



Focus on Floradale

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Floradale Mennonite Church

April, 2020

Surviving a pandemic

On Saturday, March 14 at 12:36 p.m., the following email announcement from Jim Loebb Thiessen went out to the Floradale church community: “As the Covid-19 virus situation continues to evolve, we, (Richard Bauman, Steve O. Bauman, Anita Schroeder Kipfer and myself), have chosen to cancel our service for tomorrow and next Sunday, March 22nd. As the body of Christ, we don’t want to give into a spirit of fear, but neither do we want to be unwise in our decision making in times of crisis. The strong advice from medical establishment to contain this virus is for social isolation at this time. That means minimizing group gatherings. Although not all churches are cancelling tomorrow, many are even as I write this, and many in our congregation lie in the demographic most at risk for this virus. We will evaluate after next Sunday about next steps. Please let those who don’t have access to this email know about the cancellation. And please pray for our country and leadership in this time of fear and uncertainty. And please continue to shine the light of Christ in these days, who calls us into hope beyond our fears!”

As the church became more aware of the severity of COVID-19, the province of Ontario declared a state of emergency on March 17 which declared that non-essential businesses including libraries, recreation facilities, child care centres, theatres, concert venues and private schools needed to close. The province had already closed all public schools for three weeks. Restaurants could only serve take-out. The original date

set was March 31, but then it was extended until April 14 and then May 12. No one knows how many more times it could be extended.

The church has been closed since March 14 with the pastors working mostly from home. Each day they have distributed a meditation and each week they have prepared a worship service with songs, prayers and a sermon that is available on the internet. Jim said he has been surprised at how much people say they appreciate being able to watch an online worship service coming from a familiar space with people they know. It helps them feel connected.

As well as an online service for Good Friday, Jim and Anita also led a virtual communion service. There were 22 households that joined in with about 35 people involved altogether. Of course we all to provide our own



There were 22 households that participated in the Good Friday communion service on Zoom. Not everyone had cameras or chose not to turn them on.

A fun-filled Family Day

By Jane Hesselink

Family Day 2020, celebrated on Mon. Feb. 17, was certainly a day of excitement at Floradale Menonite Church as we welcomed a large number of young families from the area to enjoy some fun together.

We went a little “wild” with the theme and activities this year which featured a live animal show and the chance for a hands-on encounter with a number of interesting creatures. We’re pretty sure



Lots of families came out to see the live animal show. The animals went up and down all the aisles so the children could touch them.

that Flower the skunk was the highlight of the show!

At the last minute, we picked up a few extra bottles of hand sanitizer as the world was waking up

to the possibility of a spreading virus. It proved helpful as guests left the sanctuary to quickly clean lots of little fingers after having touched a few furry and not so furry animals.

A talented balloon artist delighted the imagination of many with his fabulous creations and this year two bouncy castles in the gym kept lots of little bodies jumping and hopping! A segregated active play area in the gym with mats, tunnels and slides for toddlers was

a busy spot.

Board games as well as Air Hockey and Crokinole

were also available in the gym.

Coffee, mini muffins and animal crackers were enjoyed in the foyer where families could also get creative at the photo booth and make a photo memory of the

day using their own phone camera, with some cute critter ears and stuffies. Crafts in the board room included making animal puppets on popsicle sticks with a



There was a long line of children waiting for their balloon art. Meanwhile Dan Bender was serving snacks.

mini puppet theatre, butterfly wands and colouring pages. The library provided a quiet play area for our youngest guests with chairs for moms, and dads to sit and visit while watching their little ones.

It was estimated at one point during the morning that there were approximately 360 adults and children in the sanctuary while others were still in the gym and foyer. The incredible attendance for this event, and the fun atmosphere throughout the church, was very rewarding for all the volunteers involved.



Some people left the room when the white snake came out, but A.J. was willing to run his fingers down its body.



The board room was a busy, crafty place.



The bouncy castle was very popular, but so were the toddler playthings and other games.



The mini muffins and other snacks went well. There were not many left over.

Speaking of our volunteers, our committee wishes to thank everyone for their gift of time and their willingness to serve in many different ways to make this event such a success. Making muffins and treats for the volunteers, moving gym mats from Floradale School and back again, setting up activities on Sunday, greeting our guests at the door, supervising an activity or two, keeping the coffee and muffins flowing, wandering amongst the crowds and offering assistance as needed, running the sound system, take-down and clean-up, and even those who handed out invitations to friends and neighbours, were all such important

contributions and we couldn't have done it without so many pitching in.

