

## 2021 Thanks Be List for Seward United Methodist Church

Rev. Mary Kay Totty, November 17, 2021

The following list is not meant to be exhaustive. Inevitably, I will have left off some things I am grateful for, so please consider this just a start. And, next time you see me, tell me three things about Seward UMC you are thankful for!

38. We have an ice maker! I use the ice maker regularly and am grateful it is available.
37. The Four Seasons Bazaar — I love church Bazaars and this one was top notch — well planned, quality items available, so many folks helping out in so many ways — well done AND delightful!
36. Baptisms and funerals and confirmation and weddings — each of these significant life events are meaningful and it is an honor to be a part of them.
35. The mattress loading miracle — when volunteers took some 70 mattresses from Concordia dorm rooms and loaded them into the semi trailer in 22 minutes flat. The mattresses were then donated to the Pine Ridge Reservation.
34. Last Christmas Eve, stepping outside at the end of service to sing “Silent Night” in the stillness of the evening despite how very cold it was.
33. Annual trip to the Lincoln Zoo, making it possible for families to experience the zoo together including train ride and feeding the giraffes.
32. Bounce houses on the front lawn for Halloween — how fun!
31. The hospitality we provided with free coffee and donuts for the Fourth of July festivities and the volunteers who made that early morning ministry possible.
30. Getting to preach for the Fourth of July Community service where our praise team provided the music — thanks to all the folks who helped haul instruments and sound equipment to the band shell and back.
29. The church carillon which chimes each quarter hour and plays hymns throughout the day.

28. We finished updating our personnel manual.
27. Our new little free library near the north east back door.
26. The storm water management project that helps divert water run off away from our playground.
25. The new bright LED lights that show off our stained glass window so beautifully after dark!
24. The church conference back last winter where we voted to proceed with the design phase of the Building Project.
23. The congregation's support and understanding for Pastor Jo Ellen's Sabbath Leave.
22. Getting to work with Pastor Jen for several months. She brought such fresh energy, embodied faith, and joyful soul to her ministry in our midst.
21. The way this congregation observed Pastor Appreciation Month. The many, many cards and gifts I received were encouraging and uplifting. Thank y'all so much!
20. Sunday school is back!! We are in a season of rebuilding, but we have teachers in place and a few kids here. All kids are welcome!
19. Our popcorn machine! The church has a movie theater style popcorn machine. How cool is that? And on Sunday mornings, the aroma of fresh popcorn wafts through the north side of the building.
18. Easter Sunrise Service at Junto Winery — what a beautiful place to celebrate the Resurrection! What hard work by so many to make it happen.
17. Trunk or Treat! So many volunteers, so much candy, so many people — more than 1200 visited during those three hours!
16. Our new logo!!! We worked with a local designer to create the logo inspired by our beautiful tree of life stained glass window.

15. Vacation Bible School — this ecumenical effort brought together students and volunteers from three churches providing students fun and faith-filled learning.
14. Seward UMC Foundation — such amazing stewards of financial resources entrusted to our congregation. They support many ministry needs through the earnings from endowed funds. The Foundation's stewardship and vision enabled our congregation to quickly pivot in the pandemic. Foundation funds covered the cost of necessary tech equipment upgrades so that we have been able to offer virtual worship services and other opportunities.
13. Bright Beginnings Child Development Center — this self-supporting outreach ministry of the church makes a difference in the lives of some 70 little ones every year by providing safe space and faith-based learning environment for some of the youngest residents of our community.
12. The Administrative Committees of our church who keep everything going smoothly — from bills paid to building repairs, from nominations to giving statements. These committees are hard at work that we might all enjoy the ministries of the congregation.
11. Our Faith Community Nurses. These earthly angels are busy keeping an eye on our blood pressure, providing respite care, visiting members stuck at home, making a difference in the lives of many.
10. All our youth leaders and volunteers — our UMYF leaders, our Godparents, our Sunday school teachers, all the folks who give generously of their time to provide a safe place for our youth to grow in faith.
9. Food Net! SO many folks helping. So many folks being fed. Week in, week out, volunteers show up and help — this outreach ministry makes a significant difference in our community.
8. All the MANY people who make worship possible every week from ushers to the tech team, from musicians to greeters, from childcare workers to liturgists, from communion stewards to acolytes, from bell ringers to choir singers, from flower arrangers to decorators. Worship only happens because so many people make it possible.

7. Wednesday FOCUS volunteers — OK, wow. I was bowled over by the work of the ad hoc group of folks who met and planned out Wednesday evening suppers for the year and recruited the folks to make them happen. It is such a gift to not worry about trying to find something to eat between office hours and evening meetings. Delicious food and dedicated help. Win. Win.
6. Confirmation students! Between the class that was confirmed in the spring and the class that began this fall — these are some amazing and wonderful young people. I look forward to being with them for class each week.
5. The Gather and Grow Capital Campaign Task Force — this team of gifted and dedicated folks have worked with thoughtfulness, care, and enthusiasm to help us raise the funds for the “Gather and Grow” Building Project.
4. The Building Improvement Committee — it has been an honor to work with this dedicated committee in shaping the vision and design for our “Gather and Grow” project — a South Addition to our Church building. In the span of a single year, this committee has taken the need for restrooms close to the sanctuary to a full blown design that is nearly ready to put out for bid.
3. Faithfulness — this congregation is faithful in paying mission shares, faithful in doing ministry responsibly, faithful to help out this community.
2. Terri and Wess and Jo Ellen — what a GREAT staff that I get to work with. Each brings skills, gifts, abilities that enhance and enrich the ministry of the this congregation.
1. The incredible people of this congregation. Everything on the list above is ONLY possible because of the people of this church. Amazing folks who share time and skills and elbow grease. Thanks be for the ways y’all live into your membership vows to support this congregation with your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness!