



September, 2020

Life With Us

At Niagara United Mennonite Church

**Summoned by the God Who made us
rich in our diversity,
gathered in the name of Jesus,
richer still in unity:**

**Let us bring the gifts that differ and,
in splendid, varied ways,
sing a new church into being
one in faith and love and praise.**

**Radiant risen from the water,
robed in holiness and light,
male and female in God's image,
male and female, God's delight:**

**Trust the goodness of creation;
trust the Spirit strong within.
Dare to dream the vision promised
sprung from seed of what has been.**

**Bring the hopes of ev'ry nation;
bring the art of ev'ry race.
Weave a song of peace and justice;
let it sound through time and space.**

***Let us bring the gifts that differ
and, in splendid, varied ways,
sing a new church into being
one in faith and love and praise.***

**Draw together at one table
all the human family;
shape a circle ever wider
and a people ever free.**

~ Delores Dufner

Delores Dufner (*born 1939 in North Dakota*) ~ writer of “**Summoned by the God who made us**” - the first hymn in our new hymnal **Voices Together**

Delores Dufner is a member of St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, Minnesota, with Master's Degrees in Liturgical Music and Liturgical Studies. She is currently a member and a Fellow of The Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, the National Pastoral Musicians (NPM), the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP), and the Monastic Worship Forum.

Delores was a school music teacher, private piano and organ instructor, and parish organist/choir director for twelve years. She served as liturgy coordinator for her religious community of 775 members for six years and as Director of the Office of Worship for the Diocese of St. Cloud, Minnesota for fifteen years. She subsequently worked as a liturgical music consultant for the Diocese of Ballarat, Victoria in southeast Australia for fifteen months. At present, she is preparing a fourth hymn collection and assisting with liturgy planning and music leadership at the monastery.

Voices Together ~ submitted by Rachael Peters

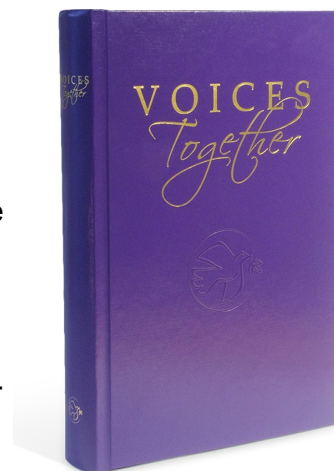
When Kathy asked me to write something for the newsletter about the new hymnal, my first reaction was excitement to share some of the details. My second reaction was “People are going to get so sick of me blabbing on and on about this new hymnal!” It's been years in the making, and I know I've mentioned it on more than a few occasions during Sunday morning worship over the last few years.

A new hymnal is a once-in-a-generation event. The new collection is called Voices Together and the website says, “[Hymnals] reflect the rhythms of the Holy Spirit, moving among God's people in a particular era. As worship rhythms develop new currents, the language of a recent generation needs to expand too.”

The new hymnal began development in 2008 with surveys and feedback from congregations across North America. The committee and a singular staff member were subsequently assembled in 2016 for four years of diligent and time-consuming work. The team surveyed congregants online from all over MC Canada and MC USA. They also visited communities all over North America, and they screened approximately 10,000 pieces to make their final selections. Voices Together will be released this fall, a mere 12 years after initial discussions began.

In addition to the editions that were available with our blue hymnal (large print version, and accompaniment edition for pianists and other instrumentalists) Voices Together will also have a worship leader edition, a projection edition, an app edition, as well as audio recordings available.

The contents include material that spans more than 40 languages and 1000 years. There will be music and language pulled from older Mennonite collections, as well as new sources. About one third of Voices Together will be content from the blue hymnal. Another third will be brand new content. The remaining third will be content from Sing the Journey, Sing the Story, the brown 1969 hymnal, as well as familiar texts set to different tunes, and familiar tunes set to new texts.



Here's an example to see if you can imagine some of those mashups. Here are the lyrics to the first verse of Natalie Sleeth's song, *In the bulb there is a flower*:

In the bulb there is a flower;
in the seed, an apple tree;
in cocoons, a hidden promise:
butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter
there's a spring that waits to be,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

Now, see if you can put those words to the tune of *Come, thou fount*. It's a little odd because both are so well known, but it works! It's actually kind of pretty. For another challenge, flip it around the other way. That means the lyrics of *Come, thou fount* are sung to the tune of *In the bulb there is a flower*.



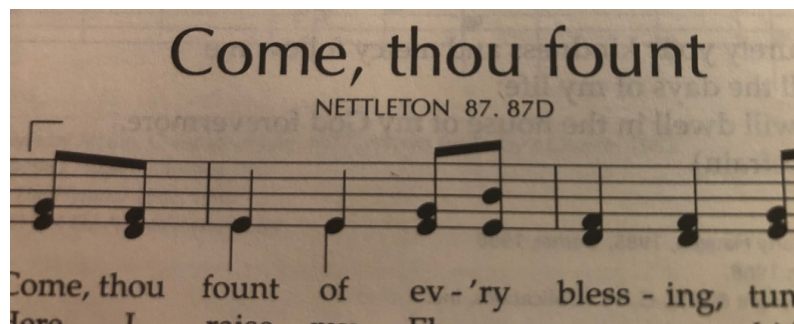
I have a feeling that neither of these well known songs will end up being mashed-up in *Voices Together*, but it's a fun experiment to try. There are tons and tons of interchangeable texts and tunes in our hymnal. I'm eager to see what gets paired up.

Personally, I'm really excited to explore the contents of the collection. My goal is to play it through cover to cover, every verse of every song! ...Though I can't commit to a deadline for that goal, because life is a little busier these days with a very curious and very sweet little one running around the house.

When I think about the new songbook collection, I'm most excited for the future generations that will benefit from the creation of this book. How will these songs shape Brooklynn's future? What songs will resonate with her as she grows up? How will the lyrics help her understand the culture and world around her?

I'll continue to explore *Voices Together* in a Community Connection segment of our service this fall. Stay tuned to learn more about the content and a potential small group that may be the first in our church to really dive in to the new books.

Note: As of right now, we've purchased 12 books. From those 12, we may have a few books left after distributing copies to our music leaders. They're set to ship sometime this fall. Let me know if you'd be interested in borrowing a copy.



Subtitle for "Come, thou fount" photo: Have you ever wondered about the odd markings underneath the hymn titles? NETTLETON is the name of the tune. 87.87D is the poetic metre. Since the poetic metre of *In the bulb there is a flower* is also 87.87D, you can interchange the tunes/lyrics.

Behind the scenes of my picture message

by Renate Dau Klaassen

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed how we do things on so many levels, including the ways & means of being the church. For both staff and lay leadership, this new reality is uncharted territory; we weren't offered "Pandemics 101" in Seminary! On top of that, for a thoroughly non-tech person like me, doing so much of church life via "Zoom", Youtube, etc., has been quite a stretch. I feel like I arrived home from our unexpectedly extended trip to Uruguay in April, to an entirely different era, requiring me to navigate a whole range of computer skills I never thought I would need. It has all been rather overwhelming!

Sharing a message for our on-line services has become a whole new experience of speaking at that little dot above the screen that's the video camera, instead of looking into a crowd of familiar faces and sharing my thoughts directly with you. Within a week of landing in COVID-paralyzed Canada, I was invited to share a message as part of a compilation of worship elements from various area Mennonite congregations, to be shared on Mennonite Church Canada's website. Having completed that challenge, I then thought, "So, what's the next challenge after going national?!"

I have enjoyed drawing and painting all my life, and had from time to time thought it might be interesting to preach a sermon while creating a picture. Our usual worship space and traditions always seemed to make that idea somewhat cumbersome, but now that all our messages are pre-recorded and viewed on a screen, I thought this was as good a time as any to give it a try. The Worship Committee's discernment of the Story of the Feeding of the 5,000 as theme for our June 14th service and virtual picnic offered suitable subject material.

Of course, the means should always be subservient to the ends. As I sought to clarify my objective, I recalled numerous past visits to art museums, gazing at the life-size originals of the great masters. On those occasions I've always pondered the experience the painter would have had in the process of rendering every detail of their masterpiece. An artist spending hours applying every individual brush stroke to a canvas to create the image of Jesus on the cross, for example, would undoubtedly enter into deep contemplation of every wound on Christ's



body, every muscle taught with pain. By giving you, the viewer, the opportunity to watch the scene of Jesus feeding a hungry crowd with five loaves and two fish take shape, I wanted to invite you to enter into the story with me. But in twenty minutes.

That is the stark reality: great ideas, once they are dreamed up, invariably lead to obstacles in actually achieving them. It didn't take me long to realize that trying to communicate the spiritual lessons of each element of the scene, while at the same time needing to focus on the act of drawing, would have its difficulties. Pastor Daniel shared with me his expertise he had acquired doing his Lego-people scenes, making video and audio recordings separately, and then fitting them together using computer technology.

Next, I needed to figure out a way of drawing an image in the usual time frame of a Sunday morning message. I was used to taking hours over several days to create even a small painting. Normally I work with pen and watercolour, but that would mean creating a pen drawing first, and then adding the colour — not suitable for a gradually unfolding image. Just watercolour? — too much time required for paint to dry from one detail to the next. Coloured pencil? — too fine for drawing a scene of a significant size. Coloured chalk? I had done a bit of chalk art in the past, but for this subject matter I needed to figure out the best technique. Each detail needed studied and practiced: how to create the sense of a whole crowd of people, without taking time to draw every individual; how to include every element of the story I wanted to talk about, in the right order, without using up too much space for any one thing; and how to allow for the appropriate amount of time to say what I wanted to say about each detail before moving on to the next.

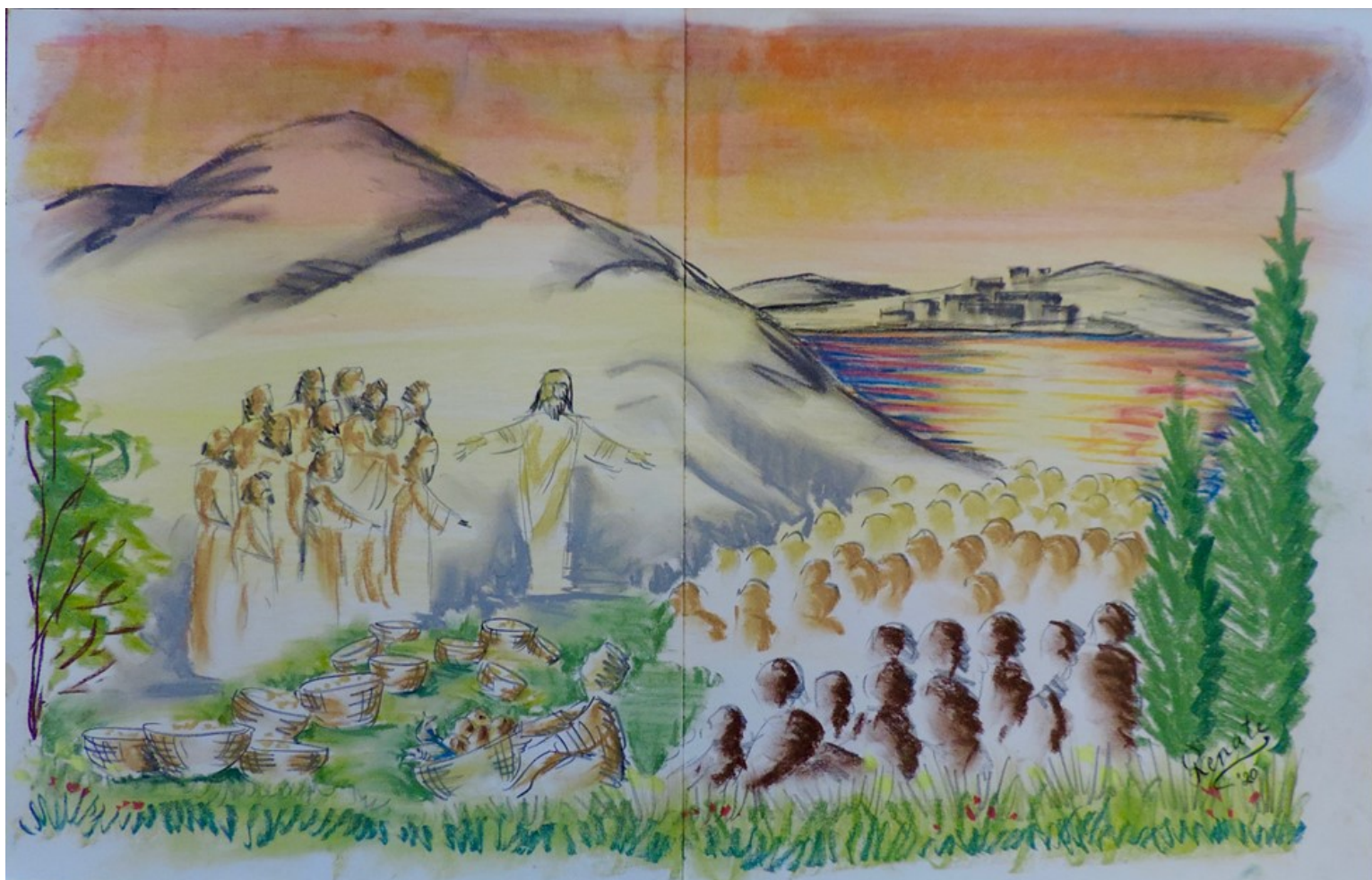
And then how big should I make the image? The art I normally do is quite small-scale, owing to the reality that my creative work space has always been rather small, and my time limited, and simply because love fine detail. .