It was a great day sharing a little of God's love for others and the gift of our beautiful space with the community by providing a place where families could play together, relax over a coffee, meet up with friends and family and see some of His amazing creatures up-close.

The Event Planning Committee,

*Nancy Martin,
Gloria H Bauman,
Jane Hesselink*



When the skunk came around, Paul was intrigued and wanted a photo (above) while Reuben was uncertain (below).



It was an opportunity for old friends Casey and Nicole to chat while their babies sat quietly.



Family Day photos by Jerry Hesselink, Jane Hesselink and Barb Draper.

Hopping Thursday program

On Friday, Feb. 21, 2020, the children from Hopping Thursday presented their program. The younger children wore a variety of animal costumes, representing the wide variety of God's creatures. The older group made puppets of some biblical characters. During the fellowship time after the performance, the excitement of the children was very apparent.



The children enjoyed dressing up in animal costumes.



A puppet representing an Old Testament character reflects on his life during the Junior Youth portion of the program.



Children's artwork, representing God's creation, was also on display on Feb. 21, 2020

Thank you for the comforters from MCC Ontario

By MCC Ontario

MCC's Great Winter Warm-up event on Jan. 18, 2020 resulted in more than 9,504 comforters from across Canada, the United States and Europe. From the bottom of our hearts we thank all of you for the hard work you put into helping us reach that incredible number.

Over a year ago, those of us in the Material Resources network met to brainstorm ways to engage everyone across MCC in our celebration of 100 years. We decided on something close to our Mennonite identity—comforter knotting. We had lots of planning questions, including how to run the same event across different countries and different time zones. We chose the achievable but ambitious goal of 6,500 comforters.

Then came a year of planning and uncertainty. We hoped everyone would be excited about this event, and you definitely were! We began getting requests for information and then more and more groups let us know they were participating. The number of visits our staff were hoping to do on the day of the event kept growing until we couldn't actually make it out to all of you.

On Jan. 18, Kitchener-Waterloo was hit with winter weather advisories and snow was piling up. Our steadfast volunteers braved the weather to join us at 50 Kent Avenue for the morning, working until the minute we had to end our event early due to the weather. Many of you held

your events in the days before or after January 18th, but on that day, we thought of you and knew you joined us in spirit.

For the rest of the month our volunteers here at 50 Kent spent their time counting, folding and baling the comforters you brought in. Every day our donation bins would empty out, and by the next day, they'd be full again. The number of bales ready to be shipped kept growing.

The generosity of time and material from each one of you allowed us to collect an incredible 9,504 comforters! Across Ontario you gathered in over 30 different spaces: church basements, living rooms and commu-

nity spaces; you helped to surpass our wildest expectations.

We're gearing up to ship again at the end of March when we'll be sending a mixture of relief kits and hygiene kits to our partners in Jordan. We ask for your continued generosity and support through your donations of school, hygiene and relief items as we prepare for that shipment.

Leading up to Thanksgiving we will again celebrate with a Buckets of Thanks collection. As we reflect with gratitude on all we have, it's important to remember those living in situations of disaster and conflict who are in need of aid. We hope that you will join us in October as we collect relief kit items and make Buckets of Thanks as fantastic as the Great Winter Warm-up.

On behalf of all of us at MCC, we thank you for your consistent and outstanding support. On behalf of those who will be receiving these comforters over the coming months, thank you for creating tangible, touchable examples of care that act as a light in otherwise dark times. We hope you will continue to reach out to us with questions surrounding comforters, relief kits or any other part of our Material Resources work.

Your Material Resources Staff:

*Jon Lebold,
Material Resources
Coordinator*

*Reid Kennel,
Material Resources
Assistant Manager*



*Fred Redekop is thrilled with all the volunteers who helped make the Great Winter Warm-up a success!
(MCC Photo/ Lisa Klassen)*

Meditation Excerpts

Beginning on Tuesday, March 17, the day that the Ontario government declared a state of emergency and asked everyone to stay home as much as possible, each day our pastors have provided a meditation. Here are a few excerpts:

March 17:

For the next few weeks, we will be putting out a series of daily meditations. These reflections will hopefully guide us as followers of Jesus in the very unique situation we find ourselves in with the COVID-19 pandemic.

