

## Outdoor service



*Photo by Valerie Cheaney*

*By Nichelle Bauman*

Our 2019 annual outdoor service was another wonderful gathering of church family. The weather was perfect and we all gathered out behind the church for worship. The worship team started off with a prelude and led the congregation in singing.

The children gathered on the grass to hear the story of the paralyzed man lowered through the roof, with a demonstration involving pretzels. They were told the importance of the role of friends in our faith and life.

Pastor Jim gave a dramatic telling of that same scripture from Luke 5 and concluded a series on healing. He gave us the acronym HEAL (Hold in prayer, Encourage, Assist, Let go) to help us remember ways that we can help others on their journeys of faith and life.

Many thanks to the volunteers who helped with set-up, tear down, AV, worship team, and providing the meal, especially on such a busy relief sale weekend.

## Welcome to a new pastor

Floradale Mennonite Church was delighted to hire Anita Schroeder Kipfer as part of our pastoral team. Things went quickly when the Search Committee received her application at the end of March.



By the end of March she had been interviewed and recommended to Church Council. Her candidating Sunday happened on May 5 and she began her duties on June 1, 2019. She has been hired on a three-quarter time basis.

Look for more information about Anita and her family in the next issue of *Focus on Floradale*.



*Amanda Martin and Valerie Cheaney were baptized and became members of Floradale Mennonite Church on June 2, 2019.*

# Another successful tea ball project

*By Mark Weber*

The Floradale Church Tea Ball project at the New Hamburg relief sale on May 24-25 was another successful year in terms of having new people involved in the project and the amount of money raised. This year we raised about \$12,900.00, which is similar to the last few years, however the overall revenue for all venues of the sale was down a bit this year.

Some of this lower revenue could be attributed to the rain on Saturday morning and also that some of the venues have been discontinued. Because of the rain forecast for Saturday, the committee decided to continue selling tea balls as long as people were wanting to buy on Friday evening. This meant that we used up well more than half the tea ball batter on Friday evening.

Thanks again to everyone who contributed time from their busy schedule to make this fundraiser a success in 2019. Special thanks to Rick Cressman and Tyler Woeschka for the hard work they did on setup and tear down at the event.

We had products donated again: flour and white sugar from Bruce MacIntyre/P & H Milling; and eggs from Mahlon Martin/Global Eggs. Other input costs are about \$1,800.00 which includes tent rental, dairy products, cooking oil and the remaining ingredients. All of these costs are covered by the Floradale Mennonite Church, including the tent cost, which the New Hamburg sale executive is encouraging the individual projects to cover.

I hope everyone who helped this year enjoyed themselves and will return for 2020 to help make this Floradale Church fundraising event fun and memorable for everyone involved.

Thanks again to everyone. Job well done!

*Submitted by Mark Weber,  
on behalf of the committee*



*Bonnie, Rita, Chris, Bonnie, Clare and Florence hard at work.*



*Howie Bauman and Nicole Woeschka begin making tea balls before the crowds come.*

The church also says a special thanks to Mark, and his wife Marilyn, who have provided such good leadership for this project. It is well-organized and that makes it a joy to participate. Thank you also to Merle and Rita Shantz, Howie and Gloria Bauman and Nicole and Tyler Woeschka who also serve on this committee.



*Thank you to Derrick and Polly Burkhart who dropped tea balls both Friday and Saturday.*



*Onne Snip and Dave Metzger snip the tails off hundreds of tea balls.*

# Introducing the Wilson family

By David and Karen Wilson

We were most happy to be asked to write this short column to introduce ourselves a bit better to the congregation.

We are the Wilsons. David, Karen, Wesley (9), Edward (7), Clara (4). We live in Elmira and have done so for about ten years now.

David was raised in Woolwich Township. He grew up just outside of Maryhill on a small dairy farm. Karen was raised in Waterloo, Ontario, but made many fond memories with her grandparents and cousins on the family farm outside of Auburn, Ontario. Both of us come from large families with lots of cousins, aunts and uncles. Our children are blessed to continue to have relationships with two Great-Grandmothers—one of whom faithfully follows Floradale's services when they are posted online.

We met through work. David was a teacher, Karen was an Educational Assistant. In the early years, we travelled extensively, visiting parts of Africa, Australia and England as well as Eastern Canada. Karen in particular is an accomplished traveller and has seen the sun rise and set in almost every part of this wonderful wide world!