So, for lack of a larger canvas, I taped three sheets of art paper together; then got everything set up, with my husband Randy at the camera controls, and started drawing. Partway through, I realized that time was running out, the scene was still in its early stage of background colours, and I was breathless from scribbling away like a maniac! Too much space to cover in that amount of time. So, I started again, with only two sheets. Thankfully, that worked much better. Another take might have allowed for further improvements, but by the time I was finished, I was completely exhausted! Playing it back, I had to laugh at myself at the point when I suddenly realized I had drawn only 10 baskets of leftover crumbs and hastily had to draw in 2 more! Did you notice me doing a quick count?

To keep safely within the time frame of our Cogeco broadcast, I had to end the video just before the scene was quite complete; this still photo includes the later addition of more background colours, so that

Jesus and His disciples are actually standing on solid ground, not just floating in nothingness. I hope you also found your place in the scene, encountering this Gospel story in a fresh way. If you missed it, go to the resources column on our website, and click on Sermons, then click on the June 14th message (for those of you, like me, who need tech stuff explained in exact detail!).

Living through a pandemic is stressful and worrisome, and we wish everything would return to the way it was before. Where is God in all of this? We are forced to figure out how to do things in new ways, and sometimes it feels as impossible as feeding a crowd with five loaves and two fish. But God is with us, and He will show us what His power and grace through us is capable of in this strange new reality. And we may be amazed at the possibilities! I am so thankful and excited to be part of a team of staff and volunteers who gladly share their expertise and are facing the challenges with collaborative energy and dedication. When we get hung up on the details, it helps to remember that it's a work in progress, and the big picture is in God's control. Let's see what it will all look like in the end!



More artwork from the hand of
Renate Dau Klaassen



Summer in a Can, 2020



Mom's Roses, 2020



Spring Singer, 2013

Sunrise by the Lake, Algonquin Park, 2020



Easter Greeting, 2019



San Juan Capistrano, CA, 2007



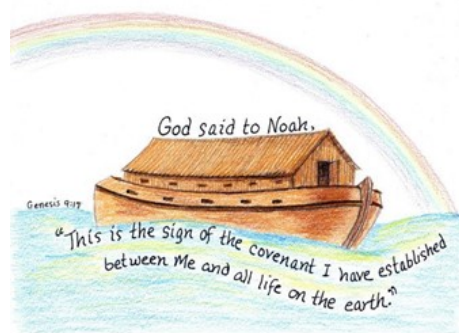
Fountain in Botanical Gardens,
Montevideo, Uruguay, 2020

Noah's Carpenters

Many hundred years ago
They ventured to remark
That Noah had some carpenters
To help him build the Ark
But sad to say on that last day
When Noah entered in ,
Those carpenters were left outside
And perished in their sin.

How sad to think they may have helped
To build the Ark so great,
Yet still they heeded not God's Word
And awful was their fate.
Today the same sad fate exists
Among the sons of men,
They helped to build the so-called church
Who are not born again.

They stay behind for sacrament.
They work, they sing, they pray;
Yet never have accepted Christ,
The Life, the Truth, the Way.
Another judgment day will come,
As sure as came the flood,
And only those will be secure
Who shelter 'neath Christ's blood



*This poem was submitted to
us by Mary Janzen
after Pastor Dan's sermon
on Mar 8/2020 "To no avail"
It is very fitting for the
message*

Walking Together: Finding connection within limitations.

~ by Jolien Koole

This fall marks my 11th year of being sick. What happened at a societal level during COVID is something not unfamiliar to those of us who have faced chronic or acute illness. The job loss/financial toll, uncertainty and confusion, isolation and broken connection. What you once knew and found normal has all of a sudden been torn from you and you now have no real choice other than to try to adapt and live in this weird new reality that isn't comfortable or desirable. You go through the stages of grief, think you've arrived at acceptance and then start all over again when you face a new question or limitation.

Today I went to the doctor to talk about what this fall/winter may look like for me and how to navigate it. There are no concrete answers. Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (Chronic Fatigue) isn't on the list of knowns. We just know that there are times when I get a cold and get knocked down for several months (or times when I have one and it doesn't seem to affect me more than the average Joe). The advice, as usual, is proceed with caution and live within your limits and what you're comfortable with. I wish that my illness had made the list, so that I could have concrete answers or be able to prove to myself and others that the caution we're taking is reasonable.

There are parts of me that deal with the trauma of developing an illness triggered by a virus in the first place. There are parts of me that remember how long it took after first getting sick just to be able to live the life I'm living now. There are parts of me that don't want my loved ones to be burdened by being caregivers if I end up sicker than I am for several months or even years. There are parts of me that are so sick of being sick and exhausted from being tired all the time, so I don't want to risk adding more of that to my plate. There are parts of me that want to ignore the fact that I'm vulnerable for long-term consequences and live in the "freedom" of denial. There are parts of me that actually find a lot of joy in living as we are right now, even within the limitations I have.

I've been challenged that I'm living in fear instead of faith and freedom. I don't think I am. I am living in the messy reality of it all. Living in the greys and unknowns. Living in the courage to take risks when I'm comfortable or not take risks if I'm not, even if others think I should. Living in consideration of what it means to be a good steward of my own body and life. I'm living in faith while not putting God to the test. I'm living in this weird peace that knows that a healthy fear is a good thing but too much isn't. I'm living in a constant state of learning, unlearning and relearning. I'm living in the most abundant freedom I can within my circumstances. And I'm living in messy grace and compassion knowing that it's going to look different for me in my circumstances than it is for you.

The reality is that there is no "One Size Fits All" to this season, not even within the same community, family, friend circle, or diagnosis. We're all learning as we go and trying to do the best we can.

So how do we support one another when we're all living under different limitations and freedoms?

For me, I love the analogy of a group going for a walk. I used to love walking, and I still do, but it looks a lot different for me now than it once did. Some of my friends are brisk walkers, others use a walker, cane or wheelchair. I take long pauses and can only do short jaunts or, if we're strolling the Botanical Gardens or touring a city on a road trip, I sit in a wheelchair for most of it so I can experience as much as I can, and in those moments a loved one will push me. When we go out together, we match the pace of the slowest member and we do whatever we can to make sure we *all* have the fullest experience possible. That may limit the quicker walkers and may humble the slower ones (let's face it, it sucks having your needs affect other people), but it's the way that we can best enjoy our time together and build our relationship together. Do I expect them to walk as slowly as me when I'm not around? Of course not! That would be silly! But the reality is, if they want to be with me, they either walk more slowly or figure out a way to help me enjoy their speed without detriment to me (in this case, a wheelchair). At first glance, this may seem restrictive, but really both of these approaches free you up to be with that person and walk with them. And it also gives you more. When we slow down to be with others, we may understand their world better and appreciate the world with new eyes.

