

Jesus' Curriculum

One of the most frustrating things about this life we share is that we don't get an instruction manual, and if we do, it never quite fits the situation the way we would like it to. It reminds me of the days when my job was to develop and oversee the implementation of curricula for teaching people with disabilities daily living skills. To assist teachers and caregivers in these tasks, educational companies developed what we used to call "canned curricula," that is, programs developed that break down skills into small, teachable parts with methodologies on how to link them together. It's great, except for one thing: they don't work. If they did, I guess teachers would have an easy job. Just follow the curriculum and you are all set. But every person is different, and they bring different things to the table and so we quickly found out that if we were going to have any success with our students at all, we were going to have to get to know each one individually and "customize" the "canned" programs to meet the needs of the actual people in each setting. But it doesn't end there. Because then we had to figure out how to do that with a group of students all learning different things in different ways. They all needed to learn the same kinds of things, but they needed to learn in a way adapted to their unique needs.

Well, our religion is kind of like that "canned curriculum," in the sense that through its sacred texts, liturgies, catechism, and structures, it lays down the values, the stories, the concepts that are structures and foundations of our Christian faith. They point us toward what is the ultimate revelation and the ultimate value of our faith: the God who created all life, is not simply a principle or a force, but love itself, a love so compelling that God could not leave us to our own devices, but rather became one of us, shared our humanity, our pain and our joy and even death itself, a death reserved for those seen as cursed even by God, so that we could see that no one is outside love's desire or its redemptive and saving power. That's why it's called the Good News, because we know that love is what will repair our broken world and her broken people and that love is the way, the truth, and the life.

What our faith does NOT give us, is a one-size-fits-all instruction manual for how to live that love in every conceivable context. We are called, instead, to use the tools God gave us to work that out in "fear and trembling," as the bible says, as individuals

and as a communion of faith. Our sacred texts tell us how our ancestors came to know about the power of God's love, in specific situations and contexts, through the prophets, through God's incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, not to present us with a specific script or rule for every occasion, but to present us with a series of examples, signposts and challenges, so that we can, as the scripture tells us, learn how to love each other in our time and place, as well as through the scriptures, the liturgies, the sacraments, and the work of the Holy Spirit through us. Because love requires that the rules serve not just the principles of faith, but the needs of real people in real life situations as they struggle to live their lives. Jesus told us "the sabbath was made for humanity, not humanity for the sabbath." When we have to choose between rules or principles and people, the needs of people come first because all the law, all the prophets, everything that matters, is about love: love of God, love of neighbor and love of this self that God breathed life into from the dust of the earth. That's the bottom line that allows us to be open to all the incredible diversity of God's creation and to be able to be the healers of the earth and builders of God's kingdom.

There has never been a time where that distinction is more important than during this "in-and-out, up-and-down" pandemic. It has come at a time when we are a divided nation grappling with fundamental issues about liberty, responsibility, and community, when we have a difficult time even agreeing on basic facts, on the efficacy of vaccines, masks, and other health precautions, on what our obligations are in terms of things like shared risk, personal inconvenience, and all the implications of that. Turn on the news and there is some story about this struggle practically every single day. But the problem is that COVID is a virus, a natural phenomenon, and it doesn't care about our issues. It defies our efforts to suppress or even control it. So, as we struggle with how we will continue to worship as a community during this difficult time, we must decide what is most important and what we are willing to sacrifice, consistent with the teachings of our Savior and our faith. Jesus chose to offer himself rather than leave his stubborn and sometimes just plain stupid children to their own devices. He asked us to save the world by the power of love lived as self-sacrifice, in communion with God and

God's creation. Joshua, the prophet who led God's people into the promised land, asked them before he led them the final steps of the way, what they would choose and whom they would serve; blessings or curses, life or death. In other words, did they trust in God, the God that had led them to this place, enough to live by his precepts when they had to make choices, when they weren't wandering the wilderness, or when other would-be gods, were tempting them to other ways?

