

SOMETIMES GOD IS SNEAKY

Jan Connelly decided to attend the December meeting of the Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition at the suggestion of Don Sherman, an immigration lawyer who's a member of her church, First Unitarian in Avondale. Topic of the day was "welcoming the stranger" and Father Jim, staff, and parishioners talked about our ministry at St. Leo's. The topic fit the project about immigration and refugees that Jan was working on for her church. Little did she know that God would use that meeting for something else as well!

Jan is an ESOL (English Speaker of Other Languages) teacher who has been teaching for the past twelve years. She works primarily with employees of major businesses in Cincinnati. She enjoys that, but also had a hunger to get to know the immigrants and refugees she was studying about. Sarah Fernandez, the experienced teacher who was leading ESOL classes on Thursdays for the Burundian women at St. Leo's was offered a full-time job. Though she was torn about leaving the women she had grown to love and admire, she knew she had to take the job and reluctantly gave her notice.

Enter God's plan and timing. Jan learned about the group's need through her daughter who was visiting her best friend at her mom's house over the holidays. Her best friend "just happens" to be parish nurse Mary Beth Basch's daughter, Kathleen. Jan's daughter mentioned that her mom had seen Mary Beth at a recent meeting. They began talking and Mary Beth learned that Jan is an ESOL teacher. It was just a few days earlier that she found out that Sarah could no longer teach the Thursday women's group. With a nudge from the Holy Spirit, Mary Beth gave Jan a call and explained the need.

After taking it to prayer, Jan decided to commit herself to the Thursday class for the women's group and began teaching January 17th. She was so excited about doing this that she came to the Epiphany international pot luck earlier in January where she met many of the women who would be her students. She is working with them on increasing their English skills and moving ahead on the path to citizenship.

An art teacher by background, Jan says her need to create art has never been as strong as her desire to be a creative teacher. "I have a strong sense of wonder and desire to have new experiences," she said. "My ESL work with people from all over the world, from different cultures and experiences, satisfies that desire; it enriches my life, gives me new perspectives, and fills me with the joy of new discovery. And, I should add, as I grow in my knowledge of people from other lands and cultures, I realize how our similarities far outweigh our differences. We are all one big global family."

For all of us this is one more lesson in trust—God puts us in the right place, opens doors, and always provides what we need, often in ways we could never imagine.

-Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate

