

LWUMC Safe Parking Program

GRATITUDE REPORT 2020



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Our COVID Year

by Kelly M.

I am sitting in a parking lot near the church when I notice a woman approaching. She is looking at me so I am guessing she might want to talk. This happens sometimes. I roll down the window for her. She is maybe mid-40s, nicely dressed but in a casual manner. She gives me her first name; says she has noticed me parked here before and asks if I am homeless. I tell her yes; I live in my car. She shyly hands me an envelope; says she hopes I'll be ok. I thank her but I want to let her know I am ok, better than ok and share with her that I live at the church on 132nd, just down the road and that they are incredibly good at taking care of our needs. She seemed unaware of the church and the safe parking program. I shared the basics of how safe parking works. This was a conversation that I expected to end shortly but she then asked me how we had been weathering COVID there. She seemed very interested, so I asked her if it would be ok if I exited the car. She had inspired in me a strong urge to really share both the difficulties and steps that were taken by both the church and the parking program to help us through COVID.

I shared that, as I am sure as it had been for her and everyone else, the COVID issue started with massive amounts of confusion, rumors, and disinformation. Some of the rumors directly related to homeless folks AND those in other safe parking programs. Rumors that other safe parking programs were shutting down. That certain services we relied on were no longer being offered. Then, within weeks, everything did shut down. At the church, all the groups that utilized/rented the space for

everything from educational programs, boy scouts, singing groups, people that were part of our daily lives, disappeared. Within the safe parking program, we had long term hosts, who monitored our access to indoor resources and many of us looked upon as friends, disappeared as they should have, as they were all at least 65 years or older. Most were members of the church. At a certain point in time, that normally busy church got quiet. And there we were, maybe 45 of us, pretty much cut off from most of our daily activities. Many things within the program changed, some rapidly. Karina O'Malley, the safe parking coordinator, who, among her many other duties, supervised the hosts, became the primary host for a while. Our hosts under 65 stayed but they were few. They, Karina, and the office manager of the church, Jennifer all earned bleach stripes. That was the first line of defense. Pretty much everyone who entered the building acquired bleach spots, everywhere. Next, of course, were the masks, paper then many different homemade masks from all kinds of groups looking to do anything to help.

Schedules were changed. Jennifer, the office manager, was now the morning host, as well as managing daily requests for blankets, clothing, essentials, as well as food overstock. Karina solicited for host volunteers. Many of those that answered the call had families at home but were willing, with precautions, to host our daily time utilizing the building's resources. In hosting, they were doing double duty. As 2020 progressed, plans were being laid out to allow us that parked there to stay as close to "home" as possible, to limit our exposure.

Hosts now arrive and clean all the common places that COVID might spread. Door handles,

restrooms, kitchen areas. Food resources increased tremendously, meals, snacks, and ingredients for those who preferred to cook. Initially, many meals came in restaurant-type large pans. The hosts dished and served us individually. Later food was provided packaged as separate meals but again, hosts then had to manage extra meals. The hosts continued to maintain a personal touch with us guests, remembering certain things like your interests or life developments or just a smiling pair of eyes. It was a lot of work.

Another issue was cleanliness. The church has no showers or laundry facilities. These were previously available via another church or gyms. Arrangements were made to provide these necessities thru the Salt House's family day care center, a nearby Lutheran church. We could shower and do laundry, all without exposure to the general population. COVID testing, flu shots, certain vaccinations were all provided either at the church or at the nearby day center. As winter approached, the "open doors and windows" policy became an issue. HEPA filters arrived out of nowhere, allowing us to close the windows and stay warm. Those aren't cheap.

News, both local and national, about COVID

changed rapidly. Churn, politics, fabricated misinformation was everywhere. I tuned it out, but Karina sifted through it, found the reliable information, and kept us posted about everything from phases, latest protection recommendations, and the progression of the vaccine.

During all of this, the safe parking program continued to provide the support they normally do. With connections to outside agencies that were now functioning, our numbers dwindled as folks who had been waiting for housing, acquired it. Families were processed quickly into emergency housing or shelters. Necessities are available here like socks, underwear, personal hygiene supplies, diapers, blankets; because some people arrive here with nothing but the clothes they are wearing. Warm coats, hats, gloves are available in winter. When smoke from fires invaded western Washington, the church was available 24 hours a day. Same with freezing temperatures. The doors are open. When sharing this with the woman in the parking lot, she was interested throughout. She found it an uplifting story that should be shared.

