



# THE BELL TOWER



“PROCLAIM GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD  
JESUS LIVES OUR GOD REIGNS”

Vol. 63 No. 2

East Rockaway, N.Y.

February 2023

FRIENDS OF BOY SCOUT TROOP 121

## 23rd ANNUAL PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Sunday March 5, 9am - 12pm

Bethany Church

100 Main Street~ East Rockaway

**TICKETS \$5**

SENIORS AND KIDS UNDER 12 ~ \$4

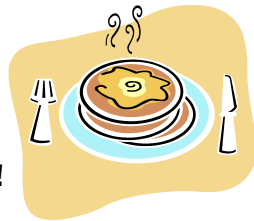
*All Youth Scouts in Class A~ free admission*

(PANCAKES, SAUSAGE, JUICE, & COFFEE)

MANY GREAT RAFFLES TO WIN,

INCLUDING OUR VERY POPULAR 50/50

**Please come down to help  
support the volunteers and  
see the amazing program  
they provide for the scouts!!**



YOU ARE INVITED!

## Women's League Pot Luck Breakfast

Sunday, March 19, 2023

9:00am

Guest Speakers: Virna & Debbie from

Cruise Planners



Bring a friend!

Please sign up in the hall and let us know how many will be attending and what you are bringing. The men are invited as our guests, no need to bring a dish; but it would be helpful if you signed the sheet just to let us know you will be there.

### **Dates to Remember:**

March 5...Troop 121 Pancake Breakfast

March 12...Begin Daylight Savings

March 17...St. Patrick's Day

March 19...Women's League Potluck  
Breakfast

March 26...Sunday School hosts coffee  
hour

March 20...First Day of Spring

April 1...Spaghetti Dinner

April 2...Palm Sunday

**Lay Readers and Ushers are needed for Sunday  
Worship. Please sign up on the sheet in the Hall-  
way 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**

# Reflections on...

The great existential theologian, Soren Kierkegaard once wrote that Christianity is a decision that we make every day in everything we do. He was railing against the comfortable faith of well to do people, that extols middle class virtues and affirms the comfortable in their comfort, while excusing them from the hard work of personal spiritual growth and of holy hospitality. He was concerned that being a Christian in his world, was more about social propriety and attendance at the proper church than it was about the law of love. People went to church in his time and place because that is what the good, proper folks did, and church attendance was part of being a pillar of the society in which they lived.

A lot of us may be able to relate to that, especially those of us who remember church in the peak years of the 1950's and 1960's when the pews were full and if you wanted to be part of the respectable folks, you went to church and you made sure your kids did too. Our churches had multiple services, and the lines between culture, faith and country were sometimes pretty blurry. We may have not have lived officially in a Christian nation, but a lot of the time it sure seemed that way. Just like in Kierkegaard's Denmark which officially was a Christian nation, being a "Christian," was the norm at least in terms of how people identified themselves and what church they went to. But Christianity, as Kierkegaard understood, was not just about belonging to the right church, and not about lift-

ing up the virtues of proper society and it was never meant to be easy. He understood faith as about personal transformation through the disciplines of prayer and worship, but also through service, a lifelong struggle to become the embodiment of God's dynamic, living love.

Howard Thurman, the twentieth century American theologian and mystic whose book, "Disciplines of the Spirit," our book group is reading now, also speaks of our faith journey as about discipline. But Thurman's words, penned by an African-American Pastor in the United States of the early and mid-twentieth century are perhaps even more poignant because of the perspective they represent. Thurman's writing reminds us that the work of Jesus Christ is a communal effort as well as an individual one. That to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God," is about a journey of transformation that affects us as individual disciples. But also as a community of God's creation, causing us to come together to help each other, to learn from each other, and to gather as the sisters and brothers that we are to lift up our voices to God, to listen for her still small voice and to partake of God's grace together.

