

Oral History Cover Sheet

Interview Information	
Project Name:	Gateway City Church, St Louis and St Charles, Oral History Project
Narrator:	Kathy Lohman
Interviewer:	Katie Sweet
Interview Date:	April 18, 2026
Interview Location:	St Charles

Descriptive Information	
Narrator's Biographical Information:	
Interview Summary:	This interview with Kathy Lohman recounts her spiritual journey from a Catholic upbringing to her conversion and long-term involvement in the St. Louis Church, part of the International Churches of Christ (ICOC). Kathy describes her early disinterest in church, struggles with personal choices, and eventual marriage to Rick, whose influence and a series of Bible studies led them both to baptism in 1986. She reflects on the challenges of leaving her family's Catholic traditions, the ups and downs of church life – including leadership turmoil, church splits, and the impact of the Henry Kriete letter – and her own personal struggles, such as a period of gambling that affected her marriage. Kathy highlights the church's resilience through adversity, its evolving approach to leadership and community outreach, and the importance of relationships and service. She values the sense of global family within the ICOC and shares how key scriptures and a commitment to faith have sustained her through decades of change, growth, and challenges in both her personal life and the church community. (Adobe AI Summary)
Interview Key Terms:	International Churches of Christ; Gateway City Church; St Louis; St Charles; No Hunger Holidays; Henry Kriete Letter; Reach Conference;

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Administrative Information

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Narrator's Name: Kathy Lohman
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Interview with Kathy Lohman Transcript

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Interviewer's Name: Katie Sweet

Date of Interview: April 18, 2026

Location of Interview: St Charles, MO

Transcript Completed By: Katie Sweet

Transcript Edited By:

Additional Notes:

KS: (00:01) So today is April 18, 2026. I'm interviewing Kathy Lohman here in St. Charles. And we're doing it for the Gateway City Church, St. Louis, St. Charles oral history project. So do I have your consent to use this for my project for the ICOC project and eventually to send it in the archive?

KL: (00:26) Yes, you do.

KS: Excellent. So the first question, what's your testimony?

KL: (00:39) My testimony is I grew up Catholic, going to church all the time, went to Catholic grade school from grades five through eight, moved out of St. Louis in 1977 to a small town where Catholicism was not the number one religion in the city. And so it was a very going from a very big church family to a very small one. I was very disinterested in church. As a teenager, I had a great family life, but I did things that I shouldn't have, like drugs, early sex, things like that. The small town didn't help. There wasn't anything else to do. Rock and roll, sex and drugs were the main attractions to recreation. God was always in the background, but never as a real part of my life. Got married at 19, was divorced by the time I was 21. Later, I met my husband Rick in a bowling alley, and he was sort of religious. I was used to being wild, and because of things that happened with my divorce, I went out to prove that I could do anything I wanted, and I did pretty much that. Didn't have a lot of money, but I had enough money for take care of myself, my cat, have my own apartment, and take care of the car that I enjoyed driving. And then I met Rick, and it was at a time where he wasn't going to continue college. I was working, so I didn't go to college, but we had a big fight. He moved back to St. Louis, and then we just started seeing each other, and he always kept, you know, me being a very sexual person. I was more enticing him, and he was playing the, you know, we shouldn't do this kind of thing. And we got together because of an argument. There was no romantic, will you marry me, or anything like that. It was an argument about whether he should, we should just not be together, or it was either moving in with me, or we weren't going to be together. And then he said, well, how about if we got married? I'm like, okay. And that was our romance. So we got married, and I've been used to being and raised as, you know, the American woman, hear me roar kind of person. He was going to tell me how to spend my money. So we were married about three months, and I was ready to get divorced. Well, we got married in March, and sometime between March and May is when the team came from South Carolina. And one of the team members started with Rick's company, and he started talking to Rick. The company Rick worked for was very religious. I mean, they were religious. They weren't necessarily honest integrity kind of religious, but you know, they have Bible studies at work and things like that. So the team member, his name was John Spencer, when he started working with Rick, they started talking, and he told him about the Bible groups that were, you know, that they came to St. Louis to have discipling ministry churches, and would he want to come and bring his wife. And so Rick went almost all summer without me, because I'm like, I'm not going. I got too much stuff going on at work. Work is my... it's part of me. That's what gets me up. I mean, that's where I get my identity most of the time, is work. I think my dad instilled that in me. Work is important. You do your best. And so I was in the middle of a big project, so Rick went without me. Well, I started having this problem with one of my co-workers, and I'd gone to one of the Bible studies, but I really... it wasn't for me. And they were having like midweeks and Friday night devotionals and Bible talks, and I'm

