



THE BELL TOWER



"PROCLAIM GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD
JESUS LIVES OUR GOD REIGNS"

Vol. 61 No. 11

East Rockaway, N.Y.

December 2021

Merry Christmas



CHRISTMAS TO-DO-LIST

- ^{BE} ~~buy~~ presents
- wrap ~~gifts~~ ^{SOMEONE} IN A HUG
- Send ~~gifts~~ ^{PEACE}
- ^{DONATE} ~~shop~~ for food
- ^{BE} ~~See~~ the lights

Dates to Remember:

December 21...First Day of Winter
 December 25....Christmas Day
 January 1...New Year's Day
 January 17...MLK, Jr. Day
 February 2...Groundhog Day
 February 14...Valentine's Day
 February 21...Presidents Day
 March 2...Ash Wednesday
 March 13...Begin Daylight Savings
 March 20...First Day of Spring



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

Christ is Coming!

Weather notwithstanding, every week for the past couple of months has felt like another step away from winter and into spring as the pandemic begins to fade into the background and more of us get our shots. We have begun to lift safety restrictions and we are slowly returning to something that seems like “normal.” Bethany has worked hard to hold together as a community of disciples, and it has seemed that at last we could see on the horizon a day when we would all be together again, with all of our banners and people and all the things we love, and maybe even in time for Christmas. There is nothing I can think of that could be better than going to a complete re-opening on Christmas Eve as we celebrate the infant Christ and prepare for his coming yet again into our world.

Of course, even as I was thinking about re-hanging the banners that have been down since March of 2020, I heard the news about the Omicron variant that the Centers of Disease Control expects has already spread from Africa to Europe and soon, North America as well. Depending on what happens with this new variant, we may not get to have the Christmas we hope to have yet again. We remain hopeful and we are preparing with vaccine boosters, but it’s worrying because we are all weary of this pandemic, but also because we fear that the ties that bind us, once broken, will not easily be restored.

That fear is not unrealistic in a world in which our civic lives have been declining even before COVID. The rising costs of living that requires all hands in the workplace, is draining us of the volunteers who kept so many of our churches and civic

groups going. The introduction of new technologies and communications platforms silo us into disembodied communities of like-minded people and isolate us from those who are different from us. I see and hear the anxiety of pastors like myself, not to mention local churches and denominations, who are beginning to worry that if we don’t do something soon, even if it might be risky or ill advised, we will become like the valley of the dry bones in the biblical story of Ezekiel, an empty reminder of what was and will not be again.

But as people of faith, we also recall how the prophet Ezekiel prophesied to those bones and made them live again, just as we remember this month how the salvation of the world came among us not as an outreach or evangelism campaign, but as an infant child of a teenaged girl of low birth. We remember how God came among us not as power and glory, but in one of the most universal occurrences in human experience: the birth of a child. We see God, the Lord of the universe, impelled by love to make himself utterly powerless and completely dependent on the love of imperfect human beings; a child who grew up to defeat the powers of sin and even death itself by grace and self-sacrifice, inviting his beloved children to know the promise of abundant and eternal life that rises up to scatter the darkness of cynicism and despair and to lead us to new life in Christ. Our task, especially as we anticipate the calling of a new settled pastor in the future, is what it has always been: to seek to proclaim the Good News and to witness to the power of God’s love at work in God’s people.

Iguess that means we’ll do what Christ’s people do: hope for better days, trust in God, gather our

wandering sheep and, with or without the trimmings and trappings, determine to worship God and rejoice in God's love, fully open or not. If we cannot come together as we wish, we will come together as we can. As long as we can thank God for the promise of the incarnation and the coming of the kingdom, even if we have to do it together on zoom, the promise of Christmas will be fulfilled. With the Holy Spirit to lead us and the love of God to sustain us, we shall do more than persevere, we will continue to grow in our relationship to God and the people God has blessed us with. Over and over in our Advent readings Jesus admonishes us to keep awake, to be prepared, to keep our lamps well-oiled and ready for the new thing that God is doing, for the still small voice of God that whispers to us in the midst of the cacophony of voices vying for our attention and our allegiance so that we can be the light bearers, the truth seekers, the lovers of God and all of her works that we were created to be. Over and over again, this little congregation has risen to the challenges of the Word calling us to "the conviction of things hoped for and the assurance of things unseen," to the coming of the kingdom of God in our time and place, and Bethany will

continue to do so because that is who you are and that is who we are called to be. "Not one stone will be left here upon another," Jesus says about the great buildings of the holy city.

