

## What St Mikes means to me

Let me be the one hundred and first person to say “God works in mysterious ways.” Before a “chance” conversation with relatives in Toronto, I guess I was as close to being an atheist as a person can be. If there was a God, then why was my life so miserable and why was I completely unable to trust a soul. I had a flippant, caustic response for everyone and I could play the fake “cocktail party” scene as well as anyone else. Slap on the smiley “I’m fine face” at will and return to sullen me instantly. That was until Peter’s cousin Eva said, “You have to go to a church called St. Mike’s. The young man who was their assistant at St. Barnabus, had recently been inducted there. You’ll really love him.”

Well within weeks we followed up on this advice. The kids needed it - Kathi was at Sunday school age. Strangely enough I had the distinct feeling that someone said either “Welcome home” or “You are home, Cherie” I felt very strange but in a most wonderful way. Murray Henderson turned out to be my real life John the Baptist. He couldn’t stop telling me about Jesus. He told me how shallow life was without knowing Him. He told me I was completely unequipped to face the questions of life without Him. He told me I would never know life and love fully without Him. Once I had committed my life to Jesus, my Lord, then he gave me my biggest challenge - you’ll never really experience Christ’s

love until you start trusting people and letting them into your life. That was the scariest thing I’d heard! It was people - especially close people, who had hurt and betrayed me in the past. At 30 years old how did one start making real friends? My gut told me I had to do this; but every other thing in my being screamed “NO!!!!” Through tears and tantrums I finally yielded. And would you believe that’s all I had to do? That very night at our praise service someone, whom I’d admired, but never thought for one minute even knew I existed, came up to me and asked if I would be interested in having her as a prayer partner. I didn’t really even know what that meant, but my heart received it as a gift from the Lord. My first step in learning to love and trust people. I was ecstatic!!!! God really did care about me and the quality of my relationships. WOW!!!!

I learned a whole new way of relating to people, loving them and truly seeing God in each new person I met. My walk with Jesus grew and developed daily. I learned what abundant life was all about and the wonderful, amazing, terrifying privilege of being a friend of Jesus. I was not good at sharing this with other people! My witness was too full of me and not enough He. That was yet to come.

Then arrived my present day Apostle Paul in the form of Gary Henizer. Because I was the wife of a warden, and Gary and Millie needed somewhere to stay through the meetings with the search committee,

we had the privilege of hosting them then, and for a bit after their arrival as the new clergy couple for St. Mike's. In those brief weeks I saw the dedicated prayer life of a man feeling the responsibility of holding his sheep before the Lord. I heard the joyful singing of two people madly in love and completely submitted to each other before the Lord. At church we heard 45 minute sermons and then acted ravenous to attend adult Sunday School after we had shared lunch together! I couldn't get enough!!!

Many things changed in my life - some good and some dreadful. But I dealt with them all, fully aware that the Lord was giving me the love and strength to carry on. I can honestly say that He never let me down and I wouldn't go back to the material-filled one dimensional life that I had lived before I came home to St. Mike's. I give thanks daily that He not only led me here, but has never allowed me to be satisfied with substitutions for the perfect plan He has for my life. He doesn't promise an easy life...His promise is for an abundant life! Thanks be to God.

*Cheryl Toms*



I was lost....

I was brought up in the Anglican Church, or should I say my mother sent

me to Sunday School on Sunday afternoon whilst she had a quiet snooze after Sunday lunch! I went on to join the youth group and eventually taught Sunday School for a while.

After I left Wales I was involved in a church in London, belonging to several study groups. Again in Rome I attended an American Episcopal Church but somehow it was all superficial, 'twas the thing to do on Sunday... to go to church in your best dress and hat!

I got married in St James the Apostle, down town in Montreal, the church I was attending at the time. We moved to N. D. G. and it became a habit to attend St James and go out for lunch on Sundays. Again it was a habit and it slowly dwindled to very few visits.

We moved to the West Island and when my daughter started school I became friendly with the mother of two of her school friends. Out of the blue one day she asked me what denomination I was and did I go to church. That friend was Millie Scott and she brought me along to St Mikes. Wow I don't know what hit me. I was overwhelmed by the welcome I got here. It was in the time of Fr Murray Henderson and there was so much going on in the church. Millie and I did a Life in the Spirit Seminar together and several other Bible Studies after that.

This was where I was meant to be, it just took me a very long time to come here. Praise be the Lord.

*Jacqui Hoitz*