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Oct. 31, 2019

Category: PC30 – Photographer of the Year

Paper: Ajax Pickering News Advertiser (his work may also appear regularly in the Oshawa This Week, Whitby This Week, Clarington This Week, Port Perry Star and Uxbridge Times-Journal)

Photographer: Ryan Pfeiffer

Ryan has been a full-time photographer in the Durham Division for over 9 years. He continues to excel and is arguably, the best photographer in Metroland. Ryan has been consistently recognized for his excellent work and has been nominated for the OCNA Photographer of the Year award 4 times, coming away with the top prize in 2018, 2015 and 2013. This goes along with his other photo awards in Ontario , Canada and in North American photo contests. Ryan’s work is easily identifiable. With nice composition and perfectly lit subjects, it’s easy to see why the awards keep piling up. His easy going style and his responsibility to the newspaper make him a pleasure to work with. This year he has taken on the added burden of working with a co-op student to help the next generation of photographers. He is our team’s lead photographer and has the trust of his fellow journalists to create stirring images to go along with their stories. Ryan actively posts his own images as well as those of his fellow photojournalists on our media Instagram, Tumblr and Facebook accounts. Ryan is a sought after speaker as well and can be found in schools speaking to students interested in photojournalism and photography.

Sincerely,

Mike Johnston
Regional Managing Editor
Metroland Media Group Ltd., Durham Region newspapers

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DANCING AT HOME WEEK



Ryan Pfeiffer/Torstar

Parvathi Bhat, left, and Lakshmi Achuthan, members of the Arunodhaya Dance Academy, performed during an Ajax Home Week event along the Ajax waterfront June 16. The event featured music, food trucks, and fun for the whole family.

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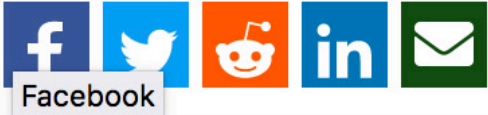
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PHOTOS FROM AROUND THE REGION FROM JULY 27-AUGUST 2

Photos from around the region by This Week's photo staff



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A competitor crossed the finish line during a 5K Foam Fest, a one of kind obstacle course based fun run at Dagmar Ski Resort in Uxbridge July 27. July 27, 2019. - Ryan Pfeiffer/Torstar

GAY BOWMANVILLE WOMAN KICKED OUT OF OSHAWA CHURCH'S MEMBERSHIP

EVERYONE WELCOME AT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE BUT MEMBERS LIVE BY SHARED THEOLOGICAL AND DOCTRINAL BELIEFS

JENNIFER O'MEARA
jomeara@durhamregion.com

DURHAM - A Bowmanville woman has been thrust into the role of gay rights advocate, after she came out to her Oshawa church and was kicked out of the membership.

"It's clear that something needs to change," said Kimberley Mills. "I feel that God designed me the way I am and He's going to love me the way I am."

Mills had been a member of the Calvary Baptist Church for almost four years. Mills was raised in Durham and she when she moved back to the area she was looking for a church. Mills attended a service at the Calvary Baptist Church, became a member and got actively involved as a youth leader.

"I just loved the people, and going there. It's such a big church. There's lots of opportunities to meet new people. I loved the kids, not just as a youth leader," said Mills.

Mills met Meghan Fowler through friends and the couple has been together for four years now. In Fowler's Whitby townhouse - with pictures on the wall of Fowler's trip to Rwanda as part of a Christian organization's aid mission - the couple sat on the dark grey couch with their protective little Yorkie named Lucy.

Mills said she started to be concerned about coming out at the Calvary Baptist Church, when a sermon took a strong stand against homosexuality. She felt like she wasn't able to be true to herself while at church.

In her Bible study group, Mills told a few women who were close to her age that she was in a relationship with a woman.

"Coming out was kind of a process ... It was not accepted," said Mills. "It never felt right being judged for being gay. It didn't feel right."

After disclosing her relationship, Mills said she had several conversations with church leaders and members. They wanted her to repent her sexual orientation, to be "restored" to the Bible's teaching.

"And they told you, you needed to change," said Fowler. "I started questioning, how she could spend so much time devoted to a place that can't accept all of her?"

