

# Rev. Howarth warmly received at Bloomington Gospel

**KATE GILDERDALE**  
Correspondent

Members of Bloomington Gospel Church on Ninth Line recently welcomed Dr. John Howarth as their new pastor.

"I spent almost six years as the senior pastor at Grace Church in Newmarket, and I came to Stouffville the first week of September," said Howarth, who was originally contacted about the post in February.

His arrival had been eagerly awaited by the congregation, since the church had been without a pastor for a year following the departure of Rev. Bryan Coker for a new ministry in Smith's Falls.

When the opportunity was presented to him, said Howarth, "my wife Natalie and I prayed about it and we were convinced that the Lord had not only opened the door here, He had kept it open, so we just kept walking through the doors He opened."

Howarth has been delighted with the warm reception from the community and enjoys the rural atmosphere.

"I'm just amazed at the number of younger families who attend - I think that's a real strength. We have a whole spectrum of ages, with a lot of little kids as well as mature citizens in the church, and that's also important, because the older people bring experience and wisdom."

Howarth has already met with members of the Stouffville Ministerial Association and is impressed with the strength and enthusiasm he has encountered in the organization.

"I'm looking forward to a good partnership and cooperation with the other pastors over the years."

When members of the congregation were asked to give their views on what direction the church should take, "one of the responses was that they wanted to reach out to the community with the love of the Lord, and something really neat happened. Our church sponsored minor league baseball this summer and the team was called Bloomington Avalanche."

The congregation attended games, bringing ice cream and snacks and, at the end of the season, the team was second overall in the league.

"Two Sundays ago we had a base-

ball service with team members, their families and coaches, because we wanted to congratulate them and celebrate their season." His goal as pastor is to continue

