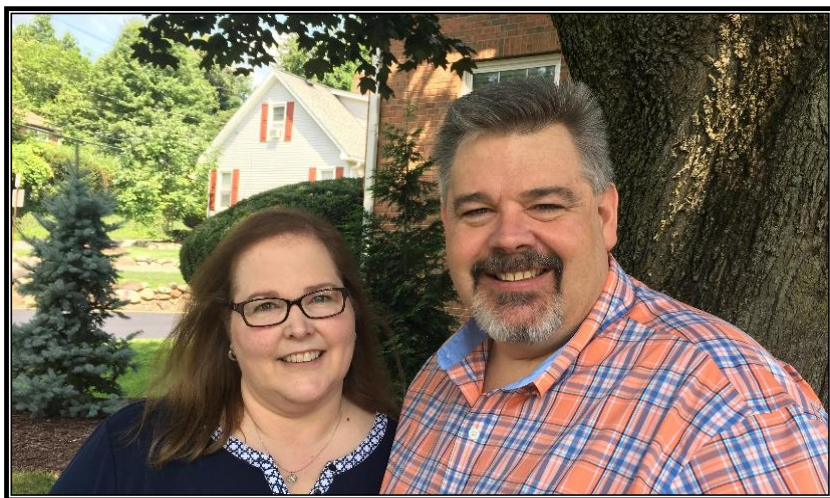


Introducing... The Cabrera Family



Ruben Cabrera grew up in North Plainfield, NJ. From early on, Ruben's mother knew the importance of having her children in church. He, his younger brother and two younger sisters grew up under the teaching of God's Word at Hydewood Park Baptist Church in North Plainfield. Through Ruben's exposure to God's Word and the gentle leading of a Sunday School teacher, he came to know Christ as his personal Lord and Savior at a young age. His father, also named Ruben, was a hard working immigrant from Cuba. In his early twenties, his father made the difficult decision to leave his family, including nine siblings, to come to America. He was an

industrious man who worked hard to learn the language and get a good job. Ruben's mother, Nancy, met his father while she was in art school and they were soon married. For almost thirty years Ruben's father worked as a chef in a number of central New Jersey restaurants. He later became the Facilities Supervisor at The Pingry School in Martinsville, NJ. He passed away in May of 2003. Ruben's mother is a retired art teacher and still lives in North Plainfield.

At a young age, the Lord began to give Ruben opportunities to serve Him. It started with helping in Children's Church teaching missionary stories. The people in the church were happy to allow him to serve in many ways. Through opportunities to teach Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, help in the church office, spend summers teaching with Child Evangelism Fellowship and as a counselor at a Christian camp, a burden for ministry developed. He found a love for serving the Lord. As He gave himself to Christ, there was fruit in his life and the lives of others. He found himself watching his pastor every Sunday in hopes that the Lord would allow him to serve in that way some day. His youth pastor, Gordon Schuit, shared this vision with him and allowed him to teach in youth meetings and arranged opportunities for him to preach under his supervision at a home for the elderly.

As high school drew to a close, it was time to begin thinking long term about what the Lord would have him do with his life. Inside, he desired nothing but to serve the Lord. Through the counsel of his pastors, friends and family, and after much prayer, he applied and was accepted at Columbia International University, then Columbia Bible College in Columbia, SC. During the summers of his college years, he served on staff at his home church. This helped solidify his call and gave him opportunity to explore his gifting and gain experience. It was at Columbia that he also met his future wife, Debbie.

Debbie was born in Alexandria, VA to David and Grace Brunner. By the time she was school age, they had settled in the Richmond area. Debbie grew up attending Immanuel Baptist Church in Richmond, VA. She came to know Christ as her personal Lord and Savior at a young age, as well. She is the middle child of three girls.

David and Grace were both Christ-followers from an early age. David's dad was a minister and his two sisters became missionaries. David and Grace met at Columbia International University, as well. Debbie's parents have always been involved in supporting missions through their church and family. After her father retired from Hewlett Packard, they felt God's call to be more involved in missions through personally going. They spent five years in Tirana, Albania working with a team of missionaries there. They are now back in Richmond serving the Lord in their church.