like, this is way too much. This is, you know, once a week is good enough for me. And we were very involved with the Lutheran Church we got married in, but when I... to kind of back up a little bit, when I told my dad that Rick and I were getting married and we'd be getting married in the Lutheran Church, my dad was not happy. He basically... well, not basically. He did tell me he would rather I be dead than to not go to the Catholic Church. So that was a major point in my discussion. So this problem with my co-worker, she was very insecure, and we were kind of going after the same position at work, and she was just being really mean. So Rick said, why don't we just go? They've invited us to this Friday night devotional. Let's go. I'm like, fine. Let's go. Because I was tired. It was a Friday night. I don't want to do anything but, you know, go get something to eat and relax. So I went, and the message was exactly what I needed to hear. That was 40 plus years ago, so I can't exactly tell you what the scriptures were, but it was like Nick Young was talking to me about this particular situation that I was dealing with and how to deal with it. And I'm like, okay. I know Rick didn't tell them anything about this because I just told him that night about what I was dealing with at work. And I'm like, okay. God's trying to talk to me. And so we started meeting with the group, and then we started the individual Bible study. And the sticking point for Rick and I was the baptism part. Because when Rick and I got married, we were very much, there was one couple that we were really close to, and that was his cousin and her husband and their three kids. We spent a lot of time with them. They were going to an evangelistic church.

I didn't believe all the stuff that they were doing, but they were the most religious people that I had met, and it was encouraging to me. So when it came down, we studied out baptism. We went to the religious bookstores, pulled everything on about glossolalia and, you know, speaking in tongues and stuff. Because something, it was a miss, but I'm like, okay, what are we missing? What have I missed in my church growth? And it came down to what does the scripture say versus what I know I've done and how this all meshes together. And because they were going to stop talking, they were actually going to stop studying with us. The couple that was the John Spencer and Kathy Sample, they were single people, but they were like leading a group Bible study together. And so we had asked Rick's cousin and her husband to come up and meet with us because we wanted their opinion about what was going on. Would they want to study the Bible with us? And their comment to us was, no, the Spirit is not telling us that we need to study the Bible. And then they stopped wanting to hang out with us. So we studied a little bit more, and on October 31st, Halloween of 1986, we made the decision to get baptized. And so we were going to go over, Nick and Debbie, the leaders at the time, were going to have a party, and we were just going to get baptized at their house, and just do it there. My mom and dad came in unexpectedly from Chicago. And so in '86, that was when you can hop on a plane in Chicago and be in St. Louis in an hour. I mean, there is no TSA or anything like that. You just got on a plane. And they go, well, we're here. Let's go. And we went to, we usually went to a local bar with my mom and dad and my uncle and aunt, and we said, no, we're going to get baptized tonight. And my mom and dad both blew up. What do you mean you're going to get baptized? You got baptized as a kid, as a baby. And I'm like, well, this is something we're going to do. We're not going out tonight. And I did not hear from my mother for a year unless I called her. They were not, I mean, normally when they came in, they would call me and tell me, because they stayed at my grandma's house at the time, when they would come in to visit. And I didn't hear from them unless I called them. So it was, you know, but that's my testimony. And it's kind of, you know, after 40 years, it's kind of grown from there. There's been spiritual ups and downs and things, but that was my, that was my decision. I mean, I was going to obey God, and that's what I wanted to do.

KS: Did your parents ever make peace with it?

KL: (11:57) They did, but they didn't. My dad never accepted that I wasn't Catholic. My dad never came to a service. My mom came to three services. One, when my aunt from Texas came up to visit, and she wanted to go to church with us, and my mom came. And then my mom and my dad came for the kids' baptisms, Abby and Eric's baptisms, but my dad didn't come in for the service, but my mom did. Okay. So, and you know, my dad just never accepted I wasn't following the Catholic rules. Yeah. But he saw that there was a difference between how we were raising our kids and how dedicated we were to God. So, I mean, he didn't like it, but you know, he never, when they finally moved back to St. Louis, and they, you know, got to meet their grandkids and stuff like that, then, I mean,

my kids were nine and ten years old before they moved back to St. Louis. So, but I mean, my dad adored my kids. Yeah.

KS: (13:21) In your walk, like how the Old Testament talks about, like, the piles or pillars of stone, like, hey, set this up to remember this, or like the successes or the defeats. Like, are some of those pillars of stones for you or piles of stones?

KL: (13:38) Well, I would have to say one. The first one was in 1987 when the leadership, there was a lot of turmoil in the leadership in that first couple of years, and basically the church split in 87. There was a group that came down from Chicago. Nick Young was leaving here. There was some issues with him and Debbie and the eldership in Chicago, and at one point, once that couple from Chicago was here, they had some issues, and so they kind of left the original team group, and they split off in St. Louis. Oh, okay. I had an aunt and two of my cousins, actually two of my aunts and two of my cousins that were coming to church, and they went with the other group, and there was a couple, Jim and Cindy Albert, that had come down from Chicago, and they had a talk with Rick and I because John and Kathy, who had studied the Bible with us, had just gotten married, and they were going with the other group, and Rick and I didn't feel comfortable with the splitting off, and we talked to Jim and Cindy, and Jim said stay, and the talk that we had with them was the right decision. We don't see them very much right now, and there's been bits and pieces where they've moved to other cities and come back to St. Louis, and now they're in Atlanta, but I know that if I needed some spiritual help, those were the two people that I could count on. Yeah. They just had a tragedy in their home, in their family, and all I did was text her. I said, I have no words, but I'm here, and we're praying for you, and like I said, I'm not expecting a text back. Just know that we're here, and I got them immediately, like 10 minutes later. I got this long. She was just crying out, just yeah. She was mad at God for the tragedy that they had just suffered, and she just needed the vent, and she knew I could take it. Yeah. So yeah, that is one of the biggest decisions that we had to make, is were we going to stay with the discipling group that we were with, or go with the offshoot, and they didn't last another six months after they left. Yeah. So that was the big one.