Both of us are now teachers. David teaches Grade 4/5 at Floradale Public School and Karen teaches French and Music at Bridgeport Public School in Kitchener.

We really cherish watching our kids grow into their own interests. Wesley is our math and science guy. Edward knows more



about the natural world than any other seven-year-old we know, and Clara just loves to play, read and connect with people.

During the school year, Wesley, Edward and Clara are heavily involved with Scouts Canada, Hopping Thursdays, swimming and piano lessons. In the spring, the Wilsons reconnect with our rural roots by making maple syrup.

Through the summer, we spend much of our time at our trailer, which is parked at a site near Mitchell, Ontario. We occasionally take some time to discover parts of the land we have never visited, journeying to places as close as local nature reserves or as far as Prince Edward Island, Florida or the Caribbean.

Our journey towards attending Floradale Mennonite is directly linked to Hopping Thursdays. After seeing a few of the amazing musicals that his students were in, David thought maybe Wesley and Edward would also enjoy the program. After going to Hopping Thursdays for a while, Edward

began to ask if he could also go to church. He read the sign that said Sunday School and thought it would be like Hopping Thursdays. Even though David did his best to talk him out of it, here we are!

We wanted to take a moment to say thank you everyone at Floradale Mennonite for making us feel so welcomed. We have really enjoyed joining your faith community and are excited to continue to see how being a part of it brings new blessings to our lives.

*Focus on Floradale* is published five times each year.

**Editor:** Barb Draper

**Editorial Committee:**

Delphine Burkhart

Sharon Cressman

Mary M. Martin

# Getting to know the Petryschuks

*By Ed and Sandra Petryschuk*

You may be wondering who these strangers are in your midst and how we ended up attending Floradale Mennonite. We will start at the beginning of our lives to give you some insight as to who we are, where we come from and what brought us to this area.

We both grew up on tomato and grain farms in the Leamington area, worked hard in the fields from a young age but also played hard in ditches, backyards and marshes. We both have three siblings so always had a companion or competitor to play/combat with.

Sandra (Driedger) grew up in the Mennonite church, attended UMEI Christian secondary school as a teen and continues to maintain many of the friendships made during these years.

Teenage years were life-changing for Ed. At the age of 19 after graduating from Grade 13, a baseball scout arrived in our small town and later that year, Ed signed with the Toronto Blue Jays. Playing professional baseball for a living was a dream come true and the memories made were unforgettable.

We were friends and kept in touch during these years as Ed travelled North America playing baseball. He attended the University of Waterloo during his off-season and Sandra went to University of Western Ontario in London. We both attended University of Windsor after that to complete our formal educations.

We started dating at the ages of 21 and 23, once Ed's professional baseball career ended. We married in 1983, two years later.

Ed was always thankful that his parents were supportive of his talents. His father, a dedicated



*Sandra and Ed Petryschuk*

farmer, always allowed him to leave the farm to attend his ball games, no matter how busy they were. A challenging time in our lives was when Ed's father passed suddenly at the age of 62. Ed's mom (age 87) and Sandra's parents (ages 89 and 91) continue to live in good health in Leamington. Needless to say, the 401 is very familiar to us.

We have two children. Ryan, our eldest, attended the University of Waterloo and married a girl from Hawksville—Alecia Bauman (Cecil and Ruth Anne's daughter, in case that helps ☺). They now live in Elmira and Ryan is working as a pharmacist for Remedy's RX. They have blessed us with two grandsons, Brayden and Connor.

Kelly, our daughter, also attended the University of Waterloo and has made her life in this area as well, with her friends and boyfriend, Dave.

We both have lived in Leamington our whole lives, besides university and baseball years. We were baptized in and attended the North Leamington United Mennonite church. Sandra taught in public elementary schools in the area for her whole teaching career, minus one year of teaching at UMEI.

Her passion was in her final 12 years, teaching Special Education to small groups of elementary students from Kindergarten to Grade 8. When she first retired, she tutored for two years for transitional purposes. She loved her job until the end.

Ed worked in business for his whole working career and spent the most time as VP, CFO and minority owner of an automotive business in Windsor called Ground Effects. Unlike Sandra, he would not say he always enjoyed his job. Working at Ground Effects had its up and downs, with many trials and tribulations during his tenure there. In 2008, Ground Effects' two largest customers filed for bankruptcy protection, which made for some interesting times, but the company managed to squeak through this difficult and trying time. After that ordeal, the company moved along with the recovering automotive industry and eventually transitioned to financial stability. After five more years of success, the time was right to sell the company and Ed decided to retire.