That's the question we are faced with today. We are struggling with conflicting information about COVID precautions, sometimes because this natural phenomenon is a tricky little demon that morphs and spins off deadly variants and sometimes because our sources don't agree. So, we do the best we can: we take vaccines, we wear masks, we social distance, and we're tired of it. Like the Israelites in the desert stuck with manna every day, we want a break. We want to take our masks off, sing praises to God and see each other's faces. Let's face it, it's getting old and some of us think it's all nonsense anyway. But people around us are hurting, some are even dying. That lady over there whose caution seems a bit much. She's got an elderly relative at home who's immune-compromised and she's afraid of unwittingly bringing it home because her vaccination protects her from serious disease, but not from carrying it. Or how about the guy whose anxiety over this has caused him to miss church for months, and he needs to be here more than anyone we know? Then of course there are the little children, not eligible and their worried parents, not to mention the family that lost someone to COVID, or the gal who won't get vaccinated, period. We might think she is misguided (or not), but

we care about her health even if it seems to us that she is taking a risk we might not take because she is one of us. In fact, we're all one of us.

Why? Because we are the people of Jesus Christ, and we believe that loving people is more important than setting them straight. Because we believe judgment is the Lord's, and our job is to take care of each other. Because we know you and we believe that whatever your politics or your ideas about vaccines or masks, we want you to continue to bless our community of faith with your presence and your challenges. Because we are called to be better than the senseless conflicts we see all around us. Because we want to err on the side of grace, put the other person first, and because we are people of Christ, before we are anything else. Finally, we do it because wearing a mask is an inconvenience and we will not risk people's health, (physical or mental), to forgo a small personal inconvenience. Jesus died on the cross for us, Peter was crucified upside down and shot full of arrows. We can handle 60 minutes in a mask for the sake of our fellows.

No one wants to wear masks, and no one is happy about this roller coaster ride of variants and vaccines, but that is the world we share. But as disciples, we have really only one choice: to put the well-being of our most vulnerable members of our community first. That's how we choose blessings and that is how we choose life.

See you in Church!

Pastor Mark



Bethany Bell Tower ...is a monthly publication of

BETHANY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

100 Main Street, East Rockaway, New York 11518 (516) 599-5768
Maryanne Walling, Secretary, bethanyoffice@optimum.net, www.bethanycong.org

Reverend Mark Lukens, Pastor, revlu@aol.com
Mildred and Art Roemer, Editors Emeritus and Guiding Lights
Charles D'Agostino, Editor, Jennifer Valis, Assistant Editor
Reach us directly at: cjdagostino@gmail.com or 516-721-8885

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Persons with differing opinions are invited to express their views in letters to the editor.***

Are you less than perfect? Welcome! We are a community of imperfect people (including but not restricted to): squirming children and their harried parents, happy and sad people, people with challenges, seniors, young people, middle aged folks, people of every race, poor people, rich people, in between people, LGBT and straight people, true believers, seekers, agnostics, odd and ordinary people, extraordinary people, un-churched and unsure people, people with disabilities, hypocrites, saints, sinners and everybody else. Because no matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here just as you are!



Greetings from your Bethany Moderator

In peace, Janet Moser, Bethany Moderator

Happy Autumn!

It seems like just last week I was sharing a “Yippee” for Summer. You blink once or twice and it’s gone. I’m not too bummed because autumn has so much to offer as well. That frenetic summer energy and activity slows down. The trees put on a different kind of show. The new school year starts with its pointy new crayons and such (although I really enjoyed being home). It is a fresh start in so many ways.

Fall is also a settling in kind of time. I’m picturing a comfy chair, a good book, and a hot cup of tea. Better yet, how about hot mulled cider? Now we’re talking.

But that is not the whole picture. Maybe you’re reading this saying, “Wait just a New York minute! I’m busier than ever”. I get it. I’m rather busy too but my internal seasonal clock is gearing down just the same.

Speaking of busy, guess who else is still out there in a big way. Bethany Congregational Church! Just look at the annual reports from all these committees! Look at what these groups have managed to do in the midst of a pandemic. Even better, look at the wonderful plans laid out for the future. This is awesome, especially when you realize that many small churches did not survive this Covid trial by fire. This has been very difficult and stressful for every group and every individual, but we did not go belly up. Instead of bemoaning what could **not** be done, Bethany figured out **how** it could be done. We have masked, we have Zoomed, we have live streamed, we have spaced, and we have worshipped. Like the phoenix rising from its ashes, we have emerged with new life and creativity.

If you are able to view this article online through the Bethany website, you can access all these reports, [2021 Annual Bethany Reports](#), which will be submitted at the September 26th Corporate Meeting following church service. I hope to see you all there, in person, or via Zoom.



Topic: Bethany Corporate Meeting

Time: Sep 26, 2021 11:45 AM

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82520306291?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82520306291?pwd=U2t0dnRsMmJsOFBjZ0pZUTNSSitYUT09)
[pwd=U2t0dnRsMmJsOFBjZ0pZUTNSSitYUT09](#)

Meeting ID: 825 2030 6291

Passcode: 238352

One tap mobile +19292056099,,82520306291#,,,,*238352# US (New York)

The Thrift Shop is OPEN!! Fridays and Saturdays 10:00 AM-2:00 PM

Communication Breakdown

It has come to my attention that some folks are no longer receiving the Bethany emails. I'm not sure what is happening with that, even after spending some frustrating time with an Optimum support person. Please check your junk or spam folders.

Since I can't exactly send out an email to ask if you're receiving them (raise your hand if you are not here), I'm asking you now to please let us know if you should be receiving the Bethany emails and are not. You can email me:

janet630@optonline.net, or call the church office at 516-599-5768.

Thank you,

Janet Moser, Bethany Moderator



OFFERING COLLECTED ON OCTOBER 3, 2021

Neighbors in Need (NIN) is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants.

Neighbors in Need grants are awarded to UCC churches and organizations doing justice work in their communities. These grants fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities.

- Where and how are the funds dispersed? Not only are NIN funds shared with CAIM, they are utilized by staff to develop curated and created social justice resources, i.e. webinars, bible studies, curriculums, advocacy tools, etc. within the program areas of environmental justice, racial justice, LGBTQ justice, economic justice, women's justice, immigration justice, and more. Additionally, a portion of the monies collected are used to fund NIN grants.
- How much money is raised during the NIN SMO on annual basis? On average, this vital offering annually collects around a million dollars* with one third going to CAIM (the Council for American Indian Ministry).
- What percentage of NIN donations are used directly to fund our commitment to service and mission? At present, we are pleased to state that nearly 100% of the monies raised from NIN SMO is used to fund our mission projects and programs which include our largest commitments to NIN grants and CAIM.

FROM THE TRUSTEES:

In preparation for our new Day Care provider...Little Village Daycare (516-846-9294)...we replaced the floor in the large room downstairs. We would like to thank Rich Eaves, Billy Lewald, Charlie D'Agostino, William and James Lewald and John-Paul D'Agostino for their wonderful help in removing the old laminate floor that buckled and needed to be replaced. Thanks also to our competent contractor, Mike Magliaro (516-557-5051) of L & M Improvements, a new floor of tiles and carpet tiles has been installed. Mike was also able to fix our fire alarm system in time for the new school year.

Yours in Christ, Rich Eaves, Chair of the Trustees

www.bethanycong.com

BOOK REVIEW:

By Lou Gaspari

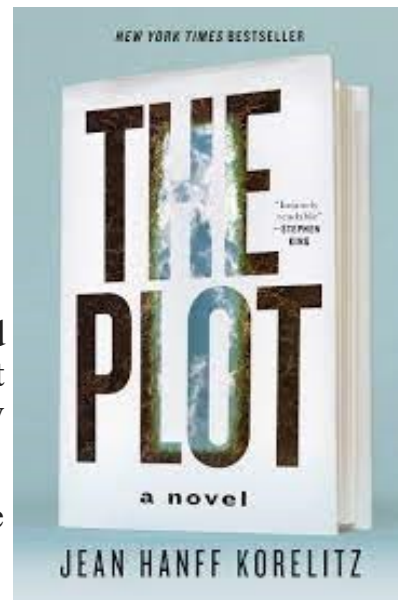
The Plot

By Jean Haniff Korelitz

If you enjoyed "The Undoing" on TV and the movie "The Talented Mr. Ripley" you will truly enjoy this book. It is the first novel that I've ever read which is about writers and writing and is a candid view of the publishing business.

