the call" process, and it is something we now believe is of the Lord to pursue. There will be an opportunity to give feedback on this launch at the upcoming members' meeting. Please pray for this new ministry opportunity.

Prior to the 1950s most churches in Ontario had two worship services, one in the morning and another in the evening. The advent of the television changed that and statistics show how TV soon replaced the evening service for many churches. As a result, today, in many church traditions, an evening service is a rarity and even an oddity. While not directly related, the spiritual health of our churches certainly did not benefit from gathering together less frequently (Heb 10:25).

I've worshipped on the Lord's Day on four different continents and have seen services structured many different ways. Most recently I lived in the UK where within a 20 minute drive I could visit 11 healthy churches with an evening service. The churches I was involved with both had evening services and while not something I had been regularly accustomed to, coming from ON, it was something I soon gladly embraced as an advantageous spiritual discipline. While I recognize that an evening service is not expressly commanded in Scripture, I believe a divinely appointed day is and that bookending that day with an evening service is a healthy spiritual practice and rhythm, and indeed part of an ancient tradition.

"It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night." (Ps 92:1-2, *A Psalm. A Song for the Sabbath*)

Below are 8 reasons to consider ending the Lord's Day in worship:

- ✓ Bookending the Lord's Day in worship helps to hallow the whole day and prepare us for the coming week. It helps us take full advantage of the day the Lord has given to us;
- ✓ It follows a deep Christian tradition stretching back to the pattern of Temple worship (Ex 29:38-9; Ps 92), through to worship patterns in the early Church (Pliny, Eusebius), Medieval vespers and the post-Reformation practice of gathering in the morning and evening. The evening service is an ancient practice;
- ✓ It affords us a double opportunity and blessing to gather before the Lord and enjoy the gift of His day:
 - To bring Him our worship.
 - To sit under the sound of the Gospel and be built up in the faith (Jude 20).

- To enjoy Christian fellowship and minister to one another's needs.
- To enjoy His presence by gathering together in His name—*for where two or three are gathered there I am in their midst* (Mt 18:20).
 - “If we are present where He is present there is no telling what blessing we may enjoy at his hand. We may look for it expectantly.” - Unknown
 - As we gather around the Lord's Table there is yet another opportunity to express our ongoing commitment to Him and be spiritually nourished by His presence at the Table; and
- ✓ It helps resist the societal tendency to marginalize God.
 - “Are we wiser and better Christians than all those who have gone before us or is it because actually we are succumbing to the secular spirit of our age which marginalizes God? Have we fallen into just doing the minimum” - John Benton

Given the Crocker's personal commitment to two services, since moving to Markdale, Rebekah, Digory and I have been worshipping in the evenings at Faith Baptist in Mount Forest (1 of 2 Bluewater Association churches that have an evening service). This is a 40 minute drive each way. While we value the fellowship at Faith, it is our desire as a family to worship in our own community and with our own people. Given the strategic location of Markdale in Grey Co., and that most area churches do not have an evening service, we also believe the service will serve to bless and encourage area Christians who may attend so they may better serve the Lord in their home churches (Area churches will receive posters and invitation letters to this).

As the promotional poster explains, we're going to begin holding our services in the lower hall (basement). This will give us flexibility as to numbers and keep the setting intimate and informal. However, our focus in gathering will remain the same as the morning: worship through song, prayer, the ministry of the Word and Communion (3rd Sunday). One difference will be that at the evening service there will also be an opportunity for interaction (e.g. group discussion, engagement with the preacher or panel discussions). We will be seeking to involve other area preachers, and together with myself, we'll cover a variety of Biblical passages and themes. There will also be refreshments to follow. If you need a ride please ask. We appreciate that dark nights, age (both young and old), distance, etc, may make it difficult for some to attend.

Try it for two months and see if your walk with the Lord isn't strengthened.

My experience is that worshipping the Lord in the evening is a spiritual practice that develops healthy Christians and so builds up churches and so brings honour to the Lord. If I can provide more information or you'd like to speak to me about the subject then please be in touch.

The Lord's Sweetest Blessings,

Chris W. Crocker
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*Our morning service will begin at 10:00 a.m. (as of Oct 20th)
 **Our evening service will begin at 6:00 p.m. (as of Oct 20th)
 ***At the moment there is no official children's program planned for the evening service though our nursery will be equipped with audio of the service and a sermon related worksheet will be developed for the children.