The move to Waterloo was instigated by retirement and our children/grandchildren calling us to the area. We knew that we would have a variety of churches to choose from. Jim Loepp Thiesen, our interim pastor at North Leamington Mennonite Church, gave us a list of churches to visit and we spent our first year in

Waterloo Region visiting and re-visiting churches. Although we found features that we liked in many of the churches, we also felt a bit like Goldilocks—that one was too large, that one too modern, too unfamiliar etc.

So why Floradale? It felt just right. From an outsider’s point of view, this is what we saw and what we felt. On our first few visits, we were greeted, people asked who we were, and we were always welcomed. You may be surprised to know that this doesn’t happen at all Mennonite churches. We also felt an immediate connection to some of you. Thank you. We have even found a father figure who lovingly reminds us of Sandra’s dad. You know who you are! ☺

We immediately loved the music here! The mixture of our old favourite hymns and modern songs is wonderful! The congregation sings in four-part harmony! We are in awe of the extreme musical talent of Nichelle and others (unsure of names)!

Another drawing card was obvious for us. Seeing/hearing Jim at the front of the church was familiar and comfortable. We always enjoy



*Our son Ryan and his family: Connor, Brayden and his wife Alecia.*

his passion for the words he speaks and his relaxed (?) delivery. Ha-ha! He has a gift...a way of keeping one’s interest for the entire message and we always walk away with something to contemplate and discuss. We know we can worship anywhere but Floradale has drawn us in and we look forward to getting to know you better. Like we said, it just feels right.

We love to travel with family and friends. Ed is a car and sports fanatic. He also helps Sandra’s

brother on the farm in Leamington during planting and harvest seasons. Sandra loves to read and crochet and we both love to golf and babysit our grandsons.

We are currently serving in some volunteer positions and are seeking out other volunteer opportunities that suit us. We have built a wonderful 36-year married life together filled with family, friends and adventure and look forward to adjusting to retirement living and the future.

Our motto in life is to love God, live a life that pleases Him and be thankful for what we have been given.



*Our daughter Kelly and her boyfriend Dave.*

## 80th birthday party



Katie Carlson holds a cake in honour of her 80th birthday at the women’s sewing group meeting on June 4. Also there to celebrate were Eleanor Metzger (left) and Florence Frey. Katie preferred to have a party as part of the regular women’s meeting rather than going to a restaurant. (Her birthday is in July, but the women don’t meet over the summer.) Friends were invited to make a donation to MCC’s clean water project which brought in \$685.00.

## Recipe

### Bruschetta Chicken Bake



- 1 can (10 oz) stewed tomatoes, undrained
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 box Stove Top Stuffing
- 1 ½ lb. chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 tsp. basil
- 1 cup grated cheese

Place tomatoes into a bowl and add garlic and dressing. Stir to moisten. Place chicken in a baking dish, sprinkle with basil and cheese and top with stuffing mix. Bake 30-40 minutes or until chicken is cooked through.

*Submitted by Shirley Shoemaker*

*This was served for lunch at the MCEC Women’s Day held at Floradale Mennonite Church on April 13, 2019.*



# Books, and reading



*The Focus asked various people to reflect on their reading experiences, their favourite books and how they like to read.*

## Books are special

*By Sharon Cressman*

Aaaaah, books! The feel of softened old pages or the crispness of new, the unplanned visual attraction of the book spines as they stand, side by side, on a shelf or the scent of a brand new book. I love the faint sound that can be heard, if you are lucky enough to be the first one to crack the spine of a brand new book.

I am not a fan of the ebook, Kindle or Kobo. I have heard all the arguments of why e-reading is so much more convenient, less cumbersome, cost effective, etc., but you will not change my mind. I love the tangible feeling of holding a book. It brings me back to my childhood library experiences.

I recall the hushed sounds bouncing from the high ceilings to the towering shelves to my corner of the children's section in the Palmerston library. My mother would leave me there to make my selections as she went to the grocery store around the corner. This was a safe and comfortable place for me, sitting on a three-legged milking stool, browsing through books as the librarian (my grandma) kept an eye on me and offered selections of what I might like.