This novel is about a story which is too good not to steal and the author who steals it and the consequence of the plagiarism.

The book is well written and breathtakingly suspenseful. It is a page turner of the highest order. You will find the conclusion startlingly gripping.



FOOD PANTRY NEEDS:

You can drop food off at the church from 9 a.m. to Noon on Tuesdays and Fridays during July and August. If you would like to make a monetary donation, make checks payable to "The Long Island Council of Churches" with "food pantry" in the memo.



Any questions, please call the office and leave a message at 516-599-5768.

Now that school has started in person, we will also be collecting school supplies.

A big "Thank you" to all who have been faithfully donating food each week.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

This summer, my husband Juan Rodriguez BSN, RN, CEN, TCRN was sworn into (virtually, of course) the Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT), a federal team usually reserved to provide medical assistance during natural disasters. Before even getting his basic training, he received a call Thursday night that he was going to be deployed Saturday. Nope wait, make that Friday. Roughly 16 hours later, he was on his way to Louisiana where Covid is still spreading like wildfire. Less than 40% of eligible Louisiana residents are vaccinated (New York is just under 60%). Their PICUs (yea, kids are getting hospitalized too) are full and their ICU nurse to patient ratio is 10:1. The decision not to get vaccinated puts others at risk, strains hospitals, and uses taxpayers money.

Get vaccinated for your own health. Get vaccinated for your parents and grandparents. Get the vaccine for our daughter, and all the children who are not eligible to receive the vaccine yet. Do it for the nurses, doctors, NPs, PAS, NAs, PCTs and everyone who works in healthcare who are SOC DAMN TIRED. We stayed at work for you, when you got to stay home. Now Juan is working across the country to treat a surge of covid cases and hospitalizations that could have been prevented.
...Katie Sobey Rodriguez

BOOK CLUB

Join the Bethany Book Club!

Re-starting after our summer recess on Tuesday, September 21st at 7 pm, we meet on Zoom to discuss some of the most interesting faith-oriented novels, biographies and non-fiction available to us today. It's fun, and we'd love to have you as a member or to just drop in when you can!

Our current selection is "**Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving and Finding the Church**" by the late Rachel Held Evans. This *New York Times* best-seller is a story of her own "thorny relationship with the church," is a lively, well written and brutally honest articulation of the concerns not just of a woman or of a couple, but of a generation with the churches of this country and a reminder of what "church" is really all about. Contact the church office at 516 599-5768 or BethanyOffice@optonline.net for access codes.



Banner Making To Meet Your Needs



In order to address the unique needs and concerns of our subscribers, we are going to change things up just a bit for our fall banner making workshop. We will offer the in person workshop on two separate dates, and will limit the number of groups for each date to four. We will also provide kits "to go" for those wishing to make the banner at their own church or home.

Make and Take Banner Workshop Dates

**October 2, 2021 or October 16, 2021 from 8:45am to 1pm
Led by Heidi Hofmann**

Cost: \$75 for banner kit plus \$10/person for subscribers or \$20/person for non-subscribers.

Preregistration is required by September 15 so supplies can be purchased and prepared. Please call us at 516-285-0919 before sending payment to ensure that space is still available for the session you would like to attend.

(Courtesy The Parish Resource Center)

TROOP 121

ONTEORA 2021

Boy Scout Camp, August 1-7

The Onteora Scout Reservation or the OSR, is a place where BSA Scouts can enjoy their summer. They can earn merit badges, try new foods and enjoy water sports. OSR has themes every year; this year's theme was Medieval and half of the camp were wizards and the other half were knights. Each side would compete in a series of challenges. This year the blue team (or wizards) beat the red team (or knights.)



The scouts did things such as scavenger hunts to gain points. At the end of the one week every Troop put on their own skit. This year's skits included a new take on The Invisible Bench and The Kastle. There was also a competition to find the Holy Grail; sadly it was found within 30 minutes.

On the first day they told us that we were one of the loudest groups, in a good way. It's jaw dropping to think about what we did in a single day. Some of the merit badges included, Archery, Robotics and Welding. Some scouts were able to get 1-on-1 sessions because of how few people there were due to COVID restrictions.