First of all, why do we isolate from others, as we did when we cancelled the service this past Sunday? You might think to yourself, “As Christians, don’t we have enough faith to not worry about meeting with others? So what if we get sick from this?” When my mother in her later years resisted putting on a seat-belt when we were getting into the car as a family, we would joke about the inconvenience, but I told her, “Mom, you aren’t just protecting yourself, you also protect our family when you belt yourself in.”

We self-isolate not simply out of concern for ourselves. We may not worry or care if we get this sickness, particularly if we are younger (although even younger folks are getting sick from this). We do so because we are not trying to pass it on to others who may get severely ill or die from exposure.

-Jim Loep Thiessen

March 21

When I was a student chaplain in a nursing home in Winnipeg over thirty years ago, there was a woman who started shopping and ordering all kinds of things that literally filled her room (think shopping channel, not internet). It’s funny to me that one way our collective anxiety about this virus manifests is through

hoarding toilet paper of all things! My brother, a physician, joked with me, “This isn’t a cholera epidemic!” ...

Now, in the face of an epidemic, people don’t know what to do when potential scarcity and isolation loom large, so they start hoarding, and like lemmings, follow what their neighbour does. We are downright scared. Markets are frightened. In the face of an unknown, deep panic sets in.

It turns out the woman in the nursing home started hoarding when she turned the same age as her sister, who died unexpectedly in the room they shared together. We were able to help her ease her fears, when we were able to trace the source of her anxiety.

-Jim Loep Thiessen

March 23

These days at St. Jacob’s Place retirement home, where I serve as the part-time Chaplain, only essential visitors are allowed to enter the facility, so I reach out to residents by phone. Often the calls end with scripture or prayer, usually Psalm 23 or The Lord’s Prayer. Sharing in this way has been a mutual source of encouragement and support. I’m surprised how this simple gesture can make such a difference in someone’s day!

The song *Gentle Shepherd* (based on Psalm 23) has been my daughter’s favourite bedtime lullaby for years. It’s a lovely song of comfort and assurance, in which the psalmist claims Jesus’ promise to provide all that is needed—including rest, protection, companionship, blessing and peace.

-Anita Schroeder Kipfer

March 27

Last week I saw images from Venice, Italy. When we were there in the summer in 2012, it was overrun with tourists, the canals jammed with boats. The city was like a giant water circus. Now however, the video images showed the city as quiet, almost surreal: the canal water was clearing up.

The same was with satellite images from Italy and China one year apart. “Clouds” of pollution, now quietly dispersing because of less traffic. It’s a beautiful picture of what is possible in this crisis.

We get shaken out of our complacency, our fears rise to the surface where, if we allow them, are gladly received by Jesus (my yoke is easy, and my burden light after all), and new life can form in places where there was none. And hopefully, things change for the better following the virus’s passing. ...

My prayer as I give thanks in, not for this crisis, is that new life comes for all of us. Ingrid said when this is all done we should have a massive music service of thanksgiving to God at Floradale. I agree. Let’s look forward to that, in the midst of what is.

-Jim Loep Thiessen

March 30

On Saturdays I get dressed for church, work on final touches for Sunday’s service, and then drive to FMC where I meet Jim and Leon to record the worship service—sent out early Sunday mornings to our congregation. These are strange and lonely days. We miss you all! We miss

gathering together on Sunday morning and connecting with everyone ... We miss hugs and handshakes and high fives!

We miss the enthusiasm of FMC kids who fill our church with energy and happy sounds! Several children have sent drawings of their families to put on their pews so that the sanctuary feels a little less empty when we lead services.

While I generally steer clear of watching recordings of myself, I couldn't resist watching the virtual service this morning as I had such a longing to be with all of you! Nichelle's music was so beautiful and I pictured all of us joining together in worship and song.

-Anita Schroeder Kipfer

April 11

One of the stresses of our season is that we can't deal with the mourning that accompanies death. When people die, funerals are a ritual of mourning that help us move on...but the women had to wait. They would have, I can only imagine, felt intense anger at the cruel death their friend and saviour, Jesus, had endured. They felt helplessness, along with fear about what was coming. Perhaps even there were things unsaid or undone that they carried. Their world would have seemed in utter turmoil. And in that state of waiting and wondering, they were commanded to rest....

There is always a Saturday that lies between Good Friday and Easter. This was a day of rest—a Sabbath. No matter what could or should be done, life shut down as people rested. The women prepared spices and ointments until sundown on Friday, and then turned to worship. The rest of the work would happen early Sunday, but not now. Not on Saturday, in the midst of their heartbreak.