This is where I was first introduced to some of my favourite characters: Nancy Drew, Trixie Belden, Anne Shirley, Caddie Woodlawn, Frank and Joe Hardy and Laura Ingalls Wilder. I have re-read all of my childhood favourites, as well as my adult favourites. They are my old friends. Even though years may have passed, we fall into a comfortable

space together. I laugh as they tell their stories of adventure and mystery.

Not everyone feels as deeply connected to characters in a book as I do, but they become very real to me. As their character is developed, I get to know their thoughts and dreams. I am a part of their lives, for just a short while, and I am allowed to share the adventures they experience.

It is probably because of this realization that I understood, when a student wailed, (yes, she wailed!) that she couldn't read the final book in a series. She explained to me, that if she read it, she would have to say goodbye to the characters. I get it, I really do. I have experienced the same feelings many times.

Books are special. Reading is magical. It takes me to places I may never experience in my life. I have been to space, 20,000 leagues below, and to the North and South Pole. I have travelled to Medieval times, the Amazon and the land of the Pharaohs. I have been a pioneer, a cowboy, an apothecary, and a holocaust survivor.

One of my favourite compliments came from a student. As she hugged me, she told me that I smelled like the library. I suppose she could have meant I smelled old and musty, but I choose to believe she meant that I smelled like an old friend, a safe, welcoming and comfortable place that she and others could enjoy.

Are books important? Is reading fashionable? My answer is and will always be, "Yes"!



## Reading opens new doors

*By Andrea Bowman*

My love of reading started as a child. I remember my mother reading to us from the *Uncle Arthur Bedtime and Bible Story* books. Every night we could hardly wait for supper to be over to listen to Mom read to us.

I received a *Children's Living Bible* with pictures from the church as a child and I remember thinking that it was so cool because it had pictures as well as words which helped me envision the Bible stories better. It still is one of my favourite Bibles in my collection of old Bibles.

Once I could read by myself, I remember reading many books in the barn, sitting on a hay bale while my parents milked the cows, or sitting under an apple tree in the orchard. As an adult I like to read anywhere that is quiet; a favourite spot is sitting in a comfortable chair with my dog Ginger snuggled in beside me, with a cup of tea.

As I got older some of my favourite books were the *Little House on the Prairie*, and *Anne of Green Gables* books. I suppose these books started my love of historical story books. I like to read books that take place in the 1800s that have a story woven into real historical facts.

Books are a way for me to relax and explore different places and things. I mostly read books borrowed from various libraries; but sometimes I treat my-self and go to the Chapters bookstore and peruse the shelves and relish in the

smell of new books. There is nothing more invigorating than the “new book smell” for an avid reader like me.

I rarely read a book more than once because I usually have three or four books on my reading pile waiting for me to read. I have never read a book on an e-reader, and I am not sure I will. I prefer to have a physical book where you turn each page with anticipation to see what will happen next!

Is reading out of fashion? I hope not! Reading is a way to open new doors and learn about an unlimited number of topics.



## A Love of the written word

*By Tim Greenwood*

I hear it all the time. “Oh, you’re a librarian, you must love books!” It seems like one can’t exist without the other—a Bonnie and Clyde, peanut butter and jelly, milk and cookies kind of relationship where one always follows the other. Luckily for me, this holds true. I do love books. They have always been a big part of my life, and always will.

Growing up, if I couldn’t be found, you could be sure I was tucked away somewhere quiet with a book, sometimes even escaping the house to read up in a tree in the park. Reading books is part of what inspires me and sparks my imagination, something I require a lot of when working with young kids. It also grounds me and helps me re-

centre when I’m feeling at odds with myself.

When I read a book I’ve read before, it becomes especially true what they say: “reading a familiar book is like talking to an old friend.” It brings up memories of all the times I’ve read it before, and for someone like me who forgets more than I should, this is really quite a good thing.

Working at a library gives me even closer access to thousands of books, and yet, if you were to ask what I read from the shelves, it might surprise you to know that I still read very much the same style of books I always have. With every genre and subgenre waiting just steps away from me, it would seem wrong to not read everything and anything. Many people expect a librarian to have knowledge of all genres. And so I dabble with a mystery here, a thriller there, and maybe the odd biography. But with only so much time to read at home (I’m not allowed to read at work, unfortunately), I have found it harder to get into new genres. And so I stick to the ones I know, advise those patrons I can, and ask for recommendations from other staff for the rest.

