



# THE BELL TOWER



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

Vol. 62 No. 11

East Rockaway, N.Y.

December 2022

## CHRISTMAS BLESSINGS

From everyone at Bethany Church to all of you!

Pastor Mark, Kate, Ben and James Lukens

*The Eaves Family... Janet Moser... Maryanne Walling... The Gilloon Family... Jon and Mary Willsten*

*... The Collins Family... Carol and Peter Henck... Heidi Hofmann... Jessica Henck, Tracy*

*McConnach and Family... Barbara Merna... Rebecca and Harold Webb and Family... Jasmine*

*Avila... Barbara Sobey... The Kilgus Family... Barbara Valis and Lou Gaspari...*

*The Parrott Family... The Hermann Family... Jen Valis, Charlie and*

*John-Paul D'Agostino... Stephanie Maddalone... Mati and Chris Padjus*

*... The Schneider-Leonsky Family: Jo, Steve, Teddy, Cleo and Dolly...*

*Barbara, Bill, Billy, Jamie, Brooke, Dean, Meghan, David, Lorraine,*

*Alex, Ben, Emily, Terry Goodspeed... Joanne, Chuck, Jake, Jordan Ragona*

### Dates to Remember:

December 18...Begin Chanukah  
December 21...First Day of Winter  
December 24...Christmas Eve  
December 25...Christmas Day  
December 26...Kwanzaa  
December 31...New Year's Eve  
January 1...New Year's Day  
January 16...Martin Luther King Jr. Day  
January 28...U.S./Vietnam Cease Fire  
February 12...Lincoln's Birthday

Happy New Year  
2023

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

# Christmas is Coming!

Christmas is coming! Trim the lights, put up the decorations, and let the shopping frenzy begin! There's great sights and smells everywhere, corny holiday music, decorated streets and the inevitable sourpusses crying about a war on Christmas, just to balance things out. I have to admit I've missed all the craziness of the season these past years. And I admit that while I probably should be writing something preachy about crass commercialism, right now I am so excited to see the season return that I don't care how many times I have to relive the tragedy of Rudolph the Reindeer or seek enlightenment with Charlie Brown or worry about what some greeter says at the mall. I am just intoxicated with the hustle and the bustle of the season, thrilled to see our ministries here at Bethany unfold with folks back at it again, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and trying to live the Gospel with all the joyous enthusiasm that the coming of Christ deserves. It's almost as if there is something in the air this year, a kind of excitement about the possibility of some reconciliation and re-connection. Maybe it's a hope that after the pandemic, and the politics, after too much suffering and too much tragedy, that people are ready to take a deep breath and try to remember that my neighbor is really not an evil doer, he's just a guy, like he was even before he put that awful sign on his yard last year, or yelled at me for wearing (or not

wearing) a mask. Maybe we can see then that though we have been slogging through the wilderness of our own struggles overloaded with our fears and our baggage, we can finally begin to open our eyes, finally be ready to see the Star in the Eastern Sky that lights the way to the coming of the kingdom of God, the light that has shone on through the pandemic, through war and violence, through our plunges into sin. The light, as it says in the Gospel of John, that shone in the darkness and the darkness could not overcome it. We preachers like to go on about "the true meaning of Christmas," and in normal times for those of us privileged enough to participate with full bellies and long gifts lists, it can be hard to let go of all the trappings long enough to know that spirit. The world, for us at least, is so different from that at the time of Jesus' birth. The holidays, as special as they are, can become rote, about the medium rather than the message as we run ourselves to exhaustion and fiscal ruin trying to buy that spirit, all the time feeling guilty for giving in to the madness.

This year feels a little different, though. Maybe it's because we found out that you can order a present online, but you can't order presence that way. We found out as we watched people we loved fighting for their lives on screens or through Covid barriers how much we need to touch each other, how much we'd rather have grandma whole and with us than the newest gadget or that article of clothing,

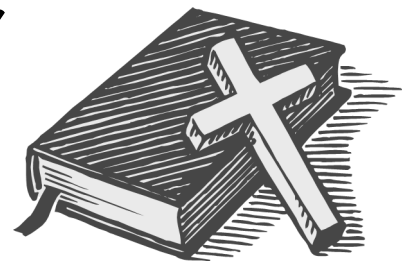
(especially when we can't go out anyway). Maybe, we've finally started to figure out how much we miss each other- and not just family and friends, but the guy at the coffee shop we saw every Wednesday, or the people on the street, the lady walking the big dog, the guy at the newsstand and all the people who make up the world in which we live in, back, busy and filling up our days with the sights and sounds of life itself. Truly a gift!

**M**aybe what I'm really feeling is hope. Hope that we have developed eyes to see the tenacity of our need for one another- specifically, that integral image of God within each of us that reaches out to the other even as we are torn apart by politics or prejudice, by racism and sexism, by pandemics and pundits seeking to drive us apart. Even as we smack each other around all day long, we are beginning to see that we miss each other, we need each other, that we cannot be complete without each other. Christmas is about the incredible power of life to persist, to seek out the light of the sun, to keep finding a way to grow

and to thrive no matter what may come, and it is about the power of love, not to conquer or destroy what is evil, but to transform it through grace into good. Like the shepherds on the first Christmas, my eyes are peeled, and my ears opened as I try and prepare to witness this miracle of the incarnation yet again for the first time. Maybe this year, after all that we have been through together, maybe this time, as we determine to get up, dust ourselves off and try again, we will see the light of God's in our neighbor's eye or look around and remember how good we have it and how blessed we really are. Maybe it'll inspire us to scan the eastern sky like shepherds for the voices of angels and the light of a star, help us to remember that into the darkness of human suffering, into the chaos and insanity of our hurting world, God came among us as one of us and through the Spirit, promised to be with us always. And He is- always!

*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 expres 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*

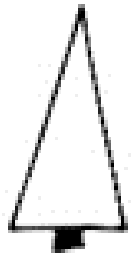
December Greetings to all,



It's hard to imagine Christmas without a Christmas tree, isn't it? But why do we associate a tree with this celebration? History.com just provided me with an in-depth explanation but I'll just share some highlights.

The story starts a very long time ago. Ancient Egyptians, Celts, Druids, Romans, and even Vikings recognized evergreen plants as having great symbolic significance. Plants and trees that stay green through the long cold dark winter? I get it! Evergreen boughs were hung over doorways and windows to keep out witches, ghosts, and all sorts of evils. Let's speed up the clock to the 1500s. German Christians started bringing decorated trees into their homes. Rumor has it that Martin Luther, himself, started

the practice of adding lit candles to the trees. Maybe not so safe in a world without smoke detectors but it caught on anyway. This is also the time when the triangle shape of the tree became symbolic as the Holy Trinity.



Christmas trees didn't make it over to America until much later and were not well received by many. Even in the 1840s, most Americans felt they were undesirable pagan symbols. The Puritans had even created laws against such frivolous practices. But, in 1846, there was Queen Victoria and the royal family shown standing around a Christmas tree. Boom! Suddenly, it became fashionable and very much in vogue. By 1890, the trees and ornaments were quite popular but while Europeans used trees about 4 feet high, Americans, in their typical bigger is better perspective, liked floor to ceiling sized trees!

Here are some interesting facts about Christmas trees around the world:

- Great Britain prefers the Norway spruce for its trees.
- Christmas trees in Greenland are all imported. It is so far north; no trees live there. In Sweden, many tree decorations, such as stars, sunbursts, and snowflakes, are made of straw.
- Norwegians like to select their tree right from the woods. The tree is decorated by the parents behind closed doors while the children wait excitedly outside the room. When the children are allowed in, everyone joins hands in a circle around the tree and walks around it singing carols. Ah – now I understand the beginning of the Nutcracker Suite much better.



- What do you do when Christmas falls in summer where you live? In Brazil, people sometimes put pieces of cotton on pine trees to represent snow.
- In the Philippines, trees are very expensive. Handmade trees made out of bamboo do the job and are decorated with colored rice paper.
- And here in the U.S.A., we now have Christmas tree farms in all 50 states of the U.S. That's a lot of trees!

***Merry Christmas!***

## FROM THE EDITOR:

*Cory Wilder married his fiancée Marissa last month! Pastor Mark officiated!*



On the first Sunday of Advent (November 27th) members of the Donovan Family were happy to light the first Advent Candle.

This is from 12/11- the toys collected for UCC Freeport food pantry. Pretty nice! We are a small but very generous congregation. Thank you!



On the third Sunday of Advent (December 11th) some of the Sobey family were in attendance and graciously lit one of the Advent Candles.



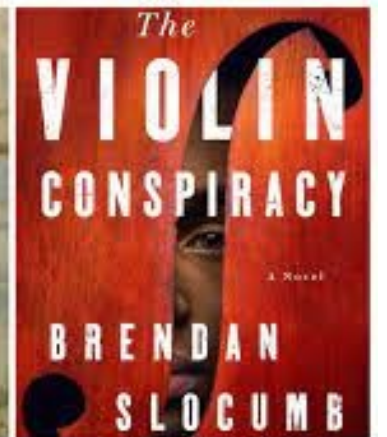
## BOOK REVIEW:

Submitted by Lou Gaspari

### *The Violin Conspiracy*

*By Brendan Slocum*

A first novel by Slocumb and it is a fantastic page-turner and also a literary thriller. The novel gives you a view of the classical music world and its very white and racist culture. This is the challenge that a black violinist faces and has to endure. You will learn a great deal about classical music and how Ray McMillian (main character) confronts these problems and solves the mystery of the stolen Stradivarius violin. If you enjoyed "The Queen's Gambit" you will love this book. This is a great read. ENJOY.