It was the time for God to do God's thing. Things were happen-

ing, under the surface. The Saturdays that fall between Good Friday and Easter are days to acknowledge our grief, lay it before the Lord, and trust God for what lies ahead. Nothing could have fully prepared the women for what was coming. The good news was just around the corner, but not yet, not on Saturday.

Our faith ultimately lies in an in-between season, between the first coming of Jesus and his return; the "already and not yet" of our faith. This virus has also hit us with an in-between time. We only know what was, and can only speculate about what it will be like when life returns to "normal." We are sitting in a season of continual Easter Saturdays.

-Jim Loep Thiessen

April 16

I'm not a natural evangelist by any means, and going public with my faith often gives me pause. Last week, Ingrid suggested that since we couldn't have Easter with her mom in Waterloo, we should stand at the base of her balcony and sing a few Easter hymns for her. Honestly, I thought she might be embarrassed by our singing. Turns out she wasn't at all,

and it turns out Ingrid knows her mother better than I do! And, surprise, surprise, since these days pretty much everyone is home, we instantly had a small crowd listening from their balconies. You can see the pic below of us with the "Happy Easter Oma!" banner that we made.

There we were, singing "Christ the Lord is risen today" and "Low in the Grave he lay." Our voices bounced off the wall of the building and it was acoustically alive. People were so thrilled with our singing, and one couple said afterwards "You made our day!"

- Jim Loep Thiessen

April 17

My faith has helped me in these days because *my faith is the bedrock of my life* and sustains me moment by moment. Yesterday on the phone I had some wonderful experiences of praying with people, as well as singing hymns like "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder" and "His Eye is on the Sparrow." It was mutually supportive to affirm our faith and encourage each other in this way.

-Anita Schroeder Kipfer



Jim, Ingrid and their daughters Joanna and Anneli sang for Ingrid's mother on Easter Sunday morning.

Annual meeting & offerings

Church Council has had a couple virtual meetings to make some decisions since our original annual meeting had to be cancelled. Because the new slate cannot take over until an annual meeting is held, Council decided to hold a virtual annual meeting using Zoom on Sun., April 26 at 2 p.m. Richard Bauman, Council chair, has also provided the option of voting by ballot on a given list of motions or voting by proxy.

The annual report booklets were prepared for the first Sunday we were closed, so paper copies remain at the church, but electronic copies were also distributed. Everyone has been encouraged to read the report before the annual meeting.

To simplify donations, the church has set up the option of making donations to the general budget by e-transfer. This can be done online through your bank or credit union using the email offeringfmc@gmail.com. Include an offering number in the memo line. Cheques can also be sent to the church by regular mail.

Births

Congratulations to Richard and Norma Bauman as they welcome their new grandson Wesley Eli Bauman. He was born on March 30, 2020 to Scott and Clara Bauman.

Congratulations to Shirley and Gerry Shoemaker on the birth of their granddaughter, Lillian Annemarie Shoemaker Orsan. She was born on April 16, 2020 to Elizabeth and Mike.



Other news

Many **events have been cancelled** due to the pandemic. Not only was the MCC meat canning fundraising breakfast, planned for March 21, cancelled, but the meat canning itself has been cancelled. As well the relief sale promotion dinner was cancelled. The end-of-May relief sale will not be held in its usual form. There is a possibility of an on-line quilt sale in the spring and some kind of event in the fall if we are no longer all in quarantine.



Women from the congregation helped Betty Snip celebrate her 90th birthday with a lunch at the Crossroads restaurant on Tuesday, March 17, 2020. With her is her daughter, Christine Kehl.

The children had been collecting money for MCC **school kits** in the weeks before we closed everything down. During the first few weeks of Lent we had two offerings where the children brought their own coins and helped to collect from others for this project.

Anita Schroeder Kipfer had planned a series on guided prayer during the Sunday School time throughout Lent. That was cut short as everything closed down after two weeks. **Jim Loopp Thiessen** also led two sessions on prayer in the Christian Education variety class on Sun. March 1 and March 8.

Fred Redekop has resigned from MCC Ontario as church and community relations associate. He is working as pastor at Poole Mennonite Church. **Shirley Redekop** has accepted a position with Mennonite World Conference as a half-time chief development officer, beginning March 23, 2020.

Focus on Floradale is published five times each year. **Editor:** Barb Draper
Editorial Committee: Polly Burkhart, Sharon Cressman, Mary M. Martin