I mentioned an imagination being important in my work, but it’s also a very large part of the way my mind works. Whether it’s a by-product of so many imaginative books read as a kid, or the books just matched the way my mind is, I don’t know. I read the usual kids’ favourites: Harry Potter, Roald Dahl books (Fantastic Mr. Fox being favourite among them), Magic Treehouse, the list goes on. But a common theme among them all is imagined worlds, creatures, magic, adventures, and others.

As I grew up, I read much the same in terms of themes, which meant the books I spent so much time reading fell under the Fanta-

sy/Science Fiction genre. I acquired a collection of Star Wars books over the years which I can still remember spending many teen hours reading on my bed, listening to a particular CD by Switchfoot. I tended to add that extra layer of music to truly immerse myself in the story. I always seemed to be able to pay attention to both the books words, and the music in the song, despite my terrible multi-tasking skills in all else. Oh, how I wish I could translate that ability to my working life. I have read them many times over and continue to do the same with many other books. In fact, I don’t consider a summer complete without reading at least half of the book Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. In fact, I’ll be starting it soon again, for possibly the 11th or 12th time.

Today my books come from the adult shelves, and more often than not feature either a historical element to them, or a futuristic one. I’m not much for contemporary stuff. If I wanted to learn more about how we live now, I’d go outside and talk to people. The one exception for this kind of reading is Malcolm Gladwell’s brand of popular pop-sociology/psychology books. These types of books, featuring stories that are easily digested, and don’t require the heavy input of long and complicated storylines most fiction books have, are certainly one reason reading is still going strong in our society.

Reading has long left the printed page, and can now be accessed in audio form (on CD, or even more conveniently as audio files), in e-books, and in many different styles and adaptations to appeal to readers of all types. I personally don’t often read anything other than print, but I enjoy the added benefit of being able to play an audiobook in the car on long drives, or build a collection

of books on my computer that takes up no more room on my shelves than the computer itself.

Reading takes many forms and doesn't just mean sitting down with a novel you got from the library. For many people, reading is the newspaper with morning breakfast, or cookbooks read obsessively in search of that next perfect recipe. It will never go out of fashion, because it never is in fashion. It's just a regular part of life and may look as different again in 50 years as it would seem to people 50 years ago. And that's what makes being a librarian so wonderful. I am part of an ever-evolving feature of society. One where I get to watch how we interact with words and stories, on a daily basis, and guide along anyone interested in that journey.



## Reaching enriches my life

By Mary Frey-Martin

Reading books is a very important part of my life. When my children were very small I did not read books, as somehow I couldn't focus on getting through an entire book. And now, I find reading for long stretches gives my eyes pain, so I can't read as much as I would like. I find myself falling asleep in the evening when I try reading, so I have to do my reading in the mornings when I'm well rested. I have tried audible books, but I don't stay focused on a book I'm listening to.

Twice in my life I have stayed up almost all night because I was so gripped by a book I just

couldn't put it down until I had finished reading it. Some books I have finished and then felt an almost lost feeling, a sadness that the book is finished, now what do I do with my life? I had become so totally enmeshed with the characters and the events taking place.

In the past year I have read several enjoyable books, including Michelle Obama's *Becoming* and then searched for and read Barack's first book.

Two books that stand out that I've read in the past year are *The 100-year-old Man Who Climbed out the Window* and *The Rosie Project*. I found myself laughing hard in places, feeling sad in places, and just generally they gave me lots to ponder about this life we live.

I think a good book educates me, entertains me, engages all my emotions, and gives me new perspectives on things.

I'm actually part of two book clubs, which gives me the structure of needing to get a book read by a certain date and allows me to read in the middle of the day while not getting other things done, because reading my book for book club is like having to get my homework done.

Reading books is very enriching to my life. I was very impacted by Richard Wagamese's books *Indian Horse* and *Ragged Company*. I could go on and on. I used to love Margaret Atwood, but find her later books have been too weird.

And my favourite way to read a book is to buy it at a thrift store or garage sale for cheap, not worry if I ruin some pages with spilt coffee, etc., then either pitch it or donate it back or loan it out to others without worrying about getting it back. This is a freeing way to do it, as I find having to return books to the library makes me crazy.

## Adventures with animals are favourite

By Susan Martin

As a child I loved reading. I would often have a book and read in the barn while my parents were milking the cows. When I was a child through to adulthood, Valina Martin was the church librarian. I must have read every book in the children's section in the small library in the church basement. *Mary of Mile 18* was a favourite!

When James and I had children they had their own favourite books. *Mike Mulligan and the Steam Shovel*, *Cowboy Sam*, *The Little Engine that Could*, *The New Baby Calf* and *Two by Two* were all fun books that were read over and over again. With grandchildren we are discovering new books like *The Little Blue Truck*, a must-read for Sullivan!!

James Herriot is one of my favourite authors. His adventures as a vet in England come alive in his *All Creatures Great and Small* series. I still giggle at the situations he would find himself in as I reread his books.

I am also a lover of cookbooks. Edna Staebler's *Food that Really Schmacks* plus her two others following in a similar vein are an enjoyable read if you like cookbooks!

I don't buy many books these days—more farm and gardening magazines and similar publications.

I enjoy watching YouTube and connecting with folks through social media. If you find yourself on YouTube, check out "Sheepishly Me," a look at Sandi Brock's adventures as a sheep farmer.





## We asked some of the children about their favourite books:

### From the Towns family:

Carson says “I like to read Minecraft books to learn about how to build things in the game Minecraft. I also like joke books and Would You Rather? books.

Spencer says “I got so many Pete the Cat books from the library at school that the library teacher said I had to try a different kind of book!”

### From the Horn family:

Aubrey currently loves books that she can imagine are all about her. She loves “I am a Big Sister,” “Too Pickley,” “Too Purplely,” and “Silly, Wonderful You!” Aubrey also loves that these books rhyme so she can “read” along with the story.

### From the Woeschkas:

Everly likes “The Very Cranky Bear.”

## The art of sorting books at the thrift shop

By Roy Draper

Over the past eight years I have been involved in sorting and pricing books for sale at the Elmira Mennonite Thrift and Gift. First of all, I discard old encyclopedia, books which are dated or in bad shape, books of which we have too many copies on the shelves already, and sometimes too those which we may feel are inappropriate for us to sell—although we have a caution posted for customers that we do not necessarily censor all the books we sell.

We also set aside older Bibles and faith-related books for pickup by another organization which does its own sorting prior to shipping them elsewhere. The rest of the discarded books are taken to the Re-Purpose Centre, and they are eventually shredded and used for bedding for livestock—which is obviously why we end up throwing out books with spiral and/or metal bindings.

During this phase I also separate things into three categories: Fiction, Non-Fiction, and “Kiddy-Lit,” and label the rough-tote bins they are stored in accordingly. This pre-sorting stage is often a bit uncomfortable for me, as I sometimes end up condemning some old “friends” or favourites to be destroyed. It is also hard to throw out old Bibles, even when they are literally falling apart.

Later I, or other book-pricers, go through the bins and separate the contents into further different categories according to genre, such as fiction, non-fiction, magazines, Christmas, Hallowe’en, cookbooks, or children’s literature, and according to price. Generally, we price and sell magazines which are only a few years old, although there are certain types which we sell regardless of their age: such as *Birds and Blooms*, *National Geographic*, or some having to do with crafts. When we price the books, we take into consideration their age, condition, original price and popularity. Hard cover novels do not tend to sell as well as paperbacks, for example.

Overall, we tend to price things more cheaply than “for-profit” used bookstores, and sometimes buyers for such stores actually purchase fairly large quantities of books from us to resell at higher prices.

I have enjoyed working with books, but have found that a good anti-histamine is crucial, as some



*Sorting books can be a tricky balancing act.*

of the books have been stored for a while in rec rooms or even garages, and may be quite dusty or even a bit mouldy. I guess you could say that volunteering to sort books is nothing to sneeze at.

Books generally sell well at the thrift shop and provide a good source of income that benefits the work of Mennonite Central Committee.



# Former refugee visits 35 years later

By Barb Draper

On Wed., July 10, people from the congregation were invited to meet Isaac Cabrera, a former refugee assisted by Floradale Mennonite Church nearly 35 years ago.

Isaac and his family fled from El Salvador in 1984. The church never heard the details of why they had to flee, but it may have been related to the injury Isaac experienced; he was stabbed in the back and lost the use of his legs. Somehow the family became separated in Texas and Isaac and his father did not know where his mother and two younger brothers were.