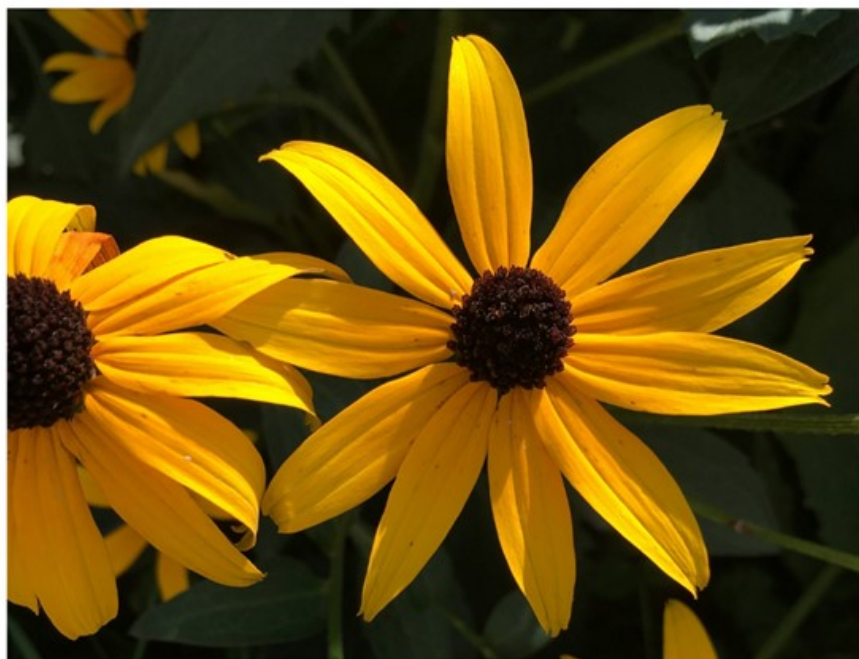
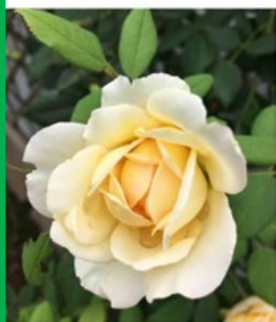
When we make it possible for others to whip around with more speed than they've experienced in years and pop wheelies, we also can bring them joy as well as having a bit of fun ourselves. There is so much that we gain by walking this way... and by living this way! I hope that we all can explore what that means and how that looks in the coming months and years— respect, consideration, dignity, compassion, and abundant joy that comes from working with each other's limitations in creative ways to gain the freedom to walk and be together.

Will you walk with me?





*Blossoms
&
Blooms*
AT CARTER COTTAGE





We are so honoured and humbled to be recognized by the city of St. Catharines for our cottage gardens. To be honest, when we were first told that we would receive this award, our first thoughts were that we weren't nearly doing anything to qualify us as Green Leaders. But as Ms. Norton explained to us, everyday people doing small things can change the world.

We've fallen deeper in love with nature through our gardens. The clover lawn, chosen for its low maintenance habits & beneficial attributes, has charmed us with its flowers and the way it closes up at night. The veggie patch, created to feed us, has intrigued and fed many others as well. The bees, chosen for pollination and honey, have mesmerized us with their gentle hum and delighted us with their bum wiggles. The trees, chosen for so many reasons, have shaded us, provided us seasonal interest, and invited wildlife into our yard... and with the help of the city, our

street will be lined with 16 more!

As our gardens have grown, so have we. We've tended to them and in turn have felt their comfort and peace. Especially during times like these, we realize what a privilege it is to have the plot of land we have. We are so blessed to have so many friends and family contribute to making our dreams come true, and we have so many dreams for the future of how our little cottage gardens can in turn bless others! Thank you all for your support, and thank you City of St. Catharines for this huge honour!

Stay tuned this week for some garden highlights and a garden tour! @ St. Catharines

~ by Jolien & Curtis Carter



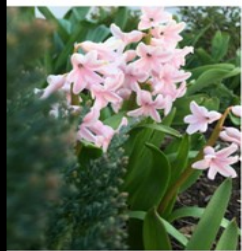
Acrostic Poems by Alice Bradnam
May 2020
PERSEVERANCE of a Plant in Pandemic Times

Plants protected beneath a blanket of snow,
peeking, poking, protruding.
Emerging from the deep, dark earth with
Reluctant yet resilient resolve.
Striving to stoically soak in the sun's warm
Energy and extending every effort to
Valiantly survive in the midst of a
volatile, vicious, virus-infested environment.
Evidence of hope and trust within,
Remembering instinctively life in all its splendour.
Able, agile, admired and appreciated.
This fragile plant
Never gives up, always willing to
Continue with calm commitment and conviction,
Every minute, hour and day forever after
throughout all eternity.



PERSEVERANCE of a Plant at All Times

Peonies, pansies, poppies and primroses,
Every shape, size and colour,
Reflects the Master's creative design.
Scents to tantalize your senses.
Evergreen, echinacea, eucalyptus and erica,
Verbena, violet and Venus flytrap.
Each little flower that opens
Reminds me to remain connected.
Abide in Him to bear much fruit.
Never give up, never lose faith.
Conviction, commitment and caring,
Even plants can point to truth.



Sunset Irrigation



I had titled it as simply "Sunset Irrigation" with the caption "Thwaites Farms finishing up an irrigation run in one of their pear orchards at sunset".

But I believe all photos have a story, so if you wouldn't mind I would like to share the one behind my photo...

I had been sent the link to the town's photo contest by a few friends and family during the submission period but I really didn't have any photos to share so I just ignored all the tags.

Fast forward to the evening I took the photo,. My husband Nelson (John and Jocelyn's son), myself and our tight-knit group of friends had suddenly lost a very dear member of our friend family just the night before. Our friend absolutely loved to bring his family down to Niagara-on-the-Lake for a "country fix" of bonfires surrounded by the orchards.

After spending that first 24hrs with gutted and heavy hearts, (and with my sister's gracious offer to take our kids overnight) I took the opportunity and went for a drive to check on an irrigation run with Nelson. We got to the orchard and the sky was lit right up. It was just absolutely gorgeous! My heart immediately went right to our friend. In that moment, as the sun set over the scenery that he loved escaping Toronto for, I felt he was letting us know he was alright and he was home. It was so very peaceful!

As Nelson and I walked around the orchard, I checked my notifications that had chimed on my phone while I was taking the photos. In that same moment I got one last push from a friend to enter the contest. I took it as a loving sign and with a little less then 24hrs before the contest closed I pressed submit and here we are!

(I have found after a loss of such a wonderful friend, it brings me comfort sharing that story, so I wanted to at least share it with you.)

~ submitted by Jennifer Thwaites

Nature's Steady Heartbeat ~ by Marion Griese

There are subtle changes happening in my garden; small changes which are signaling the end of summer days. There is a faint shift in the light, a glimpse of gold beginning to appear on the edges of leaves; garden vegetables, once tall and heavy with fruit, now slump wearily in withering heaps. Even the wind has seemingly turned direction and hints of cooler days ahead. In nature, time moves on, waiting for no one. The steady heartbeat of the earth does not rest, does not waver, not even for a pandemic. It moves ahead slowly, day by day by day. In a year that has unfolded with so many challenges, losses and uncertainty, it is in the simple reminder that the life of the world is cyclical - that one season ends, but without fail, will return again - that I find hope and encouragement.

I feel fortunate to have been able to spend time outdoors during COVID everyday, whether in my yard, on my runs or taking our dog for walks in the woods. When things were in lockdown and it felt like we would never hug our families again, I found solace in the reawakening of spring, watching the orchards and vineyards transform effortlessly from dull browns, back to vast stretches of shimmering greens and pinks. Then came the joys of summer days, and just like every year, the sun was hot and bright, the days long, and happily we could visit with some of our loved ones again.

Now, as the fall days approach and there is still much uncertainty and change to navigate, I find comfort in the steadiness of nature once more and in the encouraging words of poet Mary Oliver as she writes: "Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting – over and over announcing your place in the family of things." Her poem, like the natural world, is a reminder to me to not despair, but instead, find joy in the present moment, and strength in the wisdom nature has to offer every day.

Wild Geese | Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees

for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body

love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain

are moving across the landscapes,

over the prairies and the deep trees,

the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,

are heading home again.

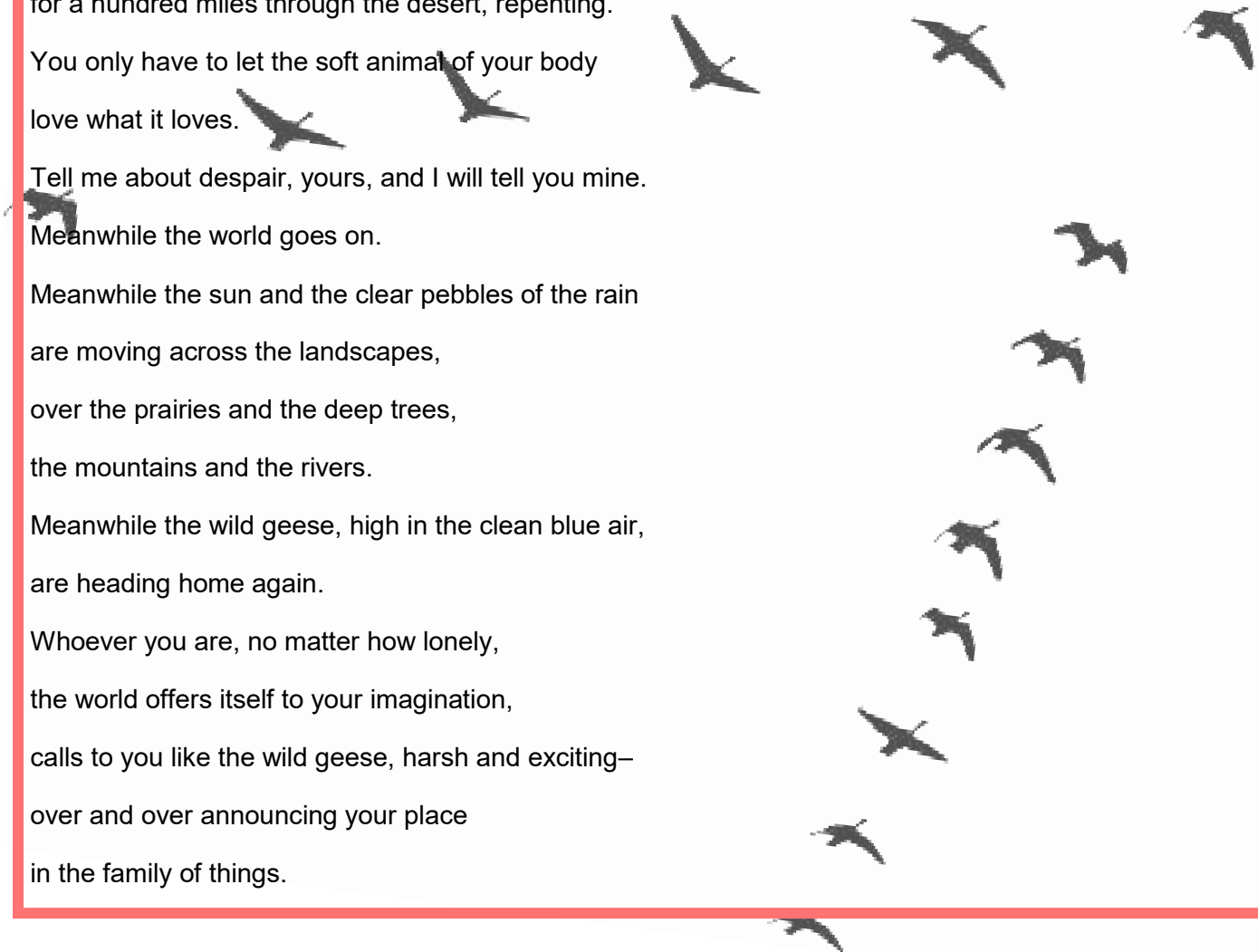
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,

the world offers itself to your imagination,

calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—

over and over announcing your place

in the family of things.



Welcome to this glimpse of what the NUMC Ladies Breakfast group is doing to stay connected during this unusual time. Each month we contribute on-topic stories or pictures to create a reading of atmosphere and ambience, around which we “gather” by email for breakfast. You’ll notice the authors’ names are not mentioned. We enjoy the story-telling purely for what it offers our imagination, rather than through the lens of what we may already know about the writer. We’ve enjoyed breakfast by the water, in the garden, breakfast of good news and blessings, a breakfast picnic, and September stories and memories. We invite you now to enjoy several of these stories, as we too have enjoyed them!—Linda Friesen (Henry)



Bin truck waiting to be loaded with grapes and a bundle of Niagara grapes from our back-yard vine.

The aroma of ripe grapes on the vine takes me back to the days when we cut grapes after school starting in September to make a bit of money for the new supplies we needed. The sun was so hot beaming down between the grape rows where no breeze stirred. I used to get very sunburned. These days, most grapes in our area are "cut" with the big harvester machines and dumped into the huge waiting bins that you see parked along the road. Old fashioned varieties such as the purple Concord and the white Niagara grapes had a much more noticeable aroma than the ones we see today, but if you drive slow past one of the beautiful vineyards around here, you'll catch a wonderful whiff of the ripening fruit of September.

Today, I paused long enough to see a monarch butterfly rest on one of hundreds of orange and yellow marigolds grown from seed gathered last autumn and just watered with pails and cans of life giving "liquid gold" from the taps of our four rain barrels. A few years ago, we took a road trip to Myrtle Beach in September. It was **fun** to observe school children exploring the beach on a class trip with their teachers. We were also absolutely **delighted** to observe a parade of monarch butterflies following a path of colourful sun umbrellas along the Atlantic coast on their long and arduous journey south to Mexico. About every ten seconds, another monarch butterfly danced in a graceful bouncing pattern from one cheery flower-like umbrella to another. What a serendipitous moment!! (happy finding of things not sought). I also remembered a little poem from my younger days. "Happiness is like a butterfly, which, when you chase after it, seems beyond your reach, but, when you sit quietly, may come and alight upon you." While in South Carolina, we also like to visit Brookgreen Gardens near Murrells Inlet. When we see the welcome sign "EVER CHANGING, SIMPLY AMAZING", we know that we will once again **appreciate** the flora and fauna, along with Anna Hyatt Huntington's plethora of sculptures tastefully displayed in this enormous botanical garden. While reflecting on this happy memory, the lyrics of an old hymn of the church found its way into my head and heart. "Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not; As thou hast been Thou forever will be. **Great is Thy faithfulness!** Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed Thy hand hath provided, Great is Thy faithfulness! Lord unto me!" That's how it is with our awesome God, creator of the universe. He is "NEVER CHANGING, TRULY AMAZING". Yet... **because of grace**, our wonderful Lord and Saviour desires to have a place in each and every heart. Invite Him and welcome Him. Never forget how much He loves you and me.

