



THE BELL TOWER



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

Vol. 63 No. 1

East Rockaway, N.Y.

January 2023



Martin Luther King, Jr. Day ...January 16, 2023

Dates to Remember:

February 12...Lincoln's Birthday
February 14...Valentine's Day
February 20...Washington's Birthday
February 22...Ash Wednesday
March 5...Troop 121 Pancake Breakfast
March 12...Begin Daylight Savings
March 17...St. Patrick's Day
March 19...Women's League Potluck
Breakfast
April 2...Palam Sunday

Lay Readers and Ushers are needed for Sunday Worship. Please sign up on the sheet in the Hallway or speak with Maryanne (516-599-5768) in the office. Lay Readers will be required to assist with the service and read two (2) Bible passages for that Sunday. Please speak to Pastor Mark for further directions.

OFFICE HOURS: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 Noon (Closed Thursdays)

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

After the Holidays

After the warm and wonderful season of Christmas, as the trees go out on the curb, and the lights are taken down, comes the long dark slog through winter. Just like the soldiers of Herod, galloping toward Bethlehem with murder on their hearts, the world seems like it cannot wait to get back to business as usual after the holidays. January, (usually the coldest month of the year), reminds us that warm thoughts and bright lights are great, but winter shall have her day. Long Island, so glorious and alive in the summer is now looking a bit shabby, everything brown, rusty, and decorated in a dirty crust of mud, smog, and schmutz. Still, life goes on, and we have to live it, come what may.

How we do that is the point, I guess. Just a week ago, angels were singing in the sky, as the Prince of Peace came into the world. This week, the empire strikes back as the soldiers of King Herod descend on the city of David, intent on murdering hope in its infancy, slaughtering the innocent as they seek to kill the promise of the Kingdom of God. All of a sudden the hope and joy of Christmas are exploded as the infant and his tiny family are hotfooting it to the border of Egypt, refugees at the gates of a foreign land, the Son of Man's survival and the hope of the world dependent not on the forces of Heaven, but on the kindness and hospitality of strangers, the willingness of ordinary human beings to take risks to care for others who are different from themselves. As is often the way of the "real world," the infant Messiah was feared by the keepers of the "way things are," because of the hope he might ignite in the wretched of the earth, King Herod sent an army to destroy a single child. No one knew better than he the truth, that his power wrested in fear and in violence, and it continued only as long as the peo-

ple bowed before it.

But the story of this little family's flight to Egypt in the middle of the night, is not simply a reminder of the determination of our Creator to bring her children to her breast, or the resourcefulness of Mary and Joseph, or the intervention of angels to protect the Messiah-to-be, but also a reminder that God's ways are not our ways and God's thoughts not our thoughts. God came into a world full built on fear and force, not with a flaming sword of righteousness, but as an infant in a stable, to be welcomed by the least, the last and the lost, the ones for whom hope was a rare and precious thing. But for the righteous and the comfortable, the principalities and powers, he was a threat, spreading the "virus" of compassion and lifting up those left out and left behind. For them., the Good News of God's love for all of God's creatures, and the unwillingness of God to stay in the lane they had built for God by popping up without their permission made Jesus an anathema. The coming of the Christ child, meant, or could mean, the end of the world as they knew it, and upending of the accepted order, and the coming of the kingdom, a brave new world in which the first would be last, the last would be first and the outcast would sit at the head of the table on the right hand of God.

They weren't wrong. Jesus did come into the world to upset the tables in the temple, to lift up those considered among the least of these and to kick our vision and our butts into gear for the kingdom of God. He wasn't a great reformer, calling people to a purer faith, or a great evangelist bringing a new church into being, he was the Son of Man, born as we are, under the heart of his mother, and he

was and is, the Son of God and his coming is about the transformation of our relationship with God and through that transformed relationship, with reality itself. We do not live by the “wisdom of the world,” but by the “foolishness,” of the Gospel, a foolishness which operates in hope, in faith and in love, rather than in fear.

Our fears tell us that such foolishness is not workable in a world so much in the grip of suffering and injustice, that compromises with the “way things are” must be made. But those compromises have not served our world nor our salvation. Today we continue to wrestle with both our fears and our failure as God’s children to trust in our better angels enough to take the same risks for grace and for peace that we take in the name of conflict and war. Today, just like then, we wonder where our God is, even when he walks among us, reaches out to us from the margins of our world and our lives every single day. Somehow, we still struggle to accept the gifts we have been given, to embrace the fullness of the abundant life that Jesus promised. Maybe because like Moses in the presence of God, we are afraid that the beauty and the glory would be too great to bear.