Although he knew no details of how to get there, Isaac heard that some people fleeing the political turmoil in El Salvador were going to Canada. Isaac and his father decided to try that route, so they flew to New York and then on to Buffalo. Trying to cross the border by bus, they were left stranded at the border. It was early November and cold, but Isaac remembers that the immigration official was kind to them. He contacted the nuns in Buffalo who provided assistance.

It took a few weeks to get from Buffalo to Elmira. The Catholic sisters dealt with the logistics and eventually took the Cabrerias to Toronto where a Quaker lady was helping refugees. Isaac doesn't know how the connection with Floradale was made, but probably it came through MCC Ontario.

Elmer and Myra Brubacher opened their basement for the Cabrera family. It was not an ideal situation because Isaac was in a wheelchair and there was a full flight of steps, but this was home for them for many months.

Isaac's mother and brother, Maria and Samuel were discovered to be living in the southern U.S. and they also came to Elmira about a month after the first arrivals. The whereabouts of another younger brother was not discovered for some years. He lives in California.

The Cabrerias lived in Elmira for about two years. Isaac was a teenager at the time and participated in the youth group at Floradale. The family moved to an apartment in a house at the corner of Duke and Erb Streets after it was made accessible for a wheelchair. After that they moved to Kitchener. Isaac was able to attend Cameron Heights to finish high school and went on to study at Conestoga College from 1989 to 1992.

Maria found Canada very cold and she moved to Vancouver around 1990. She and Samuel found it easier than Isaac and his father to settle in Canada and were able to become landed immigrants much faster. Isaac wanted to go to university, but without landed immigrant status it was simply too expensive.

In the early 1990s Isaac also moved to Vancouver. Although he was trained as a computer analyst, he had no experience and it took him years to find a good job. After years of frus-

tration and very hard work he was successful and has worked for the same company for the last 25 years. His mother and brother also live in Vancouver.

Isaac has married and has a son named Noah. The family was in Ontario for a couple weeks in July, visiting a variety of people, including his cousin who lives in Elmira. Lester and Wanda Kehl had stayed in touch over the years and opened their home for the Cabrerias during their time in Ontario.

Thank you to Lester Kehl for organizing the get-together with a refugee sponsored by the congregation so long ago. Thank you also to Veg Weber who organized the refreshments, including homemade ice cream.



Isaac Cabrera (centre) was a refugee from El Salvador who was assisted by Floradale Mennonite Church in 1984. With him is his wife, Vilumen (right) and his son, Noah.

# Will we help the stranger?

By Leon Kehl

*Matthew 25:38 – “When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?”*

For some reason this verse comes to me as I write this article today. When Jesus is asked by the righteous about when they saw him, he talks about helping the least of these.

Isaac Cabrera, who came to Canada from El Salvador as a refugee 30 years ago, recently visited this area with his family. While he was here, he talked about his journey decades ago, and how he thought the journey of refugees from his country now was far more difficult than anything he faced.

Tonight I watched a video of senior U.S. leaders at a overcrowded detention centre staring coldly at fellow human beings held in overcrowded fenced cages in a warehouse without talking to them. The men in cages had only mylar bags to keep warm as they slept on the concrete floor and apparently many hadn't been able to shower in weeks. If Isaac came today, he probably would be one of those men in a cage, even though he is paralyzed from the waist down.

Isaac came back to see the people and places who first welcomed him to Canada so many years ago and it was an emotional homecoming for him.

I think of the refugee family that our church agreed to sponsor but our government has now refused. Normally when a group agrees to sponsor, you only hear the stories of those who are accepted and don't have to face the stories of those who are not. So this hurts because I helped prepare the application and had to read and edit this family's story. I had to look into their eyes staring back at me in the application photos. I had to compare my life of comfort to their suffering and realize if not for the

accident of where I was born, I could have been them. Perhaps there is a way that they may be able to come but I know our system at times can be as heartless as other countries.

We here in North America, value our comfort and don't want to be disturbed. Yet that is exactly what Jesus is saying in the story of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25. In the end, we won't be given a test on our theology, rather our test will be on our compassion. My concern in the current political climate swirling around the issue of refugees and immigrants is whether we've lost sight of their humanity as we argue from our various political positions, trying to justify our own moral superiority. At times it feels as though the politicians are only interested in their own interests.