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

## TROOP 121

The Troop paid a visit to the Atria Assisted Living in Lynbrook to honor the vets. The troops in attendance were Jack, JP, Caleb and Jojo. The vets were delighted to have the boys pay such a heart-felt tribute.

The troop also had a wonderful pre-Thanksgiving dinner at West Hills County Park in Huntington. A few of the troopers spent the night camping out. Brrrr.



Just in time for their Blue Nose Training in December...so they will be ready for a February camp out. Really brrrrr!

*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

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR:** Hi: I think it is safe to say that you can remove our names from the "get well wishes" in the Bell Tower. Thankfully, we are doing ok, especially Mati; he is doing great. I would like to say though, " We want to thank our Bethany family for prayers, kind thoughts and concern during a difficult time. Bless you all, Mati & Chris Padjus."

*Editor's Note: If you would like us to make an announcement of any sort, please send it to me directly at [cjdagostino@gmail.com](mailto:cjdagostino@gmail.com) or call or text: 516-721-8885*

## WOMEN'S LEAGUE NEWS:

The Christmas Fair was a HUGE success and they would like to thank everyone who helped to set up and put away everything. And to those who worked the tables, cooked and served the food and sold the raffles. And to Santa himself, who took time away from the North Pole just to be with us. Of course, a really big thank you goes to everyone who came and supported this annual effort. We hope everyone had a great time! Thank you!!





*Serving Hungry and Homeless Long Islanders*

Let's Support the INN - During the month of December, a project for the 2022 Christmas Holiday Season will be to support the Interfaith Nutrition Network (INN) by collecting the following items: NEW hats, scarves & gloves (men, women & children); large

bath soap; large shampoo; large conditioner; large lotion; deodorant; shaving cream; razors; Enfamil; adult diapers (pull-ups) Large and XL; children's diapers (sizes 5-6) 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.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Cookie Baking

The Sunday school children baked with “Love” chocolate chip cookies for Bethany’s Thanksgiving dinner. Cookies were wrapped and hand written notes were attached. This is a wonderful event that we hope to continue for years to come! We wish everyone a wonderful holiday season!

The children are working hard on their annual Christmas Pageant. There will be pictures in our next issue of The Bell Tower. The teachers are always looking for new students and teacher assistants!

They wish everyone a very **Merry Christmas** and very **Happy New Year!**



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

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

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

# Thank You All for Sharing Christmas Joy at Bethany!

This Christmas Season we “adopted” two families from the **Mary Brennan Inn** in Hempstead. We have been blessed with the opportunity to provide gifts to brighten Christmas for these families in need.

I am thrilled to report that our Bethany Family went above and beyond in their generosity for these families. We provided multiple bags/boxes of gifts of clothing, toys, books, games, and other surprises for each child, as well as a gift card for each family in the amount of \$250.

Our families, Mark (father), Jennifer age 9, and Matt age 7 and Doris (mother), Valerie age 12, and Dylan age 5 will most certainly enjoy a very special Christmas this year.

Words are not sufficient to express the gratitude I feel for the outpouring of support from all of you in our Bethany Family.

Whether you made a financial donation or chose to shop for a special gift for the children, your generosity is deeply appreciated!

Perhaps you will consider including these families, and the many other families in our communities who experience poverty, hunger, housing concerns and more, in your prayers this Christmas Season.

**Wishing You and your Families a Wealth of Health, a Blessed Christmas and New Year filled with the love of family and friends, Peace to fill our World and Opportunities to make a Difference! ....Carol Henck**







Once again, David Donovan and his crew held another successful Hurricon!

David has many contacts and connections in the industry and many came through to help raise money for Bethany Church. There were a number of vendors and artists. There were also a number of door prizes and raffles. It is always a fun event. Everyone involved puts in an awful lot of their free time. It takes months of planning and coordination.

If you attended, we are sure you would agree. If not, wait for the next one! (Hopefully there is a next one!)



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### 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
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Contact our editor: Charles D'Agostino

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### 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.**

You can email submissions to Charles D'Agostino at [cjdagostino@gmail.com](mailto:cjdagostino@gmail.com) or drop them off to the Church office. Or 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!



## **FOOD PANTRY NEEDS:**

**Y**ou 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.

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

**N**ow 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



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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

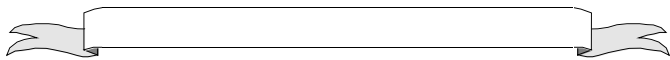
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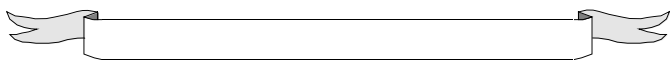
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## Bell Tower Boosters

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 (dec.)