Thankfully, God doesn’t give up on us. A little bit more than two thousand years ago, the light of salvation, nearly snuffed out by the principalities and powers, found refuge in a foreign land, because people listened to angels. The principalities and powers, with their armies and their money and their spies, could not steal the hope of humanity because love would not allow it. “He came into the world... but the world did not know him.” The principalities and powers, the priests and the proper folks tried to destroy him because they could not bear to let go of what they had, even if it cost them the kin-dom. In the movement of the Spirit, they saw only chaos and disorder. But to those who received him, to the ones unbound by their allegiance to the way things are, the ones who knocked and asked, he gave the power to become children of God. Let’s see if we can make this the year, that we begin to seize the day and make ready for the coming of the kin-dom of God.

Happy New Year!

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 expres their views in letters to the editor.***

Are you less than perfect? Welcome! We are a community or 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 NEW YEAR!

You know, I have a good feeling about this year. I hope you do too. It's just January 2nd as I write this, (our editor, Charlie, will be amazed as I am very seldom early with my contributions!) but so far so good.

My decorations are still up, including the cardboard wreath which displays the Christmas cards I have received. I enjoyed them all, the religious depictions, the Santa scenes and the photo cards with growing children and family vacations galore. I have received quite a few, in good part because I send out quite a few. That's how it works – you receive the most when you give of yourself. (There is a life lesson here but we'll save that for another time). I do push myself to find time to write all those cards because this is my opportunity to reach out to family and friends and keep those connections alive. I'm horrid at picking up the phone so these greeting cards let people know that I really do care about them and wish them every happiness.

The pandemic taught us some nasty lessons about the difficulties of staying connected when we found ourselves in lockdown, unable to worship or socialize together. We became very insular, too insular. It went on so long, we got comfortable behind our doors. Even when we could somewhat safely renew our past practices and associations, it seemed like too much bother. Well, I say "Let's snap out of that!" Let's make 2023 the year of renewed commitments – to our friends, family, and church. Visit a neighbor. Maybe even bring that neighbor to Bethany with you. Let people know you are out there! Send out those Christmas cards. It's never too late. What fun that would be! Too silly for you? How about 'thinking of you' notes. We all love to get a card in the mail. It only happens if someone sends one. Let that be you!

The past few years have been hard and exhausting, but they are over. This is the year to stop treading water and swim. Jump on in. The water's fine!



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

FROM THE EDITOR:

CONDOLENCES to the family of Jane O'Hara who passed just before Christmas. She was loved by all who knew her and will be missed greatly.



There is a new Christ candle in the sanctuary placed in memory of Miriam Wright.

Bethany can always use the help of volunteers and donations of any kind. You can always contact the office if you want to know what is needed.

We would like to send a big thank you to John Farrell who was been graciously setting up for services and especially for Christmas. And also to Jon Willetsen and JP D'Agostino who worked diligently to get the bell computer working. The Bells now chime throughout the day...Automatically through a computer!



Write for *The Bell Tower*:_Movie or TV Review? Recipe? Restaurant Review? Play Review? Book Review? Local History or reminiscences? Concert Review? Announcement? *(No political positioning, please)*

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

FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Now that the holiday season is firmly behind us, and the warm season coming up, we can start thinking about a lot of the projects on the outside of the church. The trustees have had numerous discussions and we've come up with a much different option to make the outside of the church look better and affordable. We are still trying to fill the downstairs. We have a tentative agreement with Mending Hearts who would like to take the space as of March 1, 2023. (Fingers crossed). They are a charitable, non-profit organization which counsels folks who need help.

There are all new LED lights installed in the Parish Hall/Gym. Thanks to GML electrical contractors. They donated their labor. Also, we were able to get the lights through a grant from PSEG at very little cost.

Iwould like to thank our Congregation for their patience and the fact that we'll be losing one of the great pastors in Bethany's history. But we have to keep in mind that we have some intelligent, hard working people working on finding a replacement.

Pace and love, Richard Eaves, chairman of the Board of Trustees

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TROOP 121

The Troop held its annual Holiday Party and a Court of Honor for some of the scouts who became Eagle Scouts.

Finn and Scoutmaster Boyle

Aidan

Leader Steve Mascolo and Nathan



The Troop is always planning the next adventure. This month there will be an overnighter at Camp Schiff in Suffolk County.

The Troop's Annual Pancake Breakfast will be on Sunday March 5 at Bethany from 9:00 AM until Noon. There will be a modest admission fee for all you can eat pancakes and sausages! If anyone would like to advertise on the placemats or donate a door prize or gift basket, please contact the editor...Charles D'Agostino...516-721-885...cjdagostino@gmail.com

Troop 121 is recruiting! Any boys interested in joining are welcome to join them at any scheduled meeting.

They meet in Bethany's Fellowship Hall (Gym) every Monday 7:30– 9:00 P.M.

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

BOY SCOUT TROOP 121

TODAY'S YOUTH...TOMORROW'S LEADERS

WOMEN'S LEAGUE NEWS: *You are invited to the*

Women's League Potluck Breakfast
Sunday, March 19, 2023 at 9:00 A.M.

All are invited! Bring a friend!

Please sign up on the sheet in the hall and let us know what you are making. If you cannot sign up but would like to attend please call to let us know. Hope to see you there!

Any questions, please contact Cathy Clarke.

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My Midnight Ride

It was a beautiful Summer's Day... 80 degrees. I truly feel blessed, and I decided to ride my motorcycle to work. No, the ride out to work was obligatory but mundane...nothing special. I did my shift at the bridge like I always do and decided to take the back road home. It was dark that night, but the moon was out and the roads leading out of Bayville with no streetlights going down these very old carriage roads was cold at first.

The vibration by motorcycle was underneath me because of the power on this 1200 cc Beast. It was a heady feeling with these twists and turns on the back roads where the rich ones played! I felt like I was back in time, I was back in the thirties. The Great Gatsby coming around corners! I had to put on my high beams to be able to see. Over my right shoulder full moon was shining but it was still too dark to see around the corner. I came up the stop sign just a little too fast. I like riding in the country, but I live on Long Island and there is not much country left. It was truly a blessing, and it was truly the art of riding a motorcycle! That was a beautiful thing...Rich Eaves



SUNDAY SCHOOL:



The Sunday School children put on their annual Christmas Pageant.

Reach out to Jessie Kilgus or Tina Lewald with any questions.

Jessie (516)860-4998 or Tina (917)270-6509

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As we ring in the start of a brand-New Year, these New Year quotes might bring some cheer!

- “Youth is when you’re allowed to stay up late on New Year’s Eve. Middle age is when you’re forced to.”— Bill Vaughn
- “Last year’s resolution was to lose 20 pounds by Christmas. Only 30 pounds to go.”
— Anonymous
- “Tonight’s December thirty-first, something is about to burst... Hark, it’s midnight, children dear. Duck! Here comes another year!”— Ogden Nash
- “My New Year’s resolution is to stop hanging out with people who ask me about my New Year’s resolutions.”— Anonymous
- “May the New Year bring you courage to break your resolutions early! My own plan is to swear off every kind of virtue, so that I triumph even when I fall.”— Aleister Crowley
- “I was going to quit all my bad habits for the new year, but then I remembered that nobody likes a quitter.”— Unknown
- “You know how I always dread the whole year? Well, this time I’m only going to dread one day at a time.”— Charlie Brown
- “I can’t believe it’s been a year since I didn’t become a better person.”—Anonymous
- “New Year’s Day now is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving hell with them as usual.”— Mark Twain
- “Good resolutions are simply checks that men draw on a bank where they have no account.”
— Oscar Wilde
- “An optimist stays up until midnight to see the new year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves.” --Bill Vaughan

Wishing you a Happy NEW YEAR filled with Blessings and a

Wealth of Health! Carol Henck

Did you know that Bethany has a Book Group?

Well, we do and Pastor Mark is an amazing discussion leader. We have read some very interesting titles and are just about to start a new one.

We meet via Zoom on Tuesday evenings at 7pm. Please call the Bethany office (516-599-5768) to get the Zoom information if you would like to join us or just sit in to try it out.

Perhaps you may have a suggestion for the next book.

BIBLE SEARCH (not just for children)

N	O	I	T	A	L	E	V	E	R	E	G	N	N
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I	U	J	D	I	L	P	H	I	L	I	P	H	A
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A	T	H	O	M	A	S	T	S	T	S	J	J	T
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- JOB
- COVENANT
- ISRAEL
- EDEN
- MATTHEW
- JERUSALEM
- SIMON
- ADAM
- REVELATION
- MOSES
- BETHLEHEM
- GENESIS
- JEREMIAH
- GOD
- PHILIP
- ACTS
- THOMAS
- JAMES
- PETER

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- 1/4 page ...\$300.00/year; \$45.00/month
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- Published monthly. (Except only one issue for July/August)
- Not just local...we mail all over.
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Contact our editor: Charles D'Agostino

cjdagostino@gmail.com or

Call or text: 516-721-8885 for all of the details.

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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!

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



FOOD PANTRY NEEDS:

You can drop food off at the church from 9 a.m. to Noon on Tuesdays and Fridays. 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.

East Rockaway Fire Department, Inc



Gregory Hall - Available For Rental
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As a member of Bethany Church, I will gladly *donate* to the Church **25% of my earned income** (in your name) coming from a referral from any member of Bethany or reader of ***The Bell Tower***, whether it is for yourself, friend, or relative! This includes any rental or the sale of any residential, condo, co-op, commercial or investment property.

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Bethany Congregational Church

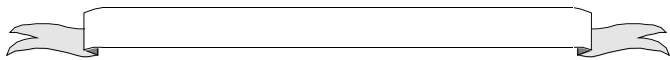
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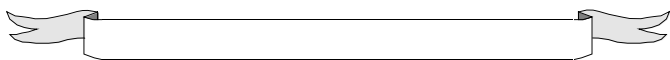
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If you enjoy *The Bell Tower* and you would like to see your name here, please send a small donation to Bethany Church. It helps to offset costs. Thank you.



Mural in the Fellowship Hall

Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie (dec.)