That's why I really appreciated our church's support for the iftar meals this year which were held at five local churches (Floradale, Breslau, Waterloo North, Stirling and Trinity United). Over 450 people from many countries and faiths sat down together, talked and explored their common humanity. I love what Janet Bauman from *Canadian Mennonite* said in an article about one of the events: “The lines between guest and host blurred, as both communities extended and received hospitality.” Having attended most of the iftar meals, one of the small things that brought me joy was watching new friends exchange contact information and promises to stay in touch.

As your Mission Chair at Floradale Mennonite Church, I am always grateful for my church's generosity and ability to welcome the stranger. I don't say this lightly be-

cause although we are a rural church in a small community, we often are able to lead on some of these issues where city churches seem to need more time to process, discuss and debate. When people at Floradale see a need they respond first and talk later. Isn't that what Jesus wants us to do?

So as I shared with the church that it seems we will not be able to sponsor the Christian refugee family who fled from Syria, I also asked the question of what might Jesus be asking us to do? I met recently with Shelley Campagnola from Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support and she talked about upcoming cuts in Legal Aid and also possible cuts that would leave refugee claimants without support for housing for 90 days. We know how tough it is becoming for people around us to find housing. Can you imagine arriving with nothing and having nothing provided? Is that any better than putting people in cages? She talked about forming a group and providing support to have families provide housing for these people until government funding is provided. Is that something we as a church should be considering?

I think each of us has an opportunity to welcome the stranger. The only question is whether or not we will take that opportunity.



*Floradale Mennonite Church hosted an Iftar meal on May 7, a meal with friends to break the fast during Ramadan. Floradale Mennonite Church contributed \$5,000 from the Generosity Fund to help the Intercultural Dialogue Institute cover the costs of providing food for Iftar meals in Waterloo Region.*

## Anniversaries

Onne and Betty Snip will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary on Aug. 14, 2019. Congratulations!



Congratulations to Sylvan and Vera Martin who will celebrate 60 years of marriage on Sept. 30, 2019



Glenn and Elaine Martin will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Sept. 10, 2019. Congratulations!

Congratulations to Ron and Merri-Lee Metzger who will celebrate 40 years of marriage on Aug. 10, 2019.

Congratulations to Rick and Sharon Cressman who will celebrate 35 years of marriage on Sept. 22, 2019.



Brad and Krysten Shoemaker will be married 10 years on July 11, 2019. Congratulations!

Calvin and Jenn Shantz will celebrate 5 years of marriage on Sept. 6, 2019. Congratulations!

## Women's Fellowship Breakfast at Riversong Bakery and Café

By Karen Bender

On a beautiful, warm, sunny, Saturday morning, 26 ladies attended a delicious buffet breakfast at Riversong in St. Jacobs. We started our breakfast off with some fresh fruit and yogurt followed by a hot buffet. The owner, Susan Pries, takes pride in making all her own pastries and breads. They are also available to purchase as they recently opened to the public rather than bookings only.

After our breakfast, Susan's husband John gave us some insight into their beautiful property. He spoke about some very interesting facts and observations of wildlife and activities that occur on and around his property. He is also a bird enthusiast! We spent time walking around the gardens while chatting alongside each other.

Our Women's Fellowship group takes a break from events in the summer months, resuming again in the fall. Some of us have been on the committee for many years and are looking for a break. Going forward we require more volunteers in order to keep these activities going. If you are interested in being on the committee, we would love to hear from you. Contact Bonnie Martin, Norma Bauman or Karen Bender for more information.

Hope you are enjoying the summer!  
Blessings, Karen Bender

## Birthdays



Congratulations to Edna Bauman who will celebrate her 90th birthday on Aug. 28, 2019.

Lovina Martin will celebrate her 85th birthday on July 15, 2019. Congratulations!



Ab Metzger will celebrate his 85th birthday on Sept. 17, 2019. Congratulations!

Congratulations to Katie Carlson who celebrated her 80th birthday on July 4, 2019.

A recent newsletter at Hidden Acres Mennonite Camp highlighted the faithful support that Lorne Bowman has given over the years with the bowling fundraiser. Over the 32 years that he has participated, Lorne has raised \$116,019.



*Dan Draper, who finished his third year of teaching in Tianjin, China, received his school's Superintendent's Award for professionalism and excellence as a teacher in early June. He works for Maple Leaf Educational Systems which runs several schools, preparing Chinese students for international universities using a Canadian B.C. curriculum.*