In early November, Mills received a registered letter from the Calvary Baptist Church. It told her she was being removed from the membership of the Cavalry Baptist Church because she was living in "disobedience to the Scriptures.

"It is a very serious matter to remove a member for discipline as you will note in the 1 Corinthians 5:5 text, and our hearts are broken over it," said the letter signed by Dr. Tim Wagner, deacon chair.

Mills said she was hurt by the letter. After taking a little cooling off time, she decided to share the letter and her hurt on Facebook. The response was immediate and immense. Mills has been overwhelmed by the outpouring of support she's received.

"People who are also believers, who don't feel this is God's love," said Mills. "Pastors are reaching out to me. People are saying 'God loves you just the way you are.'"

Representatives from the church released a followup statement to say that everyone is welcome to attend Sunday services, regardless of whether they are

THE ISSUE: WOMAN REMOVED FROM THE MEMBERSHIP OF AN OSHAWA BAPTIST CHURCH FOR BEING GAY.
LOCAL IMPACT: GAY EXCLUSION FROM CHURCH MEMBERSHIP OPENS DEBATE WITHIN COMMUNITY



Ryan Pfeiffer/Metroland

Kimberley Mills, right, with her partner Meghan Fowler and their dog Lucy, was removed from the membership at Calvary Baptist Church in Oshawa for 'choosing to live in disobedience to the Scriptures'.

members. However, the church does have the option to remove someone from membership - a "voluntary association of like-minded individuals."

"We love and care for everyone since we are all made in the Image of God," said the Calvary Baptist Church statement. "Those who choose to become members of Calvary Baptist Church share our theological and doctrinal beliefs and agree to live in accordance with those beliefs. When an individual ceases to hold those beliefs or live in accordance with them, as has recently happened, that individual may be removed from membership but always remains welcome to attend our services and other programs."

Mills said she if she did return to the Calvary Baptist Church after coming out, she would be treated differently and couldn't be involved in the church community the way she was before.

She doesn't intend to return to the church, but she plans to continue speaking about her experience. She wants to use her story to support other gay people who are scared of being excluded from their faith groups.

"The voice right now is for oth-

er people, really at the end of the day it's all about love," said Mills. "I was afraid and (Fowler) was afraid to come to the church. With some of the sermons I would share, she would feel we couldn't be there as a couple."

Oshawa community advocate Mac Moreau has launched a letter-writing campaign asking the Canada Revenue Agency to review the charitable status of Calvary Baptist Church. As a registered charity, churches receive significant tax breaks from the provincial and federal government - with the requirement that churches devote all of their resources to charity.

"The church has allowed its resources to be used for activities that promote hate and intolerance," said Moreau. "If you are going to promote hate and intolerance, you shouldn't receive benefits from the Canadian government that all Canadians contribute to."

Moreau said the letter - and potentially ensuing CRA assessment - isn't meant to close the Calvary Baptist Church. The aim is to support other gay parishioners who are feeling pushed out of their churches, and to hopeful-

ly serve as a warning to all churches that preach intolerance.

"This isn't meant to destroy a church family," said Moreau, who attended the Calvary Baptist Church as a child and said he later left over concerns about the messages of obedience and intolerance. "This is simply to say in this day-and-age, when you're receiving benefits from the public purse, this is not acceptable."

Moreau can be reached at mac.moreau@live.com.

Meanwhile, Mills is looking for a new church to attend where she and her partner will be accepted.

"It hasn't put me off my faith at all. If anything it makes me believe more in what I stand for and what I believe," said Mills.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY:

The Church letter dismissing a Bowmanville woman from membership because of her lesbian relationship was posted on Facebook, it spread quickly online and came to the attention of Durham's This Week newspapers, who uncovered an ongoing debate about who can belong in the membership of a modern Baptist church and who can't.

Pickering's Dunbarton Spartans head into OFSAA track meet on high note

Aleeya Hutchins runs off with 3 gold at regional qualifier in Oshawa

COMMUNITY May 31, 2019 DurhamRegion.com



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Jakob Kramer from Dunbarton High School in Pickering hit the ground hard on his way to a fourth-place finish in the open boys' 2,000-metre steeplechase during the OFSAA Central Region Track and Field Meet at the Oshawa Civic May 29. - Ryan Pfeiffer/Torstar