



St. Matthew's United Church

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"I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!"
Psalm 122

Dear Friends

At the end of January, my husband John spent six weeks in Mexico as part of the International Support Worker's Certificate Program at Loyalist College. I joined him for the last week of his trip, which we spent together in a fishing town on the Central Pacific Coast Called Zihuatanejo (zee-what-ah-nay-ho). There was a Roman Catholic Church close to our hotel, so on Sunday morning we walked down to celebrate Mass.

It is very interesting to attend a worship service not only in a different culture, but in a language that you do not speak, and don't even understand that well. (I can ask where the beach is and not much else!) Attending that service helped me to realize how much our churches- wherever they are and whatever language they speak- have in common. I realized how familiar the different elements of worship often are even when the language is not. There were the opening prayers, the hymns, the Lord's Prayer (*Padre Nuestro*) the sermon, prayers of the people, the offering, the passing of the peace, and of course the celebration of the Eucharist or Holy Communion. Even without any real competency in Spanish, I was- and this came as something of a surprise to me- still able to worship, and to feel truly a part of the worshipping community.

This experience brought home to me what a gift the church is, that even away from home, culturally, linguistically, and liturgically, a Roman Catholic Church in Mexico could feel like *a home away from home*- a place of shared faith, purpose and challenge. It reminded me that with all the things that supposedly separate us- economic status, sexuality and gender, cultural background, political sympathies, are not enough to cancel out our shared humanity as God's children- as those called to live joyfully and thankfully -into God's kingdom, *where* we are and as *who* we are.

St. Matthew's is privileged to be part of the gift of Christ's Church, to be part of God's family, to be an agent of the Holy Spirit right here in the West Hill neighbourhood of Belleville. It is your presence and participation, your prayers, your creativity and talent, and your financial support that will help us to continue to bring people together for worship, for spiritual growth, for community, for service, for justice making, for abundant life now and into the future. We are deeply grateful for all that **you** have done to help make St. Matthew's a faithful member of the Body of Christ.

We look forward to growing with your help and God's blessings in each and every one of these areas of ministry. May the miraculous reality of Easter fill your hearts and enrich your lives.

Rev. Cathy Russell

