

Thornhill Baptist Church, Caregivers Ministry

In recent years, the congregation of Thornhill Baptist Church, pastored by Rev. Paul Gibbon, has noticed a growing population of nannies in the affluent neighbourhood that surrounds the church. These live-in caregivers, most of whom are from the Philippines, are employed by families to care for children and elderly family members.

In the course of a long-range planning process, the church sensed God's call to reach out to these caregivers, and Gloria Stafford was asked to lead this new ministry. Gloria has developed relationships with a number of nannies, several of whom were already part of the church. She organizes a monthly meeting for the caregivers, at which they can enjoy a time of recreation and receive help with the challenges many of them face. These meetings have involved as many as two dozen caregivers.

Gloria also helps the caregivers cope with employment and immigration issues. She says, "Their lives are filled with challenges. They sacrifice a lot to come here and they work very hard." Gloria's goal is to help them find a sense of connection, even while they remain at great distance from their own families.

Meriam Montemayor, who was a teacher in the Philippines, has been in Canada for just over a year. Miriam says, "I am so thankful the church has opened this kind of programme." She sees the church as "a family that cares for us and loves us."

Gemma Ganaden expresses similar sentiments. Gemma, who worked as professional engineer in the Philippines, is hoping her husband and three children will soon be able to join her. She says she is so happy to know the church is there for her, and she is very grateful for the leadership Gloria provides to the group.

For her own part, Gloria is delighted to see how happy the caregivers are when they get together. She says, "They just have so much joy in them!"

Rev. Paul Gibbon reports, "We have been delighted to welcome several of the caregivers into church membership – including one by baptism. On a Sunday morning you will see caregivers singing in the choir, helping in the Sunday School – and even welcoming newcomers! Their presence with us is a wonderful blessing, for which we thank God."