Christianity doesn't have the cache it once has in our society. Being one of us is not a ticket to fame or fortune, political office or a promotion at the job. In some circles, it is even a liability because of the unfortunate behavior of some of those who claim to represent our faith, or because of what were once referred to as the

“cultured despisers of religion.” The people who come to faith, come seeking something deeper, something more important than checking a box on their resume or getting into the country club. We come because we are all too aware of our faults and failures, our need for grace. But all of us, regardless of why else we are here, are here because we have been called, called to be the way, the truth and the life for our hurting world, to lift up the lamp of hope and to persevere in doing good. We are here because we have fallen in love with the person of Jesus the Christ, with the God whose love created us and redeems us even as he leads us through the darkness and the chaos and out into the light. We know that love is the most powerful and important force in the universe, that love is about life and not death, about the new beginnings that rise up from the ashes of the what went before and about the truth that all of us, every human being., every living thing carries the image and the mark of the One who made them and gave them each to the others as gifts to be shared and enjoyed.

Faith is not about what we call ourselves or what house to worship we attend, it is about whose we are and what that requires of us. The world is not dying and decaying, it is growing toward new ways of living and being, and as Christ’s disciples we are being called to be part of pointing toward God’s grace, the way, the truth and the life. As we embrace the disciplines of our faith, coming to church and hearing the Word, being there for each other and sharing the grace of God in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, our fears fade. As we pray together, argue together, act and seek to discern God’s will together, we begin to catch a glimpse of the kin-dom of God, and so do others around us. That may be what this whole church thing is all about and maybe why we need that discipline, that commitment, now more than ever.

*Yours in Christ*

*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*

February 2023 Greetings,

**H**ow did you make out with that February 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>'s crazy arctic weather?

Oh my gosh – I could not believe my eyes when I looked at my outdoor thermometer Saturday morning. It was 3 degrees out there! Lucky for us, it didn't last too long.

**T**his got me to thinking. How do people who live in those cold and dark parts of the world deal with it all? It turns out that many do quite well. Have you heard of hygge (pronounced hoo guh)? It's a blessed part of the Scandinavians culture which we over here in the States caught on to about 7 or so years ago.

**A** 2016 New Yorker article by Anna Altman gave me some good insight. Hygge is “the quality of coziness and comfortable conviviality that engenders a feeling of contentment or well-being.” Hygge is associated with relaxation, indulgence, and gratitude. Doesn't that sound nice? All without the Western world's guilt inducing frowns on your laziness and non-productivity. It's taking pleasure in little comforts such as a cup of fresh coffee and cashmere socks. Think candles, woven fabrics, fuzzy slippers, pastries, and, if you're lucky, a blazing fire in the fireplace. Hygge can even include snuggling in your favorite beat-up sweatpants that you would never wear in the outside world!

**A**ccording to Louisa Thomsen Brits, hygge is a “practical way of creating sanctuary in the middle of a very real life.” It also is a great cure for SAD – seasonal affect disorder.

**Y**ou can hygge alone. Wrap yourself up in your favorite flannel blanket with a steaming cup of your favorite tea. But hygge is fully realized with loved ones in a relaxed and intimate setting. Think family or a small group of friends.



**S**candinavians are often referred to as the happiest people in the world yet many areas only receive 5 or less hours of daylight in the midst of winter. How do they do it? Well, between a societal set-up which provides health coverage, education, vacation time, ... and hygge, these folks are doing it right!

**H**ow can you hygge in your world?

**F**un Facts:      On January 1, 2023, we had 9 hours and 19 minutes of daylight  
                         On February 6<sup>th</sup> it was 10 hours and 19 minutes  
                         March 1<sup>st</sup> will see 11 hours and 17 minutes.

**I** hope you've been noticing our increasing daylight.

***How will you use your gift of sunshine?***



## **FROM THE EDITOR:**



**B**arbara Sobey has an important prayer request for us.

A six month old baby named Pia needs prayers. She is in the hospital with a rare eye condition and her eyes are bleeding. They are trying to save her eyesight. Pia's mother is a friend of Barbara's granddaughter.

**Update:** Baby Pia has been released from the hospital and is doing well!!

**C****ONDOLENCES** ...to Jo Schneider-Leonsky and her family on the loss of their dear Teddy.

**B**ethany 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.



**T**he Men's Club is excited to announce that the Annual Spaghetti Dinner will be returning this year on Saturday April 1, 2023! More details to follow in the next issue of the Bell Tower. If you have any questions, you can reach out to Bill Lewald at 973-418-5830

## **LONG ISLAND COUNCIL OF CHURCHES FOOD PANTRY NEWS:**

**A**s Chair of Bethany's *Mission* Committee, I'd like to share an excerpt from a letter received from the Freeport LICC whose ministry is in "serving our regions' most vulnerable individuals and families":

☞ With a goal to alleviate hunger, homelessness, and poverty, the LICC aims to help our *Neighbors* achieve self-sufficiency. Therefore, in addition to the direct disbursement of emergency food and relief funds, the LICC offers educational workshops to give our *Neighbors* the knowledge and skills to improve their financial well-being, avoid homelessness, get out of predatory loans, and cut energy costs through financial planning for energy conservation.

☞ Last year we fed 52,905 hungry Long Islanders 477,459 meals. Some of the highlights include 480 Thanksgiving food baskets, 255 Christmas food baskets, Christmas toys to 120 children, School supplies to 160 families, 5,500 household items and 230 pair of shoes."

**P**lease also note the Pantry is running critically low on food. Please keep this in mind when you come to worship on Sunday. Or you can drop off your donations of non-perishable foods during regular office hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday, 9 to 12.



-Maryanne Walling

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

# TROOP 121

## Cold Winter Camping

Troop 121 went cold weather camping at Camp Schiff in Wading River on January 20-22. They had a great time and cooked lots of great food including nearly two pounds of steak. The temperature was below twenty degrees but the scouts came prepared with “mummy” style sleeping bags. The scouts went on a hike across half of the campsite and spotted different plants and animals. They were able to stay warm and have a great time!



(Caleb, JP and JoJo)

## Government Night

Troop 121 went to the East Rockaway town hall to learn about how the local government works. The scouts took roles that were held by the trustees and others. They were given the chance to roleplay as the politician and deliver a speech. To quote Mayor Romano, “This tradition is certainly a great experience for our scouts to really see and understand how our village government operates.” The scouts had a great night and learned a lot.



Mayor JP and Mayor Romano



Trustee Jack (Rich Bilello)



Trustee JoJo (Jack Felbinger)



Troop 121 from Bethany joined Troop 332 and Pack 84 from St. Raymond's to participate on February 6th.

**Troop 121's Annual Pancake Breakfast will be on Sunday March 5 at Bethany from 9:00 AM until Noon. There will be 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](mailto:cjdagostino@gmail.com)

# BOY SCOUT TROOP 121

## TODAY'S YOUTH... TOMORROW'S LEADERS

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

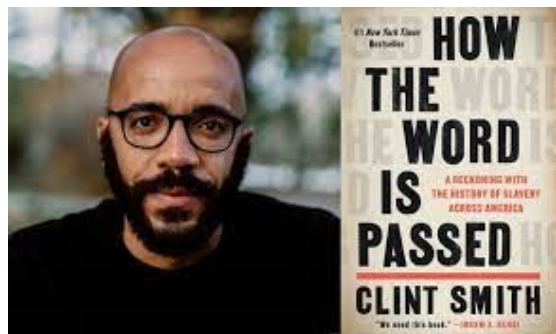


## **BOOK REVIEW:**

Submitted by Lou Gaspari

### ***How the Word is Passed***

By Clint Smith



In this book the author Clint Smith is addressing the truths concerning American Slavery by taking the readers through 7 (seven) historical sites in the States of America. The sites are Monticello, Whitney Plantation, Angola Prison, Blandford Cemetery, Galveston Island, New York City, Gore Island along with a Prologue and an Epilogue. Throughout these sites he presents to the reader what is hearsay about the past and what is fact. He gives to us a clear message to separate nostalgic stories and false narratives of history which aids the willful denial and fuels white supremacy. What he says to the reader is that slavery has been central to the growth of our nation and how our country does not realize this FACT. The conclusion is that we should all try to read history and truly try to decipher the past, acknowledge our errors, correct them and then we will truly be the United States not the States of America.