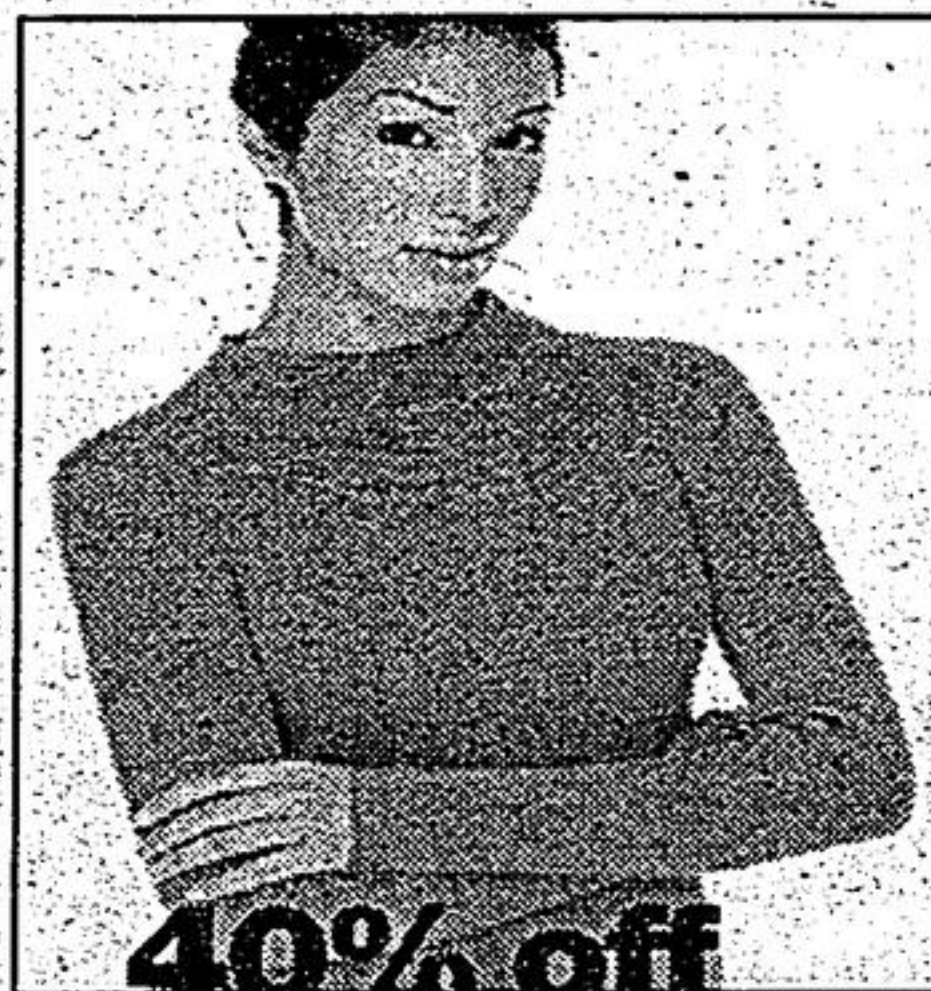
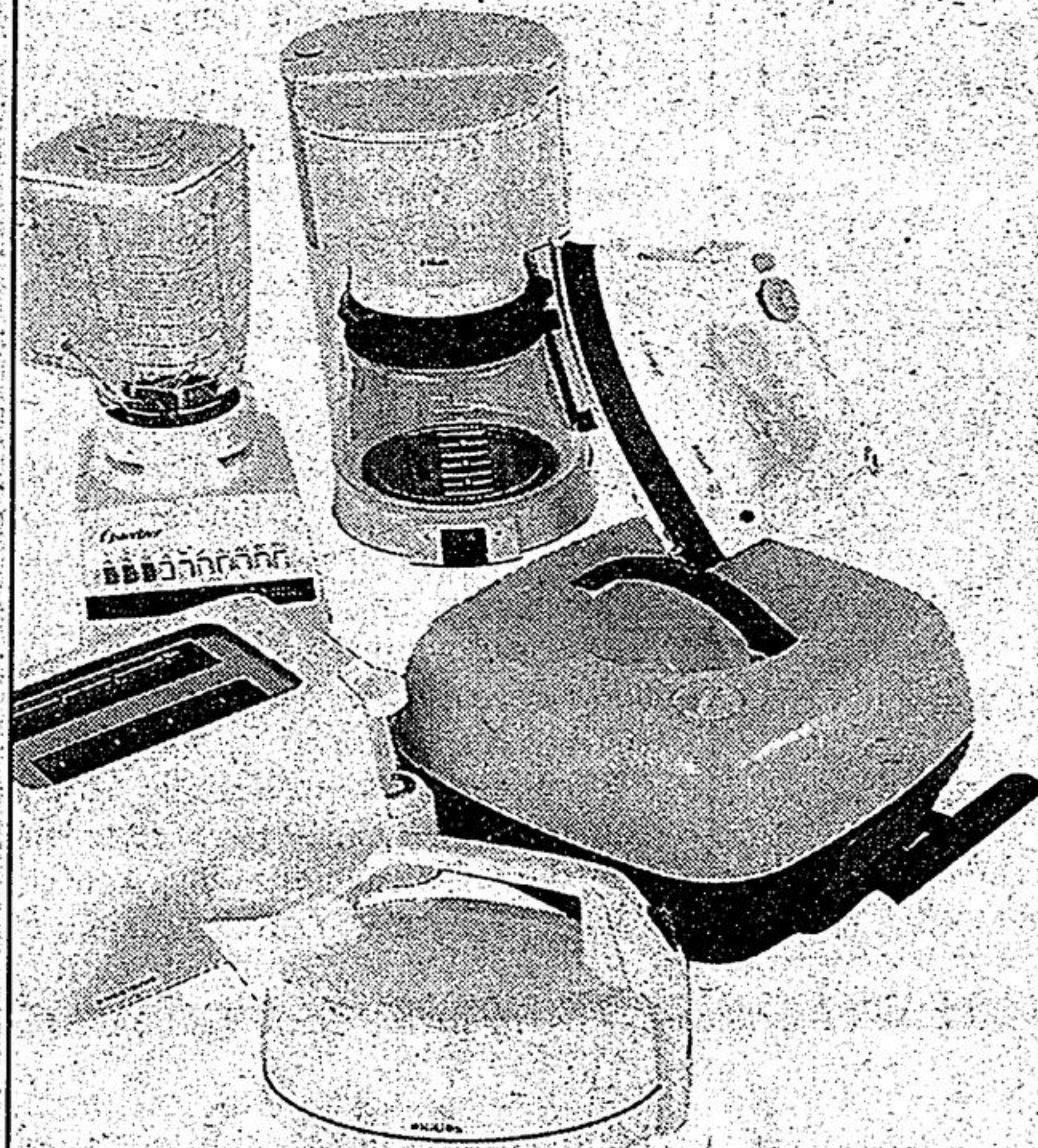
reaching out to the community, sharing the love of Jesus "and serving people in any way we can."

The Howarths have three children -

Bruce, 17, Marlys, 14 and Karolyn, 10. Natalie Howarth is a York Region physiotherapist, who also runs her own private practice.

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