I think recently, I think the negative stone one was I was feeling, I don't know, maybe my midlife crisis or something. It was about 15 years ago, and because of where we had been in the church, I mean we had been in and out of our leading Bible talks ourselves, and just pouring our lives. I mean the church became our family, even though I have all my cousins still, except for maybe four of my cousins out of 27 live in St. Louis, where McDonald's side is a very family-oriented group of people. But the church was our family, and I just wasn't feeling close to anybody. There was a lot of people who had left. St. Louis had sent out a lot of people to different ministries, like Texas and other places, and I was just feeling very alone, and I got into gambling. Rick was being looked at as an elder candidate, and so we started going to these elder candidacy classes, and we went to Colorado for a big conference and everything, and met John and Nancy Mantle and all of that group. I had hid my gambling, and so I got into a lot of it to the point where I lied to Rick about my boss didn't pay me because I had maxed out one of my credit cards and had it going to my office so he wouldn't know. And so all that came out, and so we weren't part of the elder candidacy group anymore. That was a big blow to Rick. So learning to come out of that and realize that it wasn't like an affair or anything, but I was still living this double life. I didn't realize I was living. So that was probably the lowest part of my... These stones, we don't want to go back there. But yeah, those are the two big things.

(19:27) I mean, there's been a lot of turmoil in the St. Louis church. The Henry Kriete letter came out in 2003. I was actually one of the ones that was very grateful for that letter. Because in the beginning, there was a lot of transition leaders in and out and stuff. But in the 90s, I saw a lot of things that I didn't want to see. I thought, I had this ideology of what the church should be like. With Jesus as the head, we're all trying to go... We're all going one way and not all over the place. And in the 90s, I just saw a bunch of... I was in a leader's meeting and it wasn't like... It was a business meeting and it was more a business. We were treating it, the church, like a business. And that's the part I didn't want to see. And so when the Henry Creed letter came out and all of these things, what I saw was God. I didn't see a man trying to split the church apart, although I'm not really sure what his motive is. I don't know him. But what I saw was God showing us that we had moved the pendulum all throughout scripture. You could see the pendulum moving with the Israelites back and forth, close to God. Out here, not close to God, doing their own

thing. And that's what I saw our church doing as a whole. Not just St. Louis, but the whole ICOC. We swung the pendulum way too far to the left and God was just slapping us back into the middle.

And then, of course, after that, then we swung the pendulum the other way. So I think it's just a matter of understanding history. Even biblical history or church history is that we're not any different than the Israelites. We're going to swing the pendulum back and forth and God's just going to have to slap us back into the middle. So I was very comforted. Not that the aftermath of people who got hurt through that, that was the collateral damage, I think. And we lost some very, very close friends. But I saw God in it. And that was another one of those stones. There was a pivotal moment saying God was saying, I am in control of my church, not you all. And I don't think it's going to be the last.

KS: (22:28) Yeah, I agree. What was it like here in St. Louis after the letter came out?

KL: (22:33) It was horrible. We had those town hall meetings, as they called them, and people were just mean. The congregation, we sat in and we had rent, I don't even know where we were, a ballroom or a church, I don't even remember. But we were all there. Everybody was invited and we pulled in the leaders that had been here and the leaders that were still here. And people, I didn't expect to stand up and rip people's hearts out. It was very disheartening to me. It's like, to be honest, it's like the day Jesus was in front of the Sanhedrin and they were just, you know, the brain is not working with the names, but Jesus is in front of everybody and they said, do you want Jesus or Barabbas? And everybody yelled Barabbas. And that's what it was like. People were getting up saying, I can't believe you did this and, you know, how dare you tell me I can't marry this person? And I'm like, okay, there is a way to do this without destroying the people that were trying to do their best. And I'm not saying that all of them were correct or whatever, but the way people were treating them. And I'm just sitting there like an out-of-body experience saying, these are people who are supposed to be your friends and you're ripping them to shreds. I don't understand this. Carlton got up and did say, hey, you guys, this is not how we treat each other. And I'm thinking, well, this is how Jesus died because there were people who couldn't believe what was happening, like me, just sitting there. And then there was other people trying to defend Jesus and the crowd was louder. And I'm like, oh my gosh, we're actually living this.