**PEOPLE
HELPED
IN 2020**



2020 Reflections

Sophia Way Vehicle Outreach

I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know the wonderful residents of the Lake Washington United Methodist Church's Safe parking program. Since I started 3 months ago as an Outreach Case manager, I have assisted 3 clients sleeping in their cars move into their own apartments. There is another case manager that has helped clients move into their own homes as well. Sometimes the clients would not like help with housing, they would rather spend time working on reinstating their driver's license, getting registration or tabs for cars, and sometimes they just need someone to see and hear them. I work with these clients on almost anything they want to work on.

-- **Katie Glore, Outreach Housing Navigator, Sophia Way Staff**

Garden Team

I have such gratitude for several ladies, all safe parking guests, who "organically" formed a gardening team at LWUMC. This team started several years ago to help me and others plant, water, and harvest food which was delivered to HopeLink's food bank. From 2017-2019, the team brought fresh lettuce and greens to many of the Wednesday night suppers at LWUMC in the form of just-picked salad. In 2019 and then with full steam in 2020, this team switched gears and became a team of folks who planted their own plots to provide themselves and others with fresh produce, herbs and flowers. During the COVID pandemic in 2020, this team self-managed for the most

part and greatly expanded their diets, from Jerusalem artichokes, fresh tomatoes, to beautiful bouquets and herbs, some of which were contributed to group meals for safe parking guests.

The garden also provides some exercise, a respite from sometimes stressful lives, a chance to trade gardening lore, and of course the joy of watching the miracle of life re-bloom each year. As safe parkers move from the program, it is hoped they can take these gifts with them.

As the 2021 gardening season begins anew, the team is once again managing plots for themselves and hopes that Wednesday salads can again be made a reality.

-- **Anne Buck, Garden Team Leader**

Lettuce grown in garden



Wednesday Night Dinner

What a year with the Wednesday Safe Parking Community Dinner! Things are quite different this past year due to COVID – we no longer have the congregation joining in, serving buffet style is no longer the norm, we are limited in the number of volunteers and resources, and safety is the number one concern during these challenging times. That being said, the Wednesday dinners are going quite well! In the past 12 months, Kelvin’s Facebook friends have sponsored EVERY single of Kelvin’s dinners and we’re still going strong in 2021! The power of social media has been incredible. World Centric, a leader in compostable containers, has donated ALL the “to go” containers for all of our dinners. Also, in the past 12 months, we have had 3 volunteers that have been helping with prepping, cooking, and packaging up the food on a regular basis. Kudos to Peggy Shay, Tamara Barksdale, and a 17-year-old student, Sam Thurman! Of course, we also have Molly who has been providing incredible desserts on a weekly basis! The new normal for the Wednesday dinner format is still unknown, but one thing for certain is that we will continue to provide hot nutritious dinners to our guests.

-- Kelvin Chan, Dinner Donor

Dinners

In January, we were hosting community dinners every Wednesday, and 6 other dates just for Safe Parking. In February, it was Wednesdays and 5 other dates. By December, we had transitioned to inviting the community to provide daily meals for us, and we hosted 29 donated dinners, all just for Safe Parking.



Kelvin Chan with some Wednesday dinner volunteers



Molly with Wednesday desserts

Overnights

In 2020, the church building was available for guests to sleep inside for 25 nights when the temperature was below 35 degrees or weather conditions were dangerous. This includes a period from January 12-14 during a snowstorm and again from September 11-17 during a smoke emergency from wildfires when the building remained open around the clock. These events were hosted by Pastor Rich, Karina, Anne, and Jenny.

Showers & Laundry

From April to December, we offered showers and laundry at New Bethlehem Day Center, in partnership with Catholic Community Services. We served 52 people from our program, at times it being the only place to get showers and laundry due to COVID restrictions and capacity challenges at other service sites, as well as commercial sites like Bridle Trails State Park, 24-Hour Fitness and other gyms not allowed to have customers use the showers. This equals 712 showers and 298 loads of laundry. Jane, Joy, Jan and Karina hosted this opportunity with the support of CCS staff.