In conclusion, a great time was had by all of the scouts who went.

Submitted by Scout JP

(For more information, please visit the troop's website: <http://troop121ny.org>)

BOY SCOUT TROOP 121

TODAY'S YOUTH...TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Just the Facts

How to decode the new Nutrition Facts label

BY LINDSAY MOYER

Finally! Most foods now disclose added sugars and carry an improved Nutrition Facts label. *Nutrition Action's* publisher, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, has pushed for both since 1999.

Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container

Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)

Amount per serving

Calories 230

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 8g 10%

Saturated Fat 1g 5%

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg 0%

Sodium 160mg 7%

Total Carbohydrate 37g 13%

Dietary Fiber 4g 14%

Total Sugars 12g

Includes 10g Added Sugars 20%

Protein 3g

Vitamin D 2mcg 10%

Calcium 260mg 20%

Iron 8mg 45%

Potassium 240mg 6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

VITAMINS & MINERALS

- Vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium must be listed on all labels since they're linked to major health problems.
- If a food adds—or makes a claim about—any other nutrient, it must also be listed. (Labels can show other vitamins, but it's voluntary. Don't see them? That may just mean that the company has chosen not to draw attention to them.)

SERVING SIZES

- Some serving sizes expanded to reflect how much the FDA calculates we typically eat. A few key changes:
 - ice cream went from ½ to ⅔ cup.
 - soda, tea, coffee, and water jumped from 8 to 12 oz.
 - most cereals went from 1 oz. to nearly 1½ oz. (40 grams).
 - muffins and bagels doubled, from 2 to nearly 4 oz. (110 grams).
- Whatever the food, the size of the package also matters. Less than two servings per container? A "serving" is now the whole package. Two to three servings? Most labels have to tack on a second column that gives Nutrition Facts for the entire package.

ADDED SUGARS

- "Added Sugars" means sugars that come from sweeteners (cane sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, agave, honey, etc.).
- Why the "Includes"? The "Total Sugars" line right above it includes the naturally occurring sugars in milk, fruit, tomatoes, carrots, etc., *plus* any added sugars.
- 10 grams of added sugars is 20% of the Daily Value (50 grams). (A 30-gram DV would be better, but it's not up to us. A healthy diet leaves little room for sugar's empty calories. See Nov. 2020, p. 3.)

MILLIGRAMS, ETC.

- Vitamins and minerals now list their amounts in mg (milligrams), mcg (micrograms), etc., not just as the "% Daily Value." That helps if *you* need less or more than the DV (see below).
- Vitamin D is now listed in mcg, not IU. (1 mcg = 40 IU.)

DAILY VALUES

- To match the latest advice for healthy bones, the DV for vitamin D doubled, from 10 to 20 mcg (800 IU). That's what adults over 70 need. Adults 70 and under need only 15 mcg a day.
- The calcium DV rose from 1,000 to 1,300 mg. But premenopausal women and men up to age 70 still need only 1,000 mg a day. Postmenopausal women and men over 70 need 1,200 mg. (The 1,300 mg is for children age 9 to 18.)

Wishing You a Wealth of Health!!

Submitted by Carol Henck

ATTENTION BUSINESS OWNERS:

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Contact our editor: Charles D'Agostino



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THRIFTique

We are pleased to announce that the Thrift Shop at Bethany Congregational Church located at 100 Main Street, East Rockaway, NY, is open for business once again. Our hours are Friday and Saturday from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Entry of people will be limited to few at a time, temperatures will be taken, hand sanitizer and masks must be used and social distancing will be put into practice to help keep both customers and staff healthy and safe.

We carry many items in our shop and there's something for everyone!

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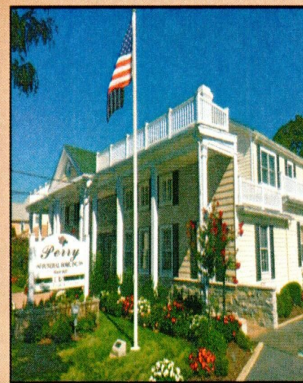
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Mural in the Fellowship Hall

Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie