

RENEWING WORSHIP

In addition to my teaching activities at the Theological Community and Lutheran Seminary, since this past May I have been helping out at one of the Lutheran churches here in Mexico City, San Pedro, working with the congregation in the renewal of its worship services. One of our Seminary students, Benjamín Quezada, is from San Pedro, and after taking a liturgy course with me at the Seminary, Benjamín invited the liturgy class to do a special service at San Pedro in May. The congregation liked the service so well that they expressed interest in renewing their entire service, since they had been using the same liturgy for over 20 years.

Based on some of the liturgies I had helped develop at the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd here in Mexico City, we developed four new liturgies for San Pedro, and the congregation has been learning them over the past five months. This has included some new texts for Confession and Absolution and for the Creeds, as well as liturgical music. I have also worked with them in teaching them new hymns.

In August, they also decided to train new liturgical assistants and asked me to give a short training course over a few Sundays. Fifteen members of the congregation attended the course—the problem now is how to give all fifteen a chance to assist with the liturgy!

Fortunately, the congregation already had some good musicians and a good worship team. They have worked hard together with their pastor, Rev. Esther León, and the changes have been very well-received.



This year, the congregation hosted a Saturday evening Reformation service as well on Oct. 29. There were representatives from several of the Lutheran congregations in Mexico City, as well as from ecumenical groups. Here are some photos:



CUTTING DOWN A TREE IN MEXICO CITY

This past spring, we noticed that the large pine tree we had in our back yard had died and needed to be cut down. No problem—just bring someone in to do the job, right? Wrong!!!

In Mexico City, trees are heavily protected. If you cut a tree down without the proper permit, even if it is on your property, you can be fined over \$1,000 (U.S. equivalent) and even put in jail! So we had to go through the lengthy and complex process of getting a permit to have the tree cut down.

The process is the following: 1) go to the government office to get the proper form and fill it out, justifying why the tree must be cut down; 2) submit three different photos from different angles of the tree; 3) wait for a government inspector to come to the house to look at the tree; 4) once the inspector approves, go to the bank to make the deposit to pay for the permit; 5) wait for notification of the approval of the permit; 6) provide for the planting of anywhere from 3 to 10 new trees (depending on the size of the tree being cut down) by either buying the young trees and taking them to a designated location or by simply paying about ten to twenty dollars per tree; 7) once this is all done, you finally get the permit; 8) you must contract with someone approved by the city government to have them cut down the tree.

Fortunately, we had a man who helps us out with the upkeep on our house do some of the legwork. But finally, after several weeks, we were able to get our tree cut down in September!

**DAY OF THE DEAD**

Celebrating the Day of the Dead, or “Día de los Muertos,” is a custom that goes back to the days before the Spanish conquered Mexico. Many indigenous people believed that the spirits of the dead came back to earth during the ninth month of the Aztec calendar (around August) and would set out food, flowers, and other things for them.

When the Roman Catholic faith was imposed on the indigenous people, they combined their ancient practices with the celebration of All Souls Day (November 2) in the Catholic liturgical calendar, and this day came to be known as the Day of the Dead. People go to the cemeteries and decorate the graves of their deceased loved ones, and set out altars in their homes for them. It is not only a religious holiday but a public holiday, so that schools, businesses and offices are closed.

Here are a couple of pictures I took from a few years ago when we visited a rural town on Nov. 2:



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