Thank you, Jesus!



The monarch butterflies are resting here after crossing Lake Ontario on their way toward Lake Erie and then onward to complete their journey south to Mexico.

September 1966 was exhilarating, deeply touching, terrifying, and the reason I don't like hazelnut flavouring - in anything! I was 11 and our family was flying to Europe! I was **exhilarated** by the anticipation of being on a Lufthansa Boeing 707 and all the adventures we would have as we travelled through Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and little Liechtenstein. The main reason for the trip was to reunite my parents with their siblings whom they hadn't seen for about 20-25 years. It was **deeply touching** as we watched the doorway embraces of my mother with her brother, and also my father with both a brother and a sister. Even as a child, I was amazed at the resemblances between them, both physically and in nature. We made many other visits to extended family as well. Everywhere we went, the hosts seemed to think that my little brother and I would enjoy chocolate bars, with hazelnuts inside. (Must be a "thing" over there...) One day, while we were driving in the mountains, my brother and I decided to dive into our cache of chocolate, more out of boredom than hunger. We were going up and down through peaks and valleys and around and around and up and down some more and soon our stomachs were also going up and down...need I say more?! **No more hazelnuts** for me - not in chocolate or in pastry or even as a coffee flavour! No thank you. I don't remember the reason for the timing of our trip, but when we returned, school had already started. I was assigned to the class that had the most **terrifying** teacher I had ever heard about! (These days, a teacher like that would not be allowed in a classroom.) Even though I was a good student, it was a huge struggle to catch up, mostly because that frightening man was always watching to see if I was keeping up. I finished the school year, no less terrified, but at the top of my class. To this day, when September comes around once again, I often feel like planning a trip, or meeting up with **friends** and **family**, but I'm relieved that I don't have to go to school or eat hazelnuts!



"A picture is worth a thousand words."
With every new day, I think my view is getting greener and greener and I feel like I'm living in the middle of a Botanical Garden! This is a wonderful surprise because this is our first summer in our new home. I am completely mesmerized by the beauty that surrounds us!

The Two Faces of the Ocean: When my family and I visited Hawaii we experienced water as never before. In the morning we sat near the shore of the calm blue ocean, enjoying fresh pineapple, guava, papaya, melons and many other tasty breakfast goodies. Birds would try to join us and steal a morsel or two. The local cat we named Pineapple, would also wander by to share our breakfast by the crystal blue water. Later we snorkeled and swam, soaking up the comfort and serenity of the warm relaxing water. One evening after dinner, we returned to our condo and sat on the lanai overlooking the ocean. A storm was brewing and we witnessed the most amazing show of nature that we had ever seen. Lightning lit up the sky as though fireworks were on display. We were bedazzled and awestruck. But it was the ocean that captivated our attention. The waves thundered and crashed upon the shore. Spray and foam from the waves shot up well above the rocks. The power and fury of the water took our breath away as we sat mesmerized by the spectacle of **God displaying His power!** The ocean was truly amazing and we remember vividly our wonderful experience learning about its many faces.



A beautiful verse on a garden sign!
The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the birds for mirth.
One is nearer God's heart in a garden,
Than anywhere else on earth.

My gardens are doing well and many flowers are blooming as well as the wisteria, iris and lilac. I have some of my vegetable garden planted, but still need some more things. The rain has come at a perfect time, for which I **thank God**. Even the weeds are multiplying! Of course, I could do without them, but it gives me exercise to go back and forth from front to back on both my yard and my neighbour's yard. Even that is **good** for me at this time of staying at home.

MDS COVID-19 Pt. 2
(cont'd from May-June LWU newsletter)
~ by *Erv Willms*

Week 2 March 8-14

Sunday arrived with a new crew of 11 people of which 9 were from Mike and Linda's home church back in Ohio. After being away from home for 3 months it must have been great for Mike and Linda to see all the familiar faces. On Sunday of week 1, we heard from our volunteers "what's your twitter account". On Sunday of week 2 we heard "I brought my Makita belt sander. Oh yah, I brought mine too, but it's a DeWalt - it'll whip yours" It certainly was a different bunch of people. We went from training everyone, to learning new tricks of the trade.

Of the 11, the 2 not from Ohio, were Canadians. One was Hank's nephew (son of Hank's sister) from Winnipeg, the other was his nephew's uncle from his father's side, Brent Barkman from Toronto. Brent had showed up at MDS 4 years ago and does 1 week every year. If you think you recognise his name, google it. He writes music, professionally, mostly for TV/movie, and has won an Emmie (Rolie Polie Olie Theme I think). His wife sings backup vocals in concerts around the world. And he is a not terrible carpenter. Some years ago, Mike challenged him to write an MDS jingle. What he came up with is a lot fun "Getting it done" on UTube. Brent and his wife are on vocals

Monday morning, we split up and headed off to our sites. With Mike's daughter in law the painter, no longer joining us, Mike called in his backup plan. One of his church members, came from a family of painters, and put herself through school by painting on the side. She's now a grand mother, and lives in the winter with her children about an hour away from where we were working. With her help and a couple of guys from the great Ohio team, we had, by the end of Monday, all the ceilings painted twice, and all the walls painted once. Mike had come by 1st thing and fixed up a bit of dry wall mudding, that we had noticed on Friday, and we carefully painted around those spots. We were in a bit of rush because we wanted to have the kitchen installed that week.

The Miller house, House 5, with Hank in the lead, had the largest crew, as the framing was a big job. By Thursday, we bumped the crew up to 12 people including my crew, to lift and install the trusses way up on top of the house.

Mike in the meantime was finishing up House 1 and 2, with a couple of the younger guys. They had some finishing to do in the crawl spaces. This area has an issue with radon gas being released. So all crawl spaces, by current building codes, need to be fitted with a heavy plastic liner from which the accumulating gasses, underneath the liner are vented to the roof. Some of the crawl spaces are high enough to stand in, others you can only crawl around in them. I was happy the young guys volunteered as house 1 and 2 both had about a 3 ft high crawl space.

In all this Linda, Mike's wife and office manager, would often go to a site and do some finish painting or clean up. Sometimes, Esther would go along, especially this last week, when we were rushing towards getting House 1 and 2 completed, to do the final interior cleanup, very similar to our Renfrew work.