There will be wars and plagues and natural disasters, social upheavals, good changes and bad changes, and we will be the church of Jesus Christ through them all, because, as it says in the Psalms, God's law of love is written on the hearts of God's people. So, we are going to continue to joyfully plan for a beautiful and blessed Christmas celebration and guess what? We're going to have one whether we do it in the sanctuary or on zoom, with masks, or in Tyvek suits out on the front stoop. Christ has come, and Christ will come again. We will be together in his name, and we will rejoice, because our God is an awesome God, a life-giving God, an eternal God! And, because he loves us, he really, really does!

So rejoice and give thanks! For Christ the Savior is born!

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Mark

Bethany Bell Tower ...is a monthly publication of

BETHANY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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***Statements made in editorials, signed articles or letters, do not represent an official position in this church.
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

December Greetings

It's that wonderful time of year again!

Well, I can't say I like the short dark days and I seem to be feeling the cold more as I age, but it is still a wonderful time of year. Christmas is coming! Advent season is here – a time to prepare for and remember what Christmas is all about.

In the more secular world, Christmas is heralded with shopping, lights and decorations, ugly sweaters, and carols. But my favorite harbingers of this season, I must confess, are the holiday specials on TV. Being a boomer, I grew up on all the classic holiday cartoons. A Charlie Brown Christmas, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, How the Grinch Stole Christmas... All great, but my favorite holiday story, hands down, is Charles Dickens' "The Christmas Carol".

☞ "The Christmas Carol". The book is wonderful and surprisingly short for a Dickens' tale. Another amazing aspect is that most of the Christmas Carol movies or cartoon adaptations stay very true to the written story, almost word for word! (This is seldom the case. Just ask Chris Van Allsburg about what the movie folks did to his beautiful story, "The Polar Express".) Not only do I love this story, but I also enjoy watching a variety of versions. I just read there are 135 versions of Dickens' classic! Now I haven't come close to that but here are a few I've watched and enjoyed. How many of you remember Mr. Magoo's Christmas Carol? I still have it on VHS. Disney got in the act with Mickey's Christmas Carol. You can't forget the 1951 version with Alastair Sim. How about the one with Patrick Stewart? Excellent! Perhaps my favorite – The Muppets Christmas Carol. (I never claimed to be more than an old child).

So just what is the draw with The Christmas Carol, in fact with all those holiday specials?

I think they really are what Christmas and Christ is all about. These tales are filled with the message of love, generosity, and perhaps most important, redemption. They are the stories of the outcasts, the misfits, and the unwanted. They are the stories of the repentant sinner who finds redemption, inclusion, and love. The Peanuts gang all sing to Charlie Brown and his little tree. Rudolph, Hermey, and the Abominable Snowman are welcomed back into the fold, each with their unique role to play. Even the Grinch has a Scrooge-like transformation and joins the love in Whoville. And Ebenezer Scrooge? After facing his past, his present, and his projected future, Scrooge finally does understand and takes to heart the lessons learned including Marley's ghost's words about being a "good businessman". "Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my business; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence were, all, my business."

Yes, these might be kid shows. But to me, they tell the story of Christmas and the redemptive love of Jesus Christ.

Merry Christmas!





HurriCON 2021 at Bethany Church was a rousing success with over 30 tables filled with comics, books, toys, artwork, writers, and artists! Almost \$4000 was raised at this one day event on Saturday, November 13, 2021. So many Bethanyites helped make this event even better



than the past two!

Thanks to our kitchen staff of Joe and Linda Fardella, Dolores Jimenez, Alice Calabrese, Kim Hastings, and Linda Donovan. We featured the HurriCON famous “Walking Taco” and Doug Herrmann’s homemade Manhattan Clam Chowder. Peter Schmidt and George Jimenez manned our raffle table that was a huge part of the show’s success with many unique items that were all donated ranging from original comic book art to signed and limited prints. The front desk was manned by David P. Donovan, Faythe Stone, Chris Hueser, John “Jack Kirby” Donovan, and Maria Spaulding. Thanks to Jo Leonsky for helping with the publicity for the event and the young people of Bethany Church who helped our vendors unload and keep them happy; William and James Lewald, John-Paul D’Agostino, Michael and Anthony Kilgus, and Julia and Danilynn Fardella. Our sexton, Dan Gilloon, helped us during the day and broke it down after the event.