Operating During COVID

We started sharing guidance from King County Public Health in our weekly guest emails about how to stay healthy and safe on Feb 27, 2020. On March 1, we shared that there had been a positive COVID case in Kirkland and explained the universal precautions we would be taking. By March 4, we had protocols in place for social distancing and cleaning of surfaces with bleach multiple times a day. On March 21,

due to many of our volunteers falling into high-risk groups, we ended our weekday morning shifts and adjusted our hours. My very first cloth face mask was sewn by a Safe Parking guest, and they made many others to share in the program. The church hired someone part-time to increase daily cleaning. Other services started shutting down, such as the Kent UMC Safe Parking and the Sophia Way Day Center. Others started limiting access, stopping intake, or reducing service hours. All through the pandemic, we continued to accept new clients, and did not restrict hours guests could be on the property. Although Helen's Place, Sophia Way's new emergency shelter for women, just a mile from LWUMC, opened in August 2020, it is still not able to accept drop-in day center clients.

We are grateful to the King County COVID Homelessness Response HEART Team who consulted with us on best practices to keep our residents safe and healthy through the pandemic. They made a site inspection on Oct 22 and gave us a full report on how to make things safer. A team of guests, volunteers, and staff met several times in a taskforce to review these recommendations and implement them. This guest participation was crucial for the effectiveness of our strategies. HEART also donated masks, gloves, cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, and HEPA air purifiers to the program.

King County Public Health also provided free, onsite COVID testing for all guests and volunteers. We had group testing offered 6 times, and on those dates, we had a total of 117 negative results and **0 positive results.**
-- Karina

Move-in Ministry

In 2020, the Move-in Ministry helped 41 different households who were experiencing homelessness or loss of income, completely furnish their new apartments or homes. We are blessed to work alongside of Holy Family Catholic Church, Sophia Way, New Bethlehem Shelter, and St. Vincent DePaul to provide needed items such as furniture, beds, kitchen items, bath and bedding, lamps, vacuums, etc. It has been a godsend for many folks who could not afford to go out and buy the things we have provided. We want to personally thank everyone from the LWUMC Community who has donated items and gift cards or helped by providing their vehicle and brute strength to help us move folks into their new homes. This ministry brings so much joy and

gratitude from all who are involved. Special shout out to Holy Family for providing the space needed to store these items!

-- Joy

A Cycle of Giving

Did you know that when we have an overage of donated items, we re-donate them to partner charities? This year we've been blessed by the volume of donations we've received. We've shared those blessings with individuals and families in need at Camp Unity Eastside, Eastside Community Aide Thrift Shop, Overlake Christian Church, MAPS Mosque, New Bethlehem Project, Seaview United Methodist Church, and Sophia Way.

-- Jennifer

Mary & Craig Gilbert with donated blankets



Seattle Sisters donors

TESTIMONIES FROM CAR REPAIRS

“I had to replace the battery as AAA said it was only working at 30%. This was an unplanned for expense and has eaten into my limited monthly budget.” This woman was reimbursed, was able to keep up with her bills and plans and has left the safe parking program for a better place.

“A woman called me from South King County, said she was out of gas, the car wouldn’t start, and the parking lot she was in told her that they would impound the car. I sent a tow truck with gas and a jump, and she joined us in the program that day. She would have lost all her belongings and had no place to sleep. She is housed now.”

“The need for the clutch is immediate. The repair would mean the chance of relocation and safety. My car and service dog are all I have left after an abusive marriage. With my health issues, I cannot stay in shared housing and my car is literally my lifeline.” This fund made this repair possible, and she left for her anticipated trip, in a safe, functioning car, across country to a home on the East Coast.

Car Repair Fund

The Biella Foundation, a Bothell-based philanthropic family foundation, approached Safe Parking back in 2018 with an offer of funds for car repairs for our Safe Parking guests.