KS: (25:01) I've been collecting stories about people's reactions to the letter since I was a baby disciple. The letter came out six months after I was baptized and I was in campus, so we got insulated from a lot of, so it's just been very intriguing hearing. Was there a lot of those toxic discipling relationships here?

KL: (25:26) I didn't think so, but there was because it all of a sudden came, it was like a permission to say all the nastiest things that you think you were involved in. I had people that, so Rick and I have a very volatile marriage. One of the reasons we're together is because of our commitment to God. I mean, we love each other, but it's, our personalities are exactly the opposite. And so we were always involved in people helping us in our marriage, you know, and sometimes Rick and I would get yelled and one couple said, if you guys are going to yell at each other, we're not even going to start this tonight. Okay. But so there were people in my life that I thought were really like friends. And I had several women come up and say, we're not friends. Our only reason I was your friend is because I had to. And I'm like, okay. Wow. And I'm like, and I had one person yell at me and say, you only thought of me as a project, you weren't very close to me. And I'm like, okay, I never thought I treated you like a project.

You stay home all day and I work full time. So I don't have the relationship with you that I would have liked, but okay. So those were the hurtful things. Yeah. And so establishing, establishing new relationships is really hard. And I think because there hasn't been as many Bible studies that I've been in to start from the beginning with the relationship, it's hard to like move in. When you're studying the Bible with so many people and you're in so many studies, that's where the rubber hits the road and you get bonded to somebody. It's not to have Bible talks and you try to maneuver people here and here and try to get everybody to match together when you haven't been in their personal Bible studies. It's kind of hard to grow those relationships. Some people are natural at it. I'm not. My natural is to study the Bible with you. This is my story. How's your story? Yeah, this is me and this is you. We're good. But yeah, I think the aftermath, I think I still think we're growing from that. The church in Virginia Beach where my son and daughter-in-law live, they are just now, their leadership decided to insulate them from the Henry Crete letter. In the last seven years and through the pandemic, that's when their reaction to the Henry Crete letter

started. They're a mess out there. Oh my goodness. We weren't very insulated here from things, except when... Everything kind of was hubbed at Boston for a very long time, right? And they would try new things and then they would kind of, like everything else on the coasts, you know, it all starts on the coast and it ends up in the Midwest, right? That's not just church. That's just how our society worked.

So they were starting this really tough discipling thing back in the early 90s or whatever. And they worked in Boston for a little while and they realized this wasn't the way. Yeah. But it never got to the Midwest saying, no, this isn't a good thing. Okay. Like these five... So we would have these big discipling groups, like the women would get together. And there'd be 10-15 women in a group and everybody would have a lesson and then everybody would get to comment. And if somebody's comment wasn't what it was supposed to be or, you know, a negative, like the day that it was my turn to get disciplined, my daughter was not a very calm child as an infant or a toddler. She cried all the time. She screamed at me most of the day. When I first had her, I did stay home. I quit my job and I stayed home with her and she cried all the time. And it was exhausting. And I was in this group and I was crying and I said, I don't want to be around my daughter. She screams at me all the time and I feel guilty about it.

And there was this one woman, she didn't stay in our ministry very long, but she yelled at me and told me I should be grateful that I even had a child, that there was another woman who had a child that she knew that had something going on with her brain and she couldn't... that I should just be grateful. And I'm like, okay, you have no idea what I'm going through, but all right. And I kept all that in, you know, it wasn't a place where it wasn't a safe place to where you could express how you really feel. And so, yeah, that started in Boston, but it didn't last very long, but nobody told the Midwest that this wasn't a healthy way to deal with things. So, it was kind of like growing up in the church with those kinds of... Yeah, that would be, wow. So, where did we go from there? So, the church is a growing entity.

KS: (32:36) So, looking at the St. Louis church, that, well, let me see. Because part of my question, one question that comes to mind is, in that pendulum swing, when did the church here start to pull out and kind of recover from? Because I know in the Phoenix church, saw that too, where it went to where nobody is discipling each other and everyone's just kind of shell-shocked. And so, starting to recover and go, can't throw the baby out with bathwater. There are certain things that we need to keep doing. And I think for me, it seemed like about 10 years out that that recovery started to take place.

KS: Oh, really?

KL: Yes.

KL: (32:43) Um, I think we were trying to do it a little sooner than 2013, but I think through 20... It may have been sooner than that. Um, I don't know. Reach was another milestone that sent the St. Louis church into a tailspin down.

KS: (32:55) Oh, that's interesting. What happened? Because I hear about Reach, because I know Michael went to Reach.

KL: (33:17) It was a great conference, but it... Do I name names? If you don't want to name names, don't. There was a leadership transition, and when we hired this couple, um, Rick and I were in on the group that were interviewing them because Rick was part of the board. We interviewed several people. One couple, I came out of this and said, nope, this isn't the couple. The woman always talked over her husband and wanted to make sure that we all knew his attributes, that this was a couple that was also hurt when the Henry Creed letter came out, and I found out that years later. But the only thing I thought through the whole thing of the interview was, no, there's... This woman is not submissive to her husband, and we have too many strong-willed women in this ministry. This would not be a good thing for us.