I told Mike, our story of being on many MDS trips and never

seeing a house dedication, until we got to Renfrew. He said, we would see 2 that week, and most likely 3 more before we went home at the end of our 5 week stay. It was exciting.

With our large, active, knowledgeable crew, Mike found he needed extra help before breakfast picking up materials. Since I am an early riser, and was up with the cooks anyways, having matte, he noticed I was up and asked me to join him in his morning trips to Lowes. We would take a couple of pickup trucks and load them all up with gear for the day's work.

One of the Ohio guys installed kitchens for a living, and he finished up both the OJ house and the Kensinger kitchens that week.

By Wednesday, our new site director and office manager arrived, to get some site training, before Mike and Linda left on Saturday, as their 2 ½ month term was up, and it was time to get back to their farm. Our new site director Lynn Miller was in his late 70s and had walked the Portuguese Camino many times. (the 400km pilgrimage hike that Esther, Sigrid and I had walked in Portugal back in 2015/16). He liked it so much that he found volunteer work to do over in Portugal, and spends a couple of months there every year, having already learned to speak the language. One suggestion he had was to volunteer to be the house greeter for a hostel along the route. I can think of nothing better (well maybe doing MDS) than to be living on the Portuguese coast in March or April, and spending a good part of the day greeting and talking to people from around the world as they make their pilgrimage. Our new office manager, Peggy was from Fresno, California. Both would be with us till our term was up, April 5, which was also when the site would shut down for the summer.

One evening our old client from 2017, Bill and his family, including Brian Dodd his son-in-law, showed up for dinner and shared all their flood related stories with the Ohio MDSers. Many were the same stories we'd heard back in 2017. Brian, is a big burly guy and a super story teller. He runs an excavating business, and was involved with VOAD, and new all our clients, and had done the excavations for all our MDS houses as well as many other VOAD projects.

The next day Mike sent Lynn and I to the town dump, with a trailer of debris, as we were cleaning up House 1 and 2, for their dedications. On the way to the dump, we saw big burly Brian and one of his excavators working down a short new side road on some project. On our way back I made sure we slowed down, and sure enough Brian was still there. So, we stopped and went over and chatted with him. Somehow, I had forgotten Brian's name, as so we just talked in generalities. We shook hands and wondered what project he was working on. As we left and said good by, Lynn who was new to everything there, and at 78 still very sharp, whispered to me, "that was not our man, was it". Of course, it was not. I had made the mistake of false identity. Who ever that West Virginian was, he was polite and courteous and never let on he did not know us. Another good laugh for evening report time.

It was mid March. By this time Covid had already infected areas of California, and Washington (although this became clear only later in April). The virus was poised to become the only news story in the country. However, we were kind of in a cocoon, in our own world, there in Lewisburg. Our MDS internet was terribly slow, barely good enough to read emails, there was no TV, and neither Esther nor I had a US data or phone plan. Some of the Ohio folks however were starting to talk about the VIRUS.

We knew it was starting to become an issue in North America when we heard March Madness (US college basketball) was cancelled. In hind site it was clear we were days away from being sent home, but at the time it was very surreal, and a far-off problem, nothing to worry about really.

However slowly as talk continued, and the Ohio folks were starting to hear about possible school closures, we all started to wonder what was happening. We did not have to wait long. On Friday, MDS leadership in Lititz PA announced that ALL MDS sites in North America were being shut down, and was sending everyone, including long term leaders' home. In hind site this was a good and timely decision. MDS was a perfect environment for the virus to flourish. Every week a new batch of volunteers from all over the USA and Canada, comes to site, mingles in close quarters for week, and goes home.

Esther and I were still not in the mental loop on this virus thing, and I started to investigate making vacation plans since we still had 3 weeks to do something. We considered Florida, or Nevada or even California was in reach. Luckily, we still had lots of work to do, finishing up houses where we could, cleaning up etc, that planning time, and lack of internet, did not let us make any solid plans.

On Friday, we all went to the Morrison House for dedication and key hand over. Lucy Morrison the owner is a very soft-spoken women of few words, but she and her family were obviously thrilled. Mike wears his heart on his sleeve and could not help but tear up as he dedicated the house to it's owner. I have noticed this before from Project Directors. Both in Renfrew with Nick Hamm, and in Saipan with Don Horst (I was not there for the Saipan dedication, but because I had spent so much time there on one house and knew the clients well, they sent me a video of the dedication), the project directors are so involved with the house, and even more so with the clients, that they cannot help but become emotional, when they finally get to present the owner keys. I think Lucy started moving in that afternoon and slept there on Saturday.



Hank's term was up that Friday, even without Covid-19 and he flew back to Winnipeg that Friday afternoon. Mike and Linda stayed an extra day or 2, just to finish up as much as they could. Esther and I came home Sunday having spend all day Saturday at the Kensinger's completing a host of little things, you don't want to leave for someone new to the site. We had come to our senses, realized the gravity of the virus situation, and decided to high tail it home asap. Gord and Maria flew home Tuesday morning. Lynn the new site director packed everything into trucks and had the site dismantled by Wednesday, the following week.

In the end from a cold start in January, MDS had completed and handed over House 1 and 2, Morrison and Gabber. When Gord left on Tuesday, the only thing left to do at OJ's house, House 3, was the base board. Mike became emotional and pleaded with VOAD, to the point of tears, to make sure that OJ's house would be their highest priority to complete. We heard later that they kept their promise. OJ and Shante Cale, and their 6 children, moved into their house April 2nd, and the bachelor got his house back. The Kensinger house, my house, house 4, had a completed ramp, kitchen, and finish paint. It needed flooring, interior doors and trim, and some basement work. We understand that Katie Kensinger moved in at the beginning of May. I have not heard where the Miller house, house 5 is at but when we left it was fully enclosed with exterior doors and windows inside but not mounted. Not bad for a couple of months work. Mike and Linda Stuckey can be incredibly pleased with all their efforts.

Home again

The trip home that Sunday was very uneventful. The Canadian border official gave us a letter asking us to be careful, for 14 days. No mention of quarantine. The very next day, Justin Trudeau asked all persons entering Canada to quarantine for 14 days, and the rest is history.

We were very blessed to have our 2 Mexican workers arrive before all the COVID-19 troubles.

I looked at our records from last year, and last spring we hired out 600 hours of local labour, mostly from Hamilton Vietnamese workers plus Mario and Luis our long-time farm staff.

With all the farmers who do not have their offshore help yet (Thwaites and Lambert for instance), the local farm workers are all busy. So, we stayed home and worked on the farm as many hours a day as we could. I am bone tired every evening. But today is Sunday. Feeling much better already. Listening to choral music as I write this. I will go out in a couple of hours and make an asado. A 4-hour B-que using coals from an open fire. The only difference today, will be that the large circle of family will only be our own of 5. I think it's someone's 65th birthday. Mine!

