



Lou Schooley, ASL Interpreter

Meet Lou, St. Mark's resident sign language interpreter extraordinaire!

Lou Schooley has been signing for St. Mark's since 2000. Her 24-year history with the church may not have happened without a special sign from God.

Lou has always been interested in learning Sign Language. She bought books, took some adult classes and taught signs to her Camp Fire Girl troop at Grantwood Elementary in Iowa City. After her girls grew older, the school principal approached Lou about interpreting for two deaf students that needed an interpreter at the school. She agreed but was concerned she didn't know enough signs to be able to help teach them what was being said in class. At the end of the school year, the principal asked how the time had gone and Lou admitted that she was surprised at how well she was able to relay the information through signing.

The principal encouraged Lou to look into a new sign language program that was being offered at Kirkwood Community College. She was hesitant at first, but after much encouragement, she completed the paperwork. The principal mailed the application for her. She told herself that if she was accepted, she would not enroll. Low and behold, Lou received an acceptance letter inviting her to enroll in the program. She was still not interested in furthering her signing knowledge with this formal program. As Lou notes, something changed overnight. "That evening God nudged me as usual when I turned something down and He wanted me to do it. I argued most of the night and God was persistent! It took me awhile to give in. I decided to go but did not plan to stay. At the end of the first semester, I was on the Dean's list with a 4.0!"

And the rest is sort of history. During her last semester at Kirkwood, Lou received a phone call from then Pastor Harlan Gillespie to join the staff of St. Mark's and interpret for the congregation. Lou started in January 2000 and after nearly 24 years she loves her position and hopes she can interpret for many more years. To her, the most important part of interpreting for the deaf is to help educate them about God, the Bible and to live a life for God.

Lou thanks God for his persistence with her and helping her get this job. "God put me in this situation at Grantwood Elementary school, and I thank Mr. Davis (the principal) for his work in submitting my application to get my Associate of Arts degree. A special thanks to my husband for encouraging me and believing in me!"

We believe in you Lou and are grateful for this special gift you share weekly with the community.

When Lou isn't providing services at St. Mark's, she is a para-educator in the Iowa City School District. She plans to retire as a para in June.