And, I mean, there was three couples being interviewed, and then the other couple kind of, I don't even remember who they were, but the third couple, through the entire interview, and Rick and I talked about this on the way home, I said, I feel like this is the couple. I said, I liked his answers. I saw his genuine love for God. He's been raised in the church. But what I saw was when the Israelites would inquire of God, and they would bring all of them together, and then God would select this group, and then out of that group, he would do this, and then he would see. And that's how I felt through the whole thing with this one couple. And we hired them and came on board, and

everything was going great. He was introducing some things that were very interesting, and more like the Seder meals.

Okay, yeah. I thought that was interesting. He showed us, you know, there are things that we should probably be doing as part of what the scriptures teach us, but, you know, being part of what Jesus would have done, or whatever. And I thought that was refreshing. There was some new stuff. We've had some wonderful leadership here. Everybody has been here for a reason. They've left for a reason, and I've seen God in all of it. And this couple was that couple that everybody loved. We were learning things. We were healing. And then he went to get his, finish his degree, and he got, I think he lost his vision. He wanted to be a mega church. And I saw this kind of from the outside, because Rick was very much against what we were doing. Rick never shared much with me about the board meeting, because he knew that if I knew intimate things, and I would, it would not be good for me spiritually.

So I just let him be part of the board, and if he felt like he needed to share something, he would. But most of the time he didn't. But this person decided that he wanted the conference, and bid for it without asking. As far as I know, I don't think he asked much. And we got it. And then all of a sudden, our staff was being paid, and other people were being paid to manage and create the REACH program, or the conference. We're not that big. It was a toll for about two years, and they wanted, he wanted to build a big church. We had already bought the building. He wanted a bigger church, and we had this, he got input from people who build mega churches, and he brought in the most wealthiest people in first, to give them, say, hey, this is our project. Can you give money to it? And then they brought in, like, the middle people, and then the rest of the church afterwards. And Rick and I did disagree with that. It was like, this isn't right. The whole thing was not right.

And then we did the REACH thing, and all of the energy for all the leaders went into the REACH went into the REACH program. And so, we were, from the Henry Creed letter, we were getting out of it, and then REACH hit, and then it was like this. Oh, wow. Like, we had leadership changes again. We put young leaders in a place that should have never been given a leadership of that, of a big church. I mean, we're not a big church, but they were too young to have a church like that, at this point, anyway. I mean, in 86, when the church started here in St. Louis, everybody was the same age. We were all in our mid-20s. Yeah.

But this was more than, I think, this young person really should have had to handle and has left the church. So, I think we're still crawling out of that one, to be honest. I think Cheryl and Ron are the perfect couple for us out here in St. Charles, and now they're obviously got a bigger chunk of it when helping out with Vince and Robin, but they're the refreshing part. I see God in all of it, and I don't think anybody should take a negative thought about leadership changes. There's a reason, and that's what's the comforting part. Yeah. I've never attached myself to any one person or discipler or leadership, because it's not a person. Church is Jesus and his teaching, and God is in control of it all.

Do I like it a lot? No. I'm a very prideful, independent person, but when you can stop and see God in all of it, it helps to stay focused and to stay faithful. I'm not perfect. I'm definitely not perfect, but I see God in it. So, the St. Louis church moved around to a lot of hotels and a lot of places.,

KS: When did the St. Louis building, Strasbury, I can't speak properly. When did that come about?

KL: (41:45) Rick would know the exact time. I think it was right around 2009, 2011, over in that period. Somebody might know. The dates get mixed with me. But, yeah.

KS: (41:56) Do you remember how that building became available or why it was like?

KL: (42:01) We had been looking for a building, and there were several people on the search committee. We had tried a smaller church building down a little farther into the names. Down the street from where we are right now, a little south of there. We met there quite a bit. And then, all of a sudden, the Catholic church started selling their buildings, and this one came available. And it seemed to be a centralized, we were looking for a centralized location between St. Charles and Illinois. And it's right there by the airport, and I guess it was fairly cheap. I didn't get involved in... Rick had to count all the yay votes versus the nay votes, and they were up in our loft at home, but he was counting them.

And I just stayed away. I had to walk by it. But, yeah. It was something I felt like we needed to get grounded, and then my husband, he was not for it because then we're too permanent in something. We can't move around. But I

know that there was a lot of people in the children's ministry and the music ministry that were ready to not have to get up two hours early on a Sunday to get all their stuff together and move it and then set it up and then take it down. But, yeah, the building was... It was nice to have someplace to say, hey, this is where we're meeting this week. But I'm sure somebody has shared with you the one Christmas video that somebody did. Dude, where's my church?

KS: (44:16) Yes. If I could get a hold of that, that would be awesome. I wish...

