

# The First Exchange \* El Primer Intercambio

By Eve Oliphant

At the beginning of the first Language and Culture Exchange, I introduced myself as Eve, Eva and Maestra Eva (the name given to me by an ESL student years ago). I looked around at the twenty participants who were ages 19-70 with various levels of communicating in their second or third language. I told them that "I could have bitten off more than I



could chew" if it weren't for the fact that I am not the only **maestra** here, but that we are all **teachers** to one another in an exchange like this. The Spanish saying for "taking on more than one can deal with" gives us another look at this concept: "Él que mucho abarca, poco aprieta" loosely

translated as "He who takes up a lot, grips only a little." So much of what we automatically say in our native tongue cannot be translated literally or taught from a world language textbook and that is why it is so important to **learn from one another**.



It's also quite fun to learn about culture and language as we live it! On that first day, I had a native speaker in both Spanish and English read about our purpose, some things to remember and what we're going to do - activities like pair up with native speakers of our second language, learn the beauty of each other's cultures and that it's okay to make mistakes because that is how we learn. We acted out the popular American game (Hokey Pokey) and sang the classic song "This Land is Your Land" by our folk hero Woodie Guthrie.



For part of the partner time, the English speakers asked questions to their partners in Spanish while the sign was turned to "Español solamente". Then, they switched roles and the Spanish speakers asked the questions in English only. When I turned the arrow to point to "Bilingual", I gave a short lesson on how to use the calendar to talk in the past, present and future and gave everyone an August and September calendar for them to fill in with their schedules and special events. For **our next Exchange- Intercambio on September 12**, we'll use these calendars to generate conversation with our partners. We'll also practice reading a poem out loud from the famous Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda, and engage in a classic game and song -this time- from *la cultura mexicana*.



To be a participant, you would need at least a little experience in speaking Spanish and have the desire for it to grow. For future meetings, I will need help opening and closing up the church and setting up tables and chairs. I would also like to provide childcare for participants and will need someone to help in the nursery as well as in the Sunday school room for elementary age children. Please email me at [maestraeva8@gmail.com](mailto:maestraeva8@gmail.com) if you would like to help with this or come as a participant.



We will meet on the second Thursday of each month from 6:00-7:30 pm in the social hall. We will call our meetings "The Exchange" or "El Intercambio" for short. I'm excited to bring people together in this way! ♥ Eve ♥ Eva ♥ Maestra Eva