

St. Matthew Church Biography: Lee Holland  
By Kathy Stewart

I had an amazing time interviewing Lee for this short biography. She is fun, adventuresome, and full of Spirit!

Lee left her previous church in search of one that could meet her needs better as Deaf person. She knew Fr. Kendall before she came to St. Matthew and felt she would be welcomed here. Lee is a “cradle Episcopalian.” She proudly described that she was an infant when she was baptized on October 27, 1957 with her brother on their father’s birthday.

Lee has served in many roles in the Episcopal Church. At St. Matthew she has been a Worship Leader, one of St. Matthew’s delegates to the Diocese of Olympia Convention, and helped out at our recent Vacation Bible School. At the Diocese level, Lee is currently an elected member of Diocesan Council representing the Rainier Regional Ministry. On a national level, she is Vice President of the Episcopal Conference of the Deaf (ECD). Lee recounted a recent story when she drove through St. Louis, Missouri this past spring. She planned on simply attending St. Thomas Deaf Church but was asked to stay longer to help an ECD board member adjust to his new role on the board so she stayed longer than planned. While there, a former vicar of St. Thomas asked Lee if she would preach at her installation service at her new church where she was now a rector. This request totally surprised her, especially since she had only three days to prepare. And, oh, by the way, she was told that the Bishop of Missouri was going to be there. Yikes! But Lee felt good about the homily she gave.

Lee grew up in Lynnwood, Washington. With a big smile, she mentioned this was before the I-5 freeway was built and the cows roamed across Highway 99! Lee attended a special preschool program that happens to have been right next to St. Mark’s Cathedral in Seattle. For some unknown reason, she still remembers the church’s parking lot. She was only 3 years old, so that’s a mystery to her. Lee went on to attend Seattle Public Schools where she could participate in programs for deaf children.

Some of the jobs Lee has had in the past include working in a bank and serving in a paralegal position. Although she is retired now, she explained, with a twinkle in her eye, she currently does “side jobs” that whatever interests her in the moment.

Lee definitely has an adventuresome spirit! She now drives a motor home and travels across the country. She showed me a funny video that she took of herself in rural Nebraska. She was in the middle of a dirt road intersection where she could look to her right, her left, in front of her, and in back of her, and see absolutely NO cars! Now that’s rural! This year she spent about 10 months on the road traveling to Florida and back. And now, starting in November, she will take off to Arizona for several months where she wants to go fishing and boating on the Colorado River. She is also looking forward to baking in the sun and bike riding. Traveling across country and attending various Episcopal Churches, Lee has discovered some new ideas that she feels St. Matthew might consider.

When asked what her vision is for at St. Matthew in the next few years, she said, “We need to have more lively and updated services.” She would love to have more music. Lee explained that she grew up in a musical family. As a child she learned to read notes. So it would help her if she had the notes of the songs sung at St. Matthew. An organ at St. Matthew would be ideal for her. Lee explained that although she is Deaf, she can hear sounds, but she can’t process what she hears. She compared her hearing loss to being in a foreign country when you’ve learned the language, but you can’t process the words into a meaningful sentence.

I found that when Lee and I sat down, face to face, at a table in our quiet library at St. Matthew, we were able to communicate with each other. Lee uses both her cochlear implant and her lip reading skills to communicate. She also uses a special app on her phone that quickly shows her what the other speaker is saying.

When Lee returns to St. Matthew from her travels next year, I hope you have an opportunity to hear about her new travel adventures. I guarantee you will be entertained!

