



St. James United Church

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Dear Members and Friends of St. James United Church,

This will be my last letter to you. I could not possibly leave without expressing my



heartfelt thanks. You have been overwhelmingly generous to me and it was great to see so many of you (141 children, youth and adults) in-person on Sunday. For some of you this was your first time out since the start of the pandemic, others came from the other side of the city and each of you blessed me with a special card, beautiful flower and favourite recipe. I am also grateful for the cards that arrived by mail or email filled with kindness. **THANK YOU!**

As much as I am looking forward to retirement, I am feeling sad that I won't see you again for a year. I expect many of us know this feeling. Due to COVID-19 and for a variety of other reasons, we have missed being with family and friends, playing with grandchildren and giving and receiving hugs. You feel like my extended family, and I already miss you. Yet at the same time, I am grateful for every one of you. Each of you has left a fingerprint on my soul, brought me joy and inspiration, and been a partner in ministry. I am well aware that it is a team effort and nothing would be possible without you.

A huge thank you to Nancy Violo for planning my retirement celebration for the past several months, coming up with creative alternatives and for recruiting all the people who helped implement and assist with various parts of it. It was fabulous, joyful and ingenious. An act of love gratefully received.

I so appreciated all of the extra special touches in my final worship service - the beautiful anthem by the Senior Choir and Catherine Richardson on flute, the hymns enriched by Albert Conforzi on trumpet and flugelhorn and Tony Gray on the Djembe drums; the video tribute compiled and edited by Katrina Desjardins, and the gracious words of affirmation and appreciation. It means so much.



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You took my breath away and moved me to tears with your immensely generous gifts: tuition for an International Reflexology course, a holiday in Hawaii (when it is safe to travel), plus the beautiful stained glass window based on the sanctuary windows (“I am the vine, you are the branches.” John 15:5). It helps me know I will always be part of your community in Christ.

It has been a great joy and privilege to get to know you and serve with you. Thanks for your open and cooperative spirit, your loving support and generosity and a lifetime of great memories. You are an inspiring community of faith who truly make a big difference both to the St. James family and the wider community. Your lay leaders and staff, past and present, are exceptional – Spirit-filled, talented, wise, generous, good-hearted and a delight to work with as a team. And we are all blessed by Rev. Linda Maw, your Volunteer Associate Minister (V.A.M.) or as her husband Dave shared, these initials might better stand for “Value Added Minister”. St. James has the good fortune of several ordained ministers who have generously stepped up to serve in various capacities, yet Linda has been a steadfast gift to me and the congregation ever since her retirement 11 years ago, and as a great lay leader prior to her ordination.

I also want to thank my partner, Cindy, who has been a tremendous support to me in every way. As a United Church minister herself, she would listen, reflect and offer her wisdom, brainstorm children’s stories and sermon ideas, supported countless Reiki training weekends especially in the early years when we needed everyone willing to help, and, of course co-led five six-week “Be Happy” courses with me. She has made it easier to be your minister.

I am confident that God has a great future ahead for St. James United Church. Rev. Maya Douglas will be very fortunate to be part of this tremendous community of faith. Thank you again for your part in making St. James such a loving, dynamic and inspiring place to be. You will always have a special place in my heart. Wishing you God’s abundant blessings.

With love and gratitude,

Rev. Coral