KL: I wonder if somebody still has it, but it was hilarious. It's like, nope, not there. We went to, oh, like seven or eight different places that we had been, and nope, where are we meeting today? But, yeah, the building was... It was a lot of work. I became part of the... Julie, the hubbies and Rick and I kind of took over the overseeing of the fellowship hall at the time when we got it so that we wanted it to be welcoming, but we were still renting to Rittner School District for their early childhood development program. And so it was a lot of work because we had to make sure it was... Everything was still up to par state regulation for when they came in on Monday. There was a full kitchen that they served meals out of. So we had to make sure whatever we did on Sunday was... We cleaned it up exactly the way their regulations said. So it was a lot of work.

So we'd get to church, and we'd make coffee, and we made sure that we had our round tables with tablecloths and decorations, and we served coffee every Sunday. We had donuts or something like that on the holidays, things like that. And then we'd have to take it all down and put up the little kids' tables for lunch. So that was fun. And then they left. Then we got a donation from someone. They wanted to redo the fellowship hall because it looked like a school cafeteria that was built in the 1950s, which... It worked for us as long as we had it, but somebody wanted to build a cafe and have a place for people to come and have coffee, kind of build something. So somebody donated the money, and then that's what you see there now. It used to be a cafe, but they didn't do enough. I don't think they thought this through well because the cafe didn't make any money, and they realized why Starbucks isn't anywhere close to there. But because it was leased out to a company, we weren't in charge of the cafe any... I mean, the fellowship hall anymore. And that was a little hard to take because nobody... None of the leadership people who made this decision actually told me or the other person that was helping that we would no longer be in charge of it. So it was like, yeah, I've been doing this for quite some time, and now you're going to tell me I can't? I can't even go back in the kitchen and do what I do? Okay. Seems like a good idea at the time. So I still... Once all that happened and things got bad with the leadership and we changed leadership again, there was one point where when I did stuff in the kitchen, I couldn't do it anymore. It was more of a chore. I mean, people weren't following the rules that we had set up. People did whatever they wanted to, and I wasn't happy.

It was more of a job, and I said, I can't do this anymore. So I stepped back for quite some time. And then that's when Piper and her husband, they both retired, and they were doing stuff in the building. I mean, they could do it full-time. I couldn't. My job changed, and I couldn't do what I used to be able to do. I had a job where I could do whatever I wanted, really. As long as I got my work done, he didn't care. I helped him build his business. I worked out of his garage, and if I told him I wanted three days off, I just took three days off. But now, when that changed, I had to get a job where I worked from nine to five, so I don't have the time to do all the extra stuff, and I miss it. So I'm really glad that Cheryl lets me dabble in the kitchen for a little while, but I can't be as dedicated as I'd like. I'm waiting for my retirement to do that. But my thing is to serve.

KS: (49:53) So when did we get the St. Charles region? When did the idea get planted, and the reality take place?

KL: (49:52) The idea has been going on since 2001. Mm. Never bet. Because there was a movement to move out to St. Charles. A lot of the leadership moved to St. Charles about 2000, 2001, and Rick said, well, let's let this be our mission team. So we sold the house that we lived in in Maryland Heights and moved out to St. Charles. But obviously, it took a long time for that to develop. Leadership changes, people moved, then a creative letter came out, and all that stuff. So it's been in the works for over 20 years. Wow. And it just happened in the last, what, five, six years, because it was right before the pandemic hit, because we just hired Vince and Robin, and they started talking about St. Charles. Mm. But it wasn't until the Mouldens came in and that it was actually, they started looking for a building. They found the 8020, and then they found the building, then the Mouldens moved. So it's been in the last, what, three years? Yeah. I know that the Hammers moved here a few months before we did, and that was 2024. So about 2023 now. And from the, was it about six years? Well, when did we start looking for a building? Out

here? Yeah, out here, yeah. It was probably... 22, 23, something like that, because we were all coming out of the pandemic, and it came up again. So they started looking for something, and they had tried renting places, and the only place we could do was the 8020, but we already knew right away that there would be no way to grow there. And then the building came available.

I mean, Bill and Kristen were still looking for buildings, but I don't know. I don't think we found the one we're in until after Ron and Cheryl got here. Yeah. My memory about the dates is bad, so somebody else might know the specific dates.

KS: (53:17) I'm hoping to talk with Cheryl about that. Not this week, but next week. Yeah. Because I figure she might get a front row seat to all of it. Mm-hmm. Yeah, and probably has pictures.

KL: (53:34) Yeah. Cheryl has lots of pictures. But yeah, it was a great find. I mean, we need to grow in it. We can grow a little bit, but it won't be permanent unless we build onto it. Yeah.

KS: (53:50) Since you've been here from the beginning to now, what are some of the ways that you've seen the St. Louis Church grow?