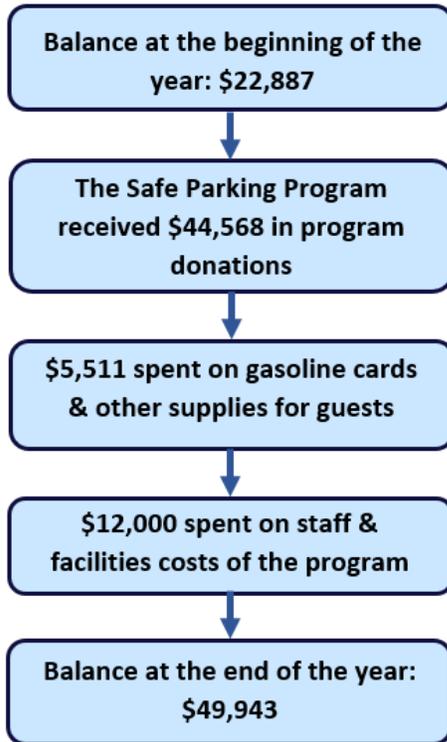
In the period of Jan-December 2020, the Biella Car Repair Fund served 41 different guests from Lake Washington United Methodist Church, for a total of \$14,600, ranging from \$53 for windshield wipers or \$60 for a tire rim, to several grants of \$500 as partial payment for repairs that cost more than that.

With the special dangers of congregate shelter and COVID, many women saw their car as the one thing that was keeping them alive. The most common expenses in the beginning of the year were tires, tows, and lockouts. I attribute the lockouts to the enormous mental load that our guests are carrying - they are

under stress, trying to work through multiple challenges at once with limited resources, and this makes folks more likely to make the simple error of locking keys in the car. While for me, locking myself out means a call to my husband, who can get the spare key and meet me anywhere, a lockout can be devastating to our safe parking guests. Sometimes, their pet is inside, on a hot day. Always, all their belongings, as well as their place to sleep, are inaccessible. They often don’t have a spare key, or if they do, it is inaccessible - in a storage unit far away, with a relative who doesn’t know their situation, with another safe parking guest who may not have the gas to get to their location. The most common requests in the last half of the year were for new tires and new batteries. The fund also provided a new window, towing, a water pump, a clutch, and a tune-up.

Finances in 2020

Safe Parking Funds:



Car Repair Funds:

This program is primarily funded by The Biella Foundation, with a recurring grant of \$6,000 every 6 months.



Hear From...

Volunteers & Guests

Beth K

As an evening Safe Parking host, I have the continuing privilege of experiencing the kindness of our neighbors. I get to receive the dinners they bring for our guests: home-cooked meals, sponsored catered meals, takeout meals to support local restaurants. Having prepared meals during the pandemic means that our Safe Parking guests don't need to crowd into our small church kitchen to cook dinner. They can maintain their social distancing and stay safe. Our generous neighbors come from a wide area: Kirkland, Redmond, Issaquah, Seattle and even Kent. They may belong to a faith community—Christian, Muslim, Baha'i, Hindu—a group of friends, or foundations and service organizations like Kirkland Parks and Community Fund or Spreeha Foundation. Kelvin and his friends prepare gourmet meals most Wednesday nights. Molly creates a dazzling accompanying dessert. The love that comes with the food nurtures everyone.

A Former Guest

I wanted to give you an update on my situation. I'm in (... [city on East Coast]). I have found a job working for a company named as a parts/Inventory person. I was looking for an apartment now but finding it difficult. Just like there, they require 3 times the amount of rent as income. Most apartments I've seen in my price range want 3x that for income. It's ridiculous. But I have hope. I've made it this far; I'm not giving up. (updated: I'm the owner of a mobile home. I now have a place to call home. Thank you all for your support. I won't forget it.)

Kelly H., a guest

Overnight I became a laid off WA state worker. Due to an overloaded system and fraudulent claims, it took 5 months to get my 1st unemployment check, during that time I truly was penniless. Rather than run up rent I couldn't pay, I decided to live in my vehicle. With no place to park, no place to go to the bathroom & no electricity to charge my cell I thought this isn't going to be easy. I was lost. I knew I needed help, but my pride kept me from seeking it, until I landed at LWMC. It was the best choice I ever made. Being homeless has its challenges, but doing it with our white house in chaos, in the middle of winter, and in a deadly pandemic is challenging, but LWMC has given me shelter and in my GPS, I call it home. To all of you who give so generously and anonymously. If you ever wonder if you are making a difference, you are.