Some of our guests this year included Star Trek novelist Michael Jan Freidman, DC Comics and Marvel Comics artist Keith Williams, Star Wars maze creator Sean C. Jackson, and East Rockaway native son and pop artist John Hartt. There was a steady stream of comic art con attendees all day purchasing comics, art, books, and more. Door prizes were handed out hourly. Thank you to everyone who came out and made this the best HurriCON ever!



HurriCON will return in 2022!...David Donovan

Over 300 pounds of food was donated to the Long Island Council of Churches Emergency Food Pantry in Freeport in the month of November collected by Bethany Church.

Also, in December boxes of warm clothing and toys collected during church services were also delivered to the Pantry. With these gifts, you are helping our neighbors who are dealing with food uncertainty. And you are making a child’s Christmas season brighter.

Thank you to everyone who donated to these worthwhile causes.

If you missed any of our collections and would still like to donate to the LICC, you can do that right here : <https://www.liccdonate.org/>

FROM THE TRUSTEES:

It is with sadness that I have to report that the Day Care folks felt that they could not continue to serve the community. Additionally, they had other family issues that they did not foresee and needed to close down. We have re-listed the property to rent. If anyone knows anyone who would be interested in running another Day Care or any other business, please contact Charlie D'Agostino at 516-721-8885. It **MUST BE EITHER Non-Profit or Not-For-Profit**. We are willing to subdivide if necessary.

Also here is a picture of the new landscape underneath the sign. Scout Kathleen O. did a wonderful job for her Eagle Scout project.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Thanksgiving Day traditionally signifies a yearly celebration of our blessings and the fall's harvest. For it's 11th year Bethany's small congregation of tremendous, caring hearts united to help those in need in our surrounding communities. Headed by Barbara and Doug Herrmann and many donors and volunteers home-cooked turkey dinners with all the trimmings were pre-ordered and picked up or delivered to Oceanside, Rockville Centre, Baldwin, Franklin Square, Lynbrook, Long Beach and East Rockaway. Last year's first Covid-19 pandemic delivery served 25 meals. This year the Herrmanns are proud to have delivered 154 meals. Bethany is truly **THANKFUL** and **BLESSED!** ...Charlene Fried



Sunday School: Jessie Kilgus reported that the Sunday School children helped to make cookies for the Thanksgiving Day dinners. (72 bags!)

From the Women's League:

We were happy to be able to hold our Christmas Fair this year. Thank you to all of our volunteers and to all who attended. We would also like to thank everyone who donated to the fair. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!...Cathy Clarke



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

BOOK REVIEW:

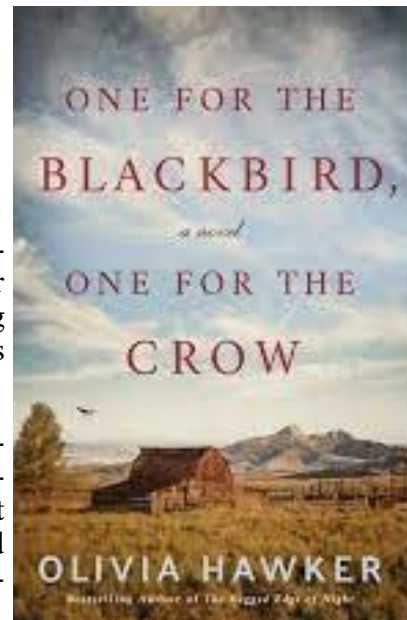
By Barbara Valis

One for the Blackbird, One for the Crow

By Olivia Hawker

This is the tale of two families living on the Wyoming frontier in 1870. The Bemis and the Weber families have relied on each other because there are no other settlers around. One day, Ernest Bemis finds his wife, Cora, in a compromising situation with their neighbor. Ernest, in a fit of rage, kills his neighbor and goes to prison.