KL: (54:01) Well, in numbers, we've had up to... I mean, we had a Bring Your Neighbor Day back in the 90s of almost 1,000 people. Wow. And that's when we were renting a space in Westport. It was the Westport Playhouse, and we filled it. Wow. But the St. Louis Church has always been one where people have been asked to move to other ministries to strengthen them. Oh, okay.

To start churches other places. So we've gone from sometimes maybe 500 to maybe back down to 250. Okay. So as far as numbers go, we've been up and down mostly. We're not a very big church compared to some of the others. I think we've always been very generous as far as missions, but I think we've grown in the attitude about it. It used to be like, this is what we're doing for missions, and you need to make sure you've got your part of it. Versus, okay, this is our goal. What can we do to make that and pray about it in praying for things, going after things in God's will rather than men's will. We've gone up and down with that throughout the years, not just in our giving, but just about anything set before God. God will make it very plain, whether it's something he's going to do, or I think that's why it took 20 years or more to get something out in St. Charles.

God wasn't ready. We weren't ready. The growth in accepting new leadership, I think, I think, I can't speak for everyone, but I think everybody is, as far as I can see, even when we're with what we call big church now, I miss all of our friends when we split up. It's 40 years of knowing people and not seeing them every week, so it's really kind of fun when we all get together, but I think that the growth is accepting leadership, maybe with a little bit of a curiosity or, okay, we'll see what you're going to do kind of thing. But I think in general, the St. Louis church is always welcoming when we have a leadership change.

KS: (57:30) Looking at the ICOC, or I Call Every Sisterhood of Churches, what makes St. Louis unique?

KL: (57:36) We have rose above a lot of adversity. Yeah. I joke with people when I first meet them, when they start talking about discipling and stuff like that, it's like, come on. The first two years, Rick and I had 10 different discipling partners. Yeah. So I think what makes us unique is that we are basically in the center of the country, and we have a small town family atmosphere with big city attitudes.

KS: (58:22) What does the ICOC mean to you? What do you think of when you think ICOC?

KL: (58:24) That I could walk into any big city in the United States or in a foreign country and know that the people there believe the same thing I do, and that without knowing them, I could basically trust my life with them. I mean, I'm not a very social person, so actually meeting other people in other cities is very challenging for me. But the familiarity, and that's comforting to me. I mean, when Rick and I first became disciples, and everything was, you know, the discipling ministries from the mainline churches of Christ weren't seeing eye to eye, but we went to Oregon one time to visit his brother, and Rick was adamant we would not go to the Lutheran church with his brother, which we now know wasn't one of the biggest mistakes we ever made with them. But the church was a mainline church, and it wasn't like what we were used to.

I mean, in that just that first year, that short first year of being together and feeling like family, I didn't get that atmosphere. I said, Rick, we made a mistake. We should have gone with your brother and just introduced us to his friends. But we were listening to our minister, and he goes, no, you need to not go to that church. But yeah, the

comfort knowing. For instance, I mean, I've never been out of the United States, but there was a couple. He's from London, and they were in England to take care of his mom. I've known her since 86, so we knew a lot about each other, and it was right after 9-11, and we were sending our son with this group called People to People. He was elected to go, and I woke up in the middle of the night and said, Rick, we don't have passports. We can't go get him if something was wrong. I'm like, I was all excited about going, and I mean, God did all these things so that he could go, because Rick and I didn't have the money to really send him, but we got it. And I just realized, wait a minute, Gary and Kathleen are over there. So we called them and said, hey, if something happens, can you be responsible for helping us get him home? And they said, yeah. And I'm like, how many people do you know that would do that? I mean, I know they're from here, but they were in, their whole family was in England, and I'm like, you can't do that with most people.

KS: It reminds me of a story. I was flying into New Mexico to drive to a conference that was in Window Rock, and I ended up having a seizure on the plane, and so, of course, they take you to the emergency room. And I contacted, I think the Muldons were actually leading Albuquerque at the time, and that I was able to find out the singles, and there was a single sister who had off, so she came and joined me in the ER. And when the doctor came by, I was like, who are you? And she's like, oh, I'm her sister. And it was just like, we really are like a family. I just met her five minutes ago, but I know, and I've got to see her son's son, and it was just like, yeah, it's family.

KL: (01:02:24) Yeah, and that's how I feel. I mean, it was conferences. It was so, I mean, I don't like crowds, but it was, it's just good overwhelming to be at a big conference. I mean, I remember hearing some of the songs that we sing for the first time at a conference, and just seeing how many people really were trying to love God. And I know there was, you know, things going on. Not everybody was a disciple, you know, because you're trying to get people involved. But the sense of the parties that maybe Jesus had, or, you know, the Israelites had when they were celebrating something. Yeah. That was what was fun. Now, dragging my kids all over the place, and not having time to relax. You know, those are the stressful parts, but I think the actual conferences, and learning, and meeting different people. Yeah. That's what was great.

KS: (01:03:30) Yeah. Like, what ways has the St. Louis Church been connected to the community around them?

KL: As a whole, I think the biggest one is the Thanksgiving No Hunger Holiday. I think that's been the most consistent outreach that we have. There's probably other groups. The groups that I've been involved with, we do something for a little bit, and we don't stick with it long enough to, you know, like, we were taking time to go to a disabled kid's home, and giving them birthdays. But we weren't any involved in their lives any other time. It's not like we were going there once a month, or, you know, a couple times a month to get to know these kids. We just show up and give them, you know, a little party, and then go home. That doesn't seem fun to me. But we would do that in smaller groups.

KS: (01:04:50) How long have you done the No Hunger Holidays?

KL: (01:04:56) I don't know. Because I'm not involved. I can't leave work and go and do them. Now, I will, buy turkeys every week that I go to the grocery store, until we have like 15 of them, you know. But I don't get to actually do the volunteering. But it is interesting that one of Cheryl's neighbors does it, and knows Hadrian. So they were very excited. Cheryl was telling me that they were very excited to know that we were, or that her and Ron were part of that same group. Yeah. So it's reaching the community, and other people are noticing that we do a lot with that particular. I'd like to see us do more with other things on a grander scale, but if this is the one that God wants us to do, then we just need to do it great.

KS: (01:05:58) Yes. I was trying to get a hold of Hadrian. I'm like, I have questions, because this is like from... I think we've been here for two of them, and it was really encouraging to hear how many turkeys we've given, and how the community is noticing. I know Linda was mentioning in 93, there was, helping with the flood and the sandbagging, and the cleanup afterwards.

KL: And I don't know how much stuff we threw away that we shouldn't have. They said, clean out all these lockers in these places that had mud six, seven feet deep. I think we've gone through possibly all of the topics. Okay. Let me see.

KS: (01:06:55) Any other stories that always come to mind when you think of our church history here in St. Louis?

KL: (01:07:19) We used to do, to raise funds, we used to do barbecues. Doug Myerkord is a meat person, a butcher actually, and he would get the meat, and the guys would start really early, and we would make the coleslaw or whatever, and it would be an all day event. Wow. And that was fun. These massive barbecues that we would have, just some random parking lot that we said, hey, can we set this up? And they said, sure. And I remember one time we were cleaning up, and my son dropped his shoes into the bucket of barbecue sauce. I'm like, yeah, well, that goes with a pair of tennis shoes. We're not going to reuse that. But yeah, it was fun. It was for the whole families.

All the families would do it. There was like 10, 12 families that would do it. Yeah. We enjoyed. They don't do it much now. I guess the generation of parents are, because both of them are working and stuff, to take care of other people's kids is a little stressful for them. But we would have date nights. It was very important to have a date night once a week. And it would be like seven to 10 families that we would get together. And we had all the kids at one house. Wow. And there could be 15, 20 kids that night. Wow. And the one couple would be staying home and everybody else would go out. But it was like every fifth, tenth weekend that you had all the kids. And it was fun. The kids enjoyed it. They played together. And we were all on the same page with parenting. So it was mostly...

It was fun. We all had activities for the kids and we fed them dinner. But it was like family. It was like my kids having 20 cousins around just hanging out. And it didn't matter whose house it was. Ours was one of the bigger houses. But it didn't matter if it was the couple that had a 1,200-foot house or ours that had 18. But it was like all the kids were together and the families were... It was fun. But I remember... And it was great because we all had a date night and the kids just hung out.

KS: (01:10:22) If you're thinking of things that we've lost along the way that you'd bring back, it sounds like that'd be one of those.

KL: (01:10:26) Yeah. For the parents to be able to just know that their kids were being taken care of. And it bonds the parents because sometimes we didn't just have the same... You just didn't go out with your spouse. Sometimes it was five or six of us all going out at the same time. We went out to a venue or just a dinner or just go, we'll get ice cream and just hang out. But we spent a lot of time together. Yeah.

KS: (01:10:59) Is there anything that you're like, I'm glad we're done with that?

KL: (01:11:04) Yeah. Those discipling groups that ripped your heart apart.

KS: So I think my final question for you is what are those verses in your walk with God that have helped carry you through?

KL: (01:11:16) My favorite one is Proverbs 31. I used to struggle because there was... When I first had my kids, most of the women didn't work. And I had to work if we wanted a bigger place. So I hung on to that because it showed that the wife, as long as she was in God, she could take care of her family. She could take care of her. She had her own job. And so that was my go-to when I felt like, okay, why can't I be home with my kids and do this? But there's a place. And Jeremiah 29. God has a plan. God has a plan. God, I'd like to know what the plan is, but I'm going to trust you that you've got the plan.

KS: (01:12:38) Excellent. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

KL: (01:12:43)

You know, being a disciple is not always fun. It's hard work. And it's not for the weak of heart. But I've enjoyed it. I wouldn't have my kids. You know, sometimes I don't like my husband. I love him. And he's very good at the things that he's good at. And so it's a lot different than the life I would have had if I just stayed married to my first husband.