Ruben and Debbie both graduated from Columbia in 1987. Ruben majored in Bible with a pre-seminary emphasis. Debbie majored in Bible and Church Music. After graduation, they both returned to Columbia in the fall. Debbie took some additional courses in the Bible teaching program, and Ruben entered Columbia Biblical Seminary studying Old Testament. They were engaged that fall and were married in Richmond in October of 1988.

The first year of their marriage they lived in North Plainfield and Ruben was involved in interim ministry at Hydewood where he grew up which was then without a Senior Pastor. In February of 1990, they moved to Old

Town, Maine where Ruben became the Associate Pastor at United Baptist Church. They greatly enjoyed their ministry and their exposure to the New England lifestyle. Two of the Cabrera's children, Ruben, Jr. (R.J.) and Jonathan were born during their time in Maine. Over time, Ruben began to feel the need for further training. After five and a half years in Maine, Ruben, Debbie and the boys, ages 3 years and 4 months, made the move to Toms River, NJ where Ruben became the Associate Pastor at New Life Church (formerly First Baptist Church).

After settling into the church and area, Ruben began classes at Bethel Seminary and graduated in July of 2003 with a Master of Divinity. Their third child, Caroline Grace, was born in 2000 during their more than thirteen years of ministry in Toms River. Ruben transitioned through various positions eventually becoming the Pastor for Educational Ministries with leadership and oversight of the youth ministries, Christian Education ministries, and their Christian School. The challenges and rewards were great at New Life. The Lord continued to confirm his call to the ministry which was affirmed by Mission Mid-Atlantic (Conservative Baptist) and the leadership team at New Life through ordination.

In February of 2009, Ruben accepted the call of Northern Valley Evangelical Free Church in Cresskill, New Jersey to serve as their Senior Pastor. Cresskill is a diverse area serving as a bedroom community to New York City. After eight years of service and ministry, through fruitful as well as stretching times, Ruben concluded his ministry there in March 2017. In all things, he can say that God is supremely faithful and has given him a love for His people. Ruben has been busy serving on the faculty of New York School of the Bible in New York City. The privilege of investing in both lay and vocational ministry leaders



Left to right – Jonathan, Caroline, and Ruben, Jr.

has been a great joy to him. It has provided an opportunity to mentor current and future church leaders. He has also been working on his doctorate at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary focusing on adaptive leadership. If his years in the pastorate have shown him anything, it is that the world is changing, and that change is happening more quickly than ever. There is a great need to learn how to minister in this changing context. His studies have provided insights and resources for him and his students to become more effective disciple makers.

On a more personal note, Ruben loves to fish (especially fly fishing), to cook (he gets that from his dad), to play guitar (he learned in Maine out of necessity for music for the teens), and to read (his library still continues to grow). Debbie loves music and has led and participated in various vocal and hand bell choirs over the years. She also has a heart for women's ministries and has taught numerous Bible studies. She enjoys HGTV with her daughter and sci-fi with her family. She is employed full time in a public school library. Their children all love the Lord and use their gifts in ministry. R.J. graduated from college with two bachelor's degrees, a BS in Physics from Gordon College, and a BS in Astronautical Engineering from the University of Southern California. He is now working on a Master's degree in Physics at Steven's Institute while working full time at an optics company in New York. He has served in campus ministry, loves discussing politics and culture, and currently assists with A/V needs at church. Jonathan completed his AFA in Music Technology and is working on his bachelor's at Ramapo College in Music Production. He is an avid drummer and has served for several years in the church's worship band. Their youngest, Caroline, will be graduating from high school in June and plans to attend Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. She uses her musical ability as a worship leader in the church.

Ruben and Debbie will celebrate their thirtieth wedding anniversary this October. It has been their privilege and great joy to be involved in full-time Christian work together. They have seen God's faithfulness through many joyful times as well as very difficult times. Their desire is to be found faithful in whatever and wherever God calls them.