Karina, Jen, the pastor, and the hosts: The compassion you each show to the people you serve is an inspiration. I've seen the love in how you treat everyone with respect and kindness, no matter what the situation is. To those who drop off donations: Warm clothes, blankets, hand warmers, personal hygiene items and the meals, those meals... are so good! The time and effort to make all this happen hasn't gone unnoticed. I don't speak for them, but I know every person living in this parking lot counts their blessings, I hear it. I am gratefully appreciative. You're showing us that people DO care and that gives hope. Because of you many are fed, safe and warm. Feeling an overwhelming sense of appreciation for all you do, I say THANK YOU and God bless.

Ellie P., a guest

I just wanted to send a big, heartfelt thank you to everyone who participates in running the safe parking program, from the members and staff of the church to those actively involved in the program - pastor, Karina, Jennifer, the amazing hosts, and everyone who donates food and meals and needed daily items. The graciousness, lack of judgement, and general positivity can possibly distract the parkers (of whom I am one) from the magnitude of the effort required to make us all feel safe, welcomed, and even loved. You all make it look so effortless, and never, ever pass on how difficult it must actually be. Speaking for myself, you all have enabled me to pick up the pieces of my life and rebuild on a solid foundation.

Char, a volunteer

While helping record donations during 2020, it became evident how awareness and support of our Safe Parking program has grown! Compared to the summer months, the number of donations received doubled in November, and then quadrupled in December. Many donors became committed "repeat" donors, some supporting us weekly, monthly and annually. These included a broad base of Individuals in our local neighborhood and an amazing number of faith-based groups (e.g. groups of friends, local church churches and non-profit organizations), as well as local, national, and a few international organizations. It tells me there is increasing awareness that homelessness is right here, in our local neighborhoods, and that there is more support and acceptance, with less judgment. We know hearts have been touched when the donation is in memory of a loved one, or when a family works together to

provide a meal in honor of a child's birthday, or when it's given in lieu of an annual family gift exchange. This wouldn't have happened if people didn't believe in the mission of the Safe Parking program and how it is

People Who Helped in 2020

2020 Organizational Donors

A Plateful, Anointing Fire Catholic Ministries, Awareness for Homelessness, Babies of Homelessness, Baha'i of Kirkland, Biella Foundation, Bridle Trails State Park, Cakes en Vogue, Eastside Community Aide Thrift Shop, Eastside Community Helpers, glassybaby White Light Fund, Gotta Dance, Grand Central Bakery, HEART, Holy Family Catholic Church, Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, Honorbound Motorcycle Ministries, Kerala Association of Washington, Kirkland Coop Preschool, Kirkland Parks & Community Foundation, Kits for Peace, Mary Queen of Peace Catholic Church, Muslim Association of Puget Sound (MAPS), Muslim Community Resource Center (MCRC), New Bethlehem Project, North Bellevue Community Center Advisory Board, Ocular Instruments, Off the Vine Catering, Overlake Christian Church, Pacifica Institute, Seattle Veterinary Outreach, Seventh Day Adventist Church, Sophia Way, Southern Taiwan Food Truck, Spreeha Kitchen, The Kineo School, U Crew, World Centric

2020 Individual Donors

Jeanne Acutanza, Dave & Hae-Sun Asher, Wendy Awsumb, Sylvia Bailey, Claudia Ballheim, Laura Banks, Michelle Barnes, Candice & Don Bartleson, William Baxter, Tracy Berry, Rod Biagtan, Arden & Becky Blackledge, Nikki Blackmer, Jeannie & Tom Blank, Tanesha Brester, Betsy & Michael

managed. During an unusual and very challenging year, it is gratifying to see how more individuals and organizations are reaching out to help our program support women and children living in their vehicles.

Brockman, Harold Broman Memorial Fund, Sharry Broman, Anne Buck, Danita Cain, Melinda Chambers Grey, Kelvin Chan, Marcia Chapman, Paula Christiansen, Greta Climer, Dianne Commo, Cynthia Cronkhite, Penni Defrin, Hao Duong & Taryn Chlebowski, K. Scott Dwyer, Adele Engelbrecht, Simin Faghieh, Belinda Feller, Doreen Fisher, Chuck Fleming, Anne Fogarty, Craig Fujisaki & Beth Kopyar, Lucille Funk, Marian Gaynor, Mary Gilbert, Paula Goelzer, Bernadette Gollhofer, Jan Goyt, Chris Haddock, Terry Hall, Tarsi Hall, Noel Harper, Sue Harvey, Marrassa Hellesen, Leslie & Matt Holle, Joe & Wilma Horrall, Suzanne Houghton, Tary Hoyt, Melissa Hughes Wilson, Constance Hutchison, Hide & Laurie Iba, Jebarson Jebamony & Betsy Kumar, Emily Johnson, Deborah Kalas, Ursel Kammereck-Jones & Phil Jones, Nancy Kehrili, Parivash Khajavi, Trishawn Kipp, Brett Kitty, Stephanie Klein, Cindy Klettke, Mary Kooistra, Robin Krause, Brenda Kuhns, Anubhav Kushwaha, Soosan Ladha, Cathy & Rich Lang, Loralee Leavitt, Carol Lewis, Victoria Lewis, Andrea Ligget, Luellen Lockwood, Rachel Louinger, Jill Mclenahan, Jenny Miller, Kamrun Mizra, Carolyn & Sung Moon, Vanda Murphy, Gloria Nakroshis, Dawn & Tiim Nelson, NW Cellers, Larry O'Daniel, Karen Okeson, Yvonne Olsen, Kathy Paauw, Sandee Palmquist, Nadia Rahmen, Rosemary Reid, Lisa Retless, Curtis Reusser, Lindsey Richards, Peg Rogers, Jodie Ruby, Colleen & Rodney Rutherford, Aileen Salle, Meredith Schwietzer, Peggy Shay, Sharon Sherrard, Marni Simon-Blake,

Stephanie St. James, Jack Staudt, Lori Steiner, Alice Stenstrom, Erik & Jules Still, The Andersons, Joy Thielsen, Thoreau Elementary, Georgia Tillotson, Laura Twyman, Sonya, Soheila, Ashe, Ryan, Soheila, Roy, Sarita Valji, Nicole, Lisa Yang, Andrea Yao, Dale Zobrist



Dave & Helen, owners of Gotta Dance, whose students supply Christmas stockings & gift cards.



Colleen, a meal donor from the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

2020 Meal Donors

Jeanne Acutanza, Niloofar, Ahmadian, Sayeed Alams, Sharna Alt, Kelvin Chan, Pashmeena Chawro, Krystal Clarke, Fariba Daneshgaran, Simin Faghieh, Faith Farajifar, Karim Farha, Nahid Ferdous, Shahina Ferdous, Anne Fogarty, Elisa Ford, Molly Forry, Heike Grodecki, Bernadette Gollhofer, Susan Herold,

Keith Herold, Munira Jiwani, Laila Kabani, Zahirra Kara, Zahra Karmali, Parivash Khajavi, Rachelle Kiesel, Beth Kopyar, Soosan Ladha, Lynne Lew, Laksmi Madasu, Anna Mahmud, Jenny Miller, Kamrun Mizra, Moutushi Zakir Family, Vanda Murphy, Kelly Mutch, Sielen Namdar, Jennifer Nawasangarin, Marlena Newcomb, Larry O'Daniel, Golam Osmani, Ellen Padgett, Judith Politanont, Larry Pomada, Ananya Rabeya, Saffiyya Rayani, Ali Sharifin, Brittan Stockert, Ramkumar Subramanian, Sareh Swaikat, Kunal Tanwar, Gretchen, Soha, Setsuko, Soheila, Paula White, Lisa Whitney, Nicole Wiersma, Kevin Wittkof, Andrea Yao, Moutushi Zakir, Nazia Zaman

We'd also like to thank our many anonymous donors!

Hosts of 2020 (*currently serving)

Christian Larson, Rodney Rutherford, Laura Twyman, Marilyn Hair, Char Downes, Tom Blank, Jeannie Blank, Jan Warden, Arden Blackledge, *Rosemary Reid, Sandie Talkov, Krystal Clarke, *Karina O'Malley, *Jeanne Acutanza, *Jane Hylton, *Catherine Smith, *Jennifer Hover, *Jenny Miller, *Beth Kopyar, *Jodie Ruby, *Dale Garnett

Leadership Team: Joy Thielsen, Laura Twyman, Anne Buck, Jennifer Hover, Karina O'Malley, Beth Kopyar, Char Downes, Jane Hylton