## **SUNDAY SCHOOL:**

### ***Upcoming Events:***

- ♦ March 26...Sunday School will be hosting Coffee Hour
- ♦ April 2... The annual Sunday School Easter presentation
- ♦ May 7...The children will be decorating church planters
- ♦ May 21.... Confirmation Sunday

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**

**Help support Bethany**

**Be there or be square!**

# Stress relief from laughter? It's no joke



When it comes to relieving stress, more laughs and giggles are just what the doctor ordered. Whether you're chuckling at a sitcom on TV or quietly giggling at a newspaper cartoon, laughter is good for you! A good sense of humor can't cure all ailments, but data is mounting about the positive effects laughter can have:



## Short-term benefits

When you start to laugh, it doesn't just lighten your load mentally, it actually induces physical changes in your body. Laughter can:

- ◆ **Stimulate many organs.** Laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs, and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain.
- ◆ **Activate and relieve your stress response.** A rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response, and it can increase and then decrease your heart rate and blood pressure. The result? A good, relaxed feeling.
- ◆ **Soothe tension.** Laughter can also stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation, both of which can help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress.

## Long-term effects

Laughter isn't just a quick pick-me-up, though. It's also good for you over the long term. Laughter may:

- ◆ **Improve your immune system.** Negative thoughts manifest into chemical reactions that can affect your body by bringing more stress into your system and decreasing your immunity. By contrast, positive thoughts can actually release neuropeptides that help fight stress and potentially more-serious illnesses.
- ◆ **Relieve pain.** Laughter may help ease pain by causing the body to produce its own natural painkillers.
- ◆ **Increase personal satisfaction.** Laughter can also make it easier to cope with difficult situations. It also helps you connect with other people.
- ◆ **Improve your mood.** Laughter can help lessen your stress, depression and anxiety and may make you feel happier. It can also improve your self-esteem.

**Laughter is the best medicine - Go ahead and give it a try!**

**Wishing you a Wealth of Health (and a few belly-laugh!)**

Source: [Mayoclinic.org](http://Mayoclinic.org)

*Submitted By Carol Henck*



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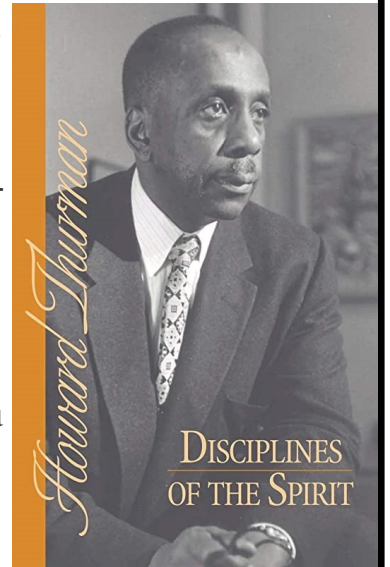
## Did you know that Bethany has a Book Group?

We are starting a new book for discussion, ***Disciplines of the Spirit*** by Howard Thurman. The Book Group meets via Zoom on Tuesday evenings at 7pm. Our first meeting on this book will be January 24. Please feel free to join us.

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.

The more who participate, the greater the reward. Hope to see you soon.



## INN

Serving Hungry and Homeless Long Islanders

21 1 Fulton Avenue Hempstead NY 1 1550 (516) 486-8506 Fax (516) 486-8105 [www.the-inn.org](http://www.the-inn.org)

On behalf of the guests, staff, and Board Members of The INN, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for participating in our 2022 Holiday Adopt—a-Family Program.

Your AMAZINGLY generous donation of gift card(s) totaling \$435.00, along with clothing, toys, and other assorted items, to support the work that we do at The INN, and to support the families who were unable to provide for their children during the holidays, was truly a blessing for each one of them. Thank you for being a beautiful shining light in their lives.

Because of your generosity, and the generosity of so many others, over 100 families (275 children) were adopted. We could not possibly continue to serve the thousands of men, women, and children, who seek our help, without people like you, and the countless others, who believe in our mission and are also inspired to help those in need.

We truly thank you for your selfless spirit of giving! Wishing you, and all those you love, a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia Sucich".

Cynthia Sucich  
Chief Development Officer

Corporate & Community Relations

P.S. Per IRS regulations, it is noted that no goods or services were provided for the above contribution.

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

### 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

[cjdagostino@gmail.com](mailto:cjdagostino@gmail.com) or

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

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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, please*)

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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East Rockaway, N.Y. 11518

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## Bell Tower Boosters

Thank you to **Diane Rafferty**  
for her generous booster.

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.)