Cora and her neighbor, Nettie Mae Weber (now a widow), somehow come together with their children to share the duties of working the land in order to survive. With the winter approaching, they must move in together in order to get through the brutal winter months. This is a compelling story of personalities and learning to bond for survival in an extremely harsh environment. I strongly recommend this book.



TROOP 121

November was a busy month for Troop 121 beginning with an open house at the start of the month. We invited Webelos to visit and had many displays and presentations for them to see so they would get an idea of some of the things our troop does. We showed them some first aid by making fake wounds and teaching how to treat them, cooking, fire building and how to set up a model campsite. Next we had our turkey trip. On this trip we cook a whole turkey in a garbage can and make all the trimmings to go along with it for our troop and their families. We went to West Hills County Park in Melville, NY where we explored during the day when we took a hike on one of the trails. There were a few other troops there as well having their Thanksgiving festivities also. Our council hosted a shooting sports competition weekend where Ethan G won an award in shotgun shooting. We also competed in rifle and archery and had fun throwing tomahawks and shooting paintballs.

Max D. is working on his Eagle project and a few of our Eagles are preparing for their Eagle Court of Honor.

We can't believe it's the end of the year already! We are planning a bowling trip this month and making preparations for our Holiday Party. We've made our "Secret Santa" (shhhhh!) selections and are getting ready for our "pot luck" dinner. This is always a fun dinner with games and stories and just enjoying each other's company and all of our extended families. At our last meeting we had the honor of a visit from Honorary Chief Bruce Schwarting of the Rockville Centre Fire Department. He taught us the history of our American Flag and how to properly fold a flag. As we folded it, he taught us what each fold is for. Lastly, he helped us improve on our Color Guard techniques and showed us what we should practice. Thank you for all of your good advice Chief!

In this holiday season, Troop 121 and all of our families would like to wish all of Bethany Congregation and all of your families a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year. May everyone prosper in happiness and health in the coming year.

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

BOY SCOUT TROOP 121
TODAY'S YOUTH...TOMORROW'S LEADERS



**Add some Festive Fun to your
in-person or “zoom” gathering of
Family and Friends
with these curious
Christmas trivia questions!**

After leaving Bethlehem, to which country did Joseph, Mary, and Jesus travel? (*Egypt*)

Christmas is celebrated on the 25th of December. Who is the patron saint remembered on the 26th of December? (*Stephen*)

Every elf has this ornament on the tip of their shoes. Which ornament are we talking about? (*Bells*)

Everyone is familiar with the mistletoe tradition. What is the color of the berries of the plant? (*White*)

How many points does a snowflake traditionally have? (*Six*)

Red and green are the two colors most associated with Christmas. Which are the two other colors, according to Christmas holiday trivia, that are also extremely popular in this season? (*Gold and Silver*)

Traditions of Christmas around the world will tell you that Santa Claus is known by many names. What is the French name for Santa Claus? (*Père Noel*)

Two of the reindeers are named after weather phenomenon. Name the reindeer. (*Donner*, which means thunder in German, and *Blitzen* which means lightning)

What is the name of Ebenezer Scrooge’s partner, from the play, *A Christmas Carol*? (*Jacob Marley*)

When does the Russian Orthodox Church celebrate Christmas? (*January 7th*)

Which country can be credited with the creation of the Christmas beverage, eggnog? (*England*)

Which country does St. Nicholas originally belong to? (*Turkey*)

Which is the most popular ornament used to place at the top of the Christmas tree? (*Angel*)

Which was the first state in the United States to recognize Christmas as an official holiday? (*Alabama*)

Which was the last state in the United States that declared Christmas a legal holiday? (*Oklahoma*)

Where is the world’s largest nativity scene? (*Einsiedeln, Switzerland*)

Who tracks Santa’s location on Christmas Eve? Bonus points for when it started. (*NORAD-North American Aerospace Defense Command. The tradition started in 1955.*)

Who was the first President to have a tree in the White House? (*President Benjamin Harrison*)

What President established Christmas as a national holiday? (*President Ulysses S. Grant*)

Why are Christmas lights used on trees? (*Comes from Pagan traditions using light to celebrate the Winter Solstice using candles*)

Of all the popular Christmas songs, which is the best-selling single of all time? (*“White Christmas”*)

Wishing you and your families a Wealth of Holiday Health!

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

SIMPLE SCONES

By Linda Fardella

INGREDIENTS:

2 CUPS ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR
1/3 CUP SUGAR
1 TEASPOON BAKING POWDER
1/4 TEASPOON BAKING SODA
1/2 TEASPOON COURSE SALT
8 TABLESPOONS UNSALTED BUTTER, FROZEN
1/2 CUP RAISINS (OR DRIED CURRANTS)
1/2 CUP SOUR CREAM



ADJUST OVEN RACK TO MIDDLE POSITION AND PREHEAT OVEN TO 400 DEGREES

In a food processor, pulse together flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt.

Add butter and pulse until pea-size pieces form. Add raisins to ingredients.

In a small bowl, whisk together the egg and sour cream. Pour in flour mixture. Pulsing until dough comes together. Transfer dough to a lightly floured work surface. Gently knead into ball.

Place on a lightly floured surfaced and pat into a 7 or 8 inch circle, about 3/4 " thick. Sprinkle generously with sugar. Use a sharp knife to cut into 8 triangles:

PLACE ON PARCHMENT PAPER About 1" apart. Bake until golden, about 15 to 17 minutes. Cool on wire rack.

Serve with butter or clotted cream. Recipe for Clotted Cream:

1 cup heavy cream
1/3 cup sour cream
1 tablespoon confectioner's sugar

MISSIONS: THE CHRISTMAS FUND FOR THE Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency

Fund has been a tangible expression of God's love and light in the world for over 115 years. One of the special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ, the Christmas Fund provides UCC congregations and members an opportunity to reach out in kindheartedness to those who have faithfully shepherded our Church and now finds themselves facing worrisome financial needs. The Pension Boards, on behalf of the whole church, passes on this direct support so that real needs may be met and support may be felt. This Fund helps provide pension and health premium supplementation to lower-income retired church workers, emergency assistance to clergy or lay church employees in need, and Christmas "Thank you" gift checks to hundreds of annuitants. We will be receiving the Offering on Sunday, December 19th. Thank you in advance for your generosity in supporting this special mission asking.



Serving Hungry and Homeless Long Islanders

Let's support the INN...A new project for the 2021 Christmas Holiday Season will be to support the Interfaith Nutrition Network (INN) by collecting the following items: NEW hats, scarves and gloves (men, women and children); large bath soap, large shampoo, large conditioner, large lotion, deodorant, shaving cream, razors; Enfamil, adult diapers (pull-ups) (large and extra large); children's diapers and pull-ups; wipes. These items can be brought to the church during the month of December for delivery to the

INN. The INN serves Long Islanders who are challenged by hunger, homelessness, and profound poverty.

ATTENTION BUSINESS OWNERS:

- Space is now available for advertising. (No full or half pages)
- Reasonably priced.
- 1/8 page....\$200.00/year; \$25.00/month
- 1/4 page ...\$300.00/year; \$45.00/month
- 200+ circulation.
- Published monthly. (Except only one issue for July/August)
- Not just local...we mail all over.
- Send us camera-ready artwork or we will create your ad for you.
- Business expense deduction (Perhaps a charitable deduction?)

Contact our editor: Charles D'Agostino

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.

HELP ME HELP BETHANY!



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Write for The Bell Tower



You can email submissions to Charles D'Agostino at cjdagostino@gmail.com or drop them off to the Church office. You can even mail to him directly: 70 Sunrise Drive, Lynbrook, NY 11563. *Thank you!*

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!

Looking forward to seeing friends
- old and new - real soon!



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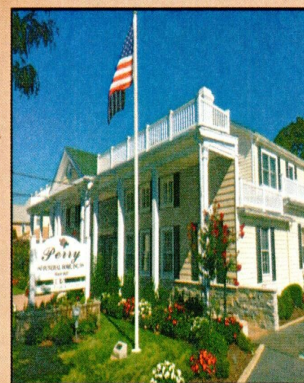
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Bell Tower Boosters

If you enjoy *The Bell Tower* and you would like to see your name here, please send a small donation to Bethany Church. It helps to offset costs. Thank you.



Mural in the Fellowship Hall

Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie