



Bell Choir and Chancel Choir Special Recognition Awards

Beginning in 1986, our beloved former choir director Barb Seppeler chose to honor one or two choir members each year for outstanding service and had their names added to a plaque that hangs just outside the sanctuary near the library. Bell Choir members began to be included a few years later, and since then, our bell choir and choir directors have continued this tradition. As the original plaque is now filled up with the names of these honorees, we have purchased a new plaque to display next to the original one. Our 2023 Bell Choir and Chancel Choir Special Recognition honorees are the first names at the top of this new plaque!

This year's Special Recognition Awards go to:

Chancel Choir: I am pleased to announce that this year's award goes to **Stephanie Mercer**. Stephanie is our church's Music Director, organist, and choir accompanist. She showed great leadership for many months when the pandemic interrupted our music programs, providing weekly live online performances and arranging for special music. Her efforts kept the joyful sounds ringing from our sanctuary. Stephanie arranged for the overhaul of our grand piano and oversees the maintenance of our organ. Her special emphasis on honoring members of the U.S military led her to partner with Nancy Schrader to establish an annual Veterans Appreciation concert. She never stops dreaming up new ways to share the gift of music with our congregation and community.

I have chosen to honor Stephanie for all these reasons and for her role as our choir accompanist. This is my first year serving as your Chancel Choir director, and I realized early on what a treasure the choir has in Stephanie. A good accompanist plays the right notes, follows the director, and supports the choir. A *great* accompanist also shares her musicality and expression within every choir piece, so that together, we can sing to the glory of God and the inspiration of the congregation. Thank you, Stephanie, for your dedication, preparation, musicality, and love for this church! ---*Kathy Cornwell, Chancel Choir Director*

Bell Choir:

I am really excited to recognize the Bell Choir recipient this year. The person has been a member for a number of years now, both as a sub and a full member. I know I can count on them no matter what, and can definitely say that I wouldn't be here with them, both literally and figuratively.

Our 2023 recipient is my mom, Christine Taylor

My mom began playing handbells during her undergraduate years at the College of Saint Rose. She then joined the St. Michael's bell choir some years later and became a sub ringer here at Newark First when Carole and Eileen would travel to Florida. After several years as a sub she became a full member, and I soon followed. She started off in the front row when Lucina developed issues with her shoulder but has since taken her permanent spot in the second row after Carole's passing.

My mom has always been very supportive of me both as a director and a musician. We're definitely lucky to have her here.