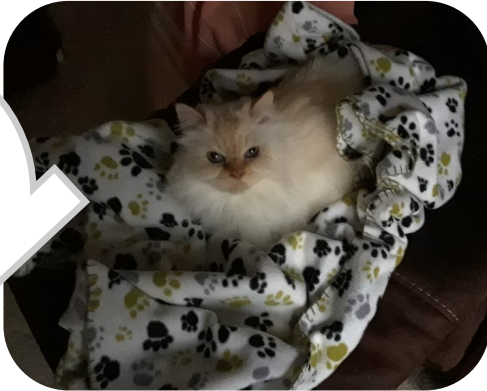
(Happy belated Birthday, Erv! Hope you had a good one!)

(This article was written in May, 2020, and therefore has some "old news" in it)

I've been snapping pictures of my cat, **Cookie** and noticed how some of her poses seemed to symbolize how we are all trying to cope with the situation and react as humans. ~ by Marlene Heidebrecht

Cookie & the 2020 Pandemic

Well I guess I'll just snuggle in and wait for this crisis to pass."



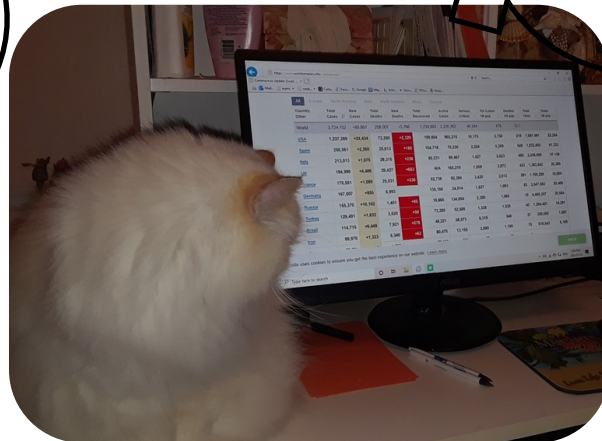
March

"Where are all my friends?"



June

"The Covid numbers on Worldometer are looking better now!"



July

"I'm still waiting.... It seems to be taking a long time!"



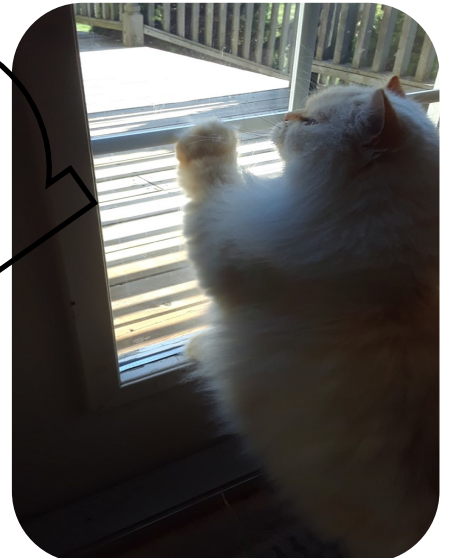
April

"Can we P-L-E-A-S-E go out now?"



May

"OK - that's it! I'm breaking out!!!"



August

One of NUMC's Budding Artists

Unlike her father and like everyone else within her family, **Elora Hutton** possesses a lot of artistic talent and thoroughly enjoys attending an art school like Laura Secord Secondary School in St. Catharines.

The first painting depicted here was created during Elora's Grade 9 year when she was asked to complete an abstract painting for an art project. Students were instructed they could not simply "just paint something," but their painting was required to depict some sort of topic. Elora chose to paint something that describes her own personal experiences of autism and anxiety. Sometimes, these topics are difficult to verbally describe. So, Elora chose to describe them visually.

The top half of the painting represents Elora's experience of autism. The infinity symbol is a common symbol for the concept of neurodiversity. This reflects Elora's belief that autism is not something to be fixed, but an additional representation of the human experience that is to be loved.

As we move to the bottom of the painting, we get into her experience of anxiety. The heart rate line represents how Elora's heart rate will often spike whenever she experiences anxiety. The brain in the middle of the painting reflects how autism and anxiety are both neurological in nature, and rooted in the mind.

Elora added cut-out pictures of eyes to represent how the feeling like she is being constantly watched is often a trigger for anxiety. The hands are attempting to cover up those eyes and prevent her from feeling watched.

One interesting thing to note about this painting is that Elora created this piece entirely with her hands, and not a single paintbrush was used in its creation.

Finally, the second painting was created one day when Elora just felt like making something with her hands! The entire background was created entirely using paint on her hands.

The birds are present because Elora just likes birds!

- submitted by Chris Hutton



(Thank-you Elora for sharing your intimate artwork & feelings with us, your church family. We wish you well in following your dreams & building your talents! ~ LWU editors

The Blessing

The Lord bless you
And keep you
Make His face shine upon you
And be gracious to you
The Lord turn His
Face toward you
And give you peace

The Lord bless you
And keep you
Make His face shine upon you
And be gracious to you
The Lord turn His
Face toward you
And give you peace

Amen, amen, amen
Amen, amen, amen

May His favor be upon you
And a thousand generations
And your family and your children
And their children, and their children

May His favor be upon you
And a thousand generations
And your family and your children
And their children, and their children

May His presence go before you
And behind you, and beside you
All around you, and within you
He is with you, He is with you

In the morning, in the evening
In your coming, and your going
In your weeping, and rejoicing
He is for you, He is for you

He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you

Amen, amen, amen
Amen, amen, amen

May His favor be upon you
And a thousand generations
And your family and your children
And their children, and their children

May His presence go before you
And behind you, and beside you
All around you, and within you
He is with you, He is with you

In the morning, in the evening
In your coming, and your going
In your weeping, and rejoicing
He is for you, He is for you

He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you
He is for you, He is for you

source: <https://www.lyricsondemand.com/k/karijobelyrics/theblessinglyrics.html>

The Blessing, was co-written by Steven Furtick, Chris Brown, Kari Jobe, and Cody Carnes earlier this year and has been sung by many during these uncertain times of the pandemic. The lyrics of The Blessing are based on Numbers 6:24 – 26, a prayer given by God to Moses and Aaron.

According to author and podcaster DJ Chuang, 144 digitally stitched-together choirs from Australia to Zimbabwe have now recorded their own versions of the song, some in English, and at least 160 other languages.

A former journalist and editor-in-chief of a news service that covers religion around the world says: I have never seen or heard anything spontaneously spread like this with no marketing. **The Blessing** has become an unorchestrated global movement that transcends beliefs and boundary lines. As the world has come together in a time of crisis, the church has united in prayer and worship to bless communities around the world.

Please take the time to listen to some of the many global virtual recordings of The Blessing on YouTube.

Dear **Newsletter Readers**, we thank you for faithfully reading and contributing to the NUMC Life With Us newsletter for the last 6 years. We hope that you have enjoyed the variety of articles submitted by fellow readers. We have often been pleasantly surprised by the level and variety of talents displayed by contributors, and have been honoured to share these talents with the rest of the congregation.

But all good things must at some point come to an end, or be passed on to others. And so, we would like to say farewell to you with this last issue filled with wonderful colours and experiences. We leave you with the globally sung **Blessing** above. **“The Lord bless you and keep you”!**

Co-editors: Lani Gade & Kathy Rempel