



THE BELL TOWER



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

Vol. 63 No. 5

East Rockaway, N.Y.

May 2023

MEMORIAL DAY

REMEMBER AND HONOR



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Dates to Remember:

- May 20...PRC...Learn to make banners
- May 20...Yard Sale (Women's League)
- May 21...Confirmation Sunday
- May 28...Pentecost Sunday
- May 29...Memorial Day
- June 4...Pastor Mark's Last Day
- June 17...HurriCon!
- June 14...Flag Day
- June 18...Father's Day

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HurriCon

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“For everything there is a season...” Ecclesiastes 3:1a

May is one of my favorite months, because it is so bursting with life and with hope after the cold, damp days of winter. The sun is warm, the birds are out, and the air feels heavy with anticipation of the summer, my favorite time on Long Island. Usually, I'd be breaking out the lawn mower to try and tame the grass that seems to have gotten knee high in less than a week, but this year is different. For one thing, I gave away my lawn mower, so I have to wait for the lawn guy to come next week. For another thing, I'm moving away and every time I think of some little thing around the house I need to do for Spring, I remember that in a few weeks, I won't need to order more bird seed for the feeder, or take Stormy for a walk down by the water front, because the lives we have made here will be over, and the big house on Rhame Avenue will no longer be our home.

Our boys grew up here and have made lives here, and they can't imagine any place they'd rather be despite the economic obstacles. That means we will be back, if not to live, then at least to visit. It also says something about the kind of community this is. They say it takes a village to raise a child, and mine have grown up in a church that taught them about the power of love as part of a community that loves people as they are. They learned that not just at home, but especially here at Bethany, where everybody, (to steal a phrase) is somebody special, just as they are in the eyes of God.

I guess I grew up here too. We came here because we could sense the determination of this congregation to live and grow as the beating heart of this community and feel the breathe of the Holy Spirit in a place that had labored on for years without pastoral leadership and yet still hung on to its devotion to our

faith through holy hospitality, and through openness to the many ways that God is still speaking through worship, through prayer and through the winds of change that were blowing off the ocean and calling this congregation to a new life. Kate and I were so impressed by the humor, the deep faith, and the commitment to community we found in this overlooked little church that we decided to come and be a part of it.

And we did. We prayed together, we worshiped together, we sought to reach out and gather the people of Jesus to his house. Most of the time, it was clear by any algorithm you could name that our little church was not viable financially, or terribly “successful.” It grew slowly, not by marketing, but by living the discipleship that we were called to; by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked in our thrift shop, by meeting people where they are, giving them a place to be, by encouraging folks in their struggles and by opening our doors to our community: to all of those groups and activities that serve to strengthen the spirit of this garden in which we have been planted. In normal times and through terror attacks, floods, pandemics and all manner of disasters, Bethany has always been there to meet the needs of all comers in Christ's name and you have always had the flexibility and the courage to embrace the change that is what the abundant life is all about.

The truth is, that whether in prayer and worship, or in service, Bethany Congregational Church is the most authentic expression of our faith that I have ever seen. It was founded by members of 11 different denominations who overcame their differences to create first a Sunday School and then a

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

church, and it is maintained by a congregation who understand that our faith is all about the law of love, worshiped and lived in a communion of disciples with open hearts, open minds, and open hands. I didn't bring that here, I found it here. Everything that I had learned about church administration and church planning in seminary told me that Bethany was a "bad bet.". It was broke, shrinking, and in an area that was not conducive to growth. But this congregation determined to live and to serve, choosing blessings over curses. With the help of the Holy Spirit, you made it happen. You understood that God made the Sabbath for humanity and not humanity for the Sabbath so Bethany has become a people's church, just as Jesus would want it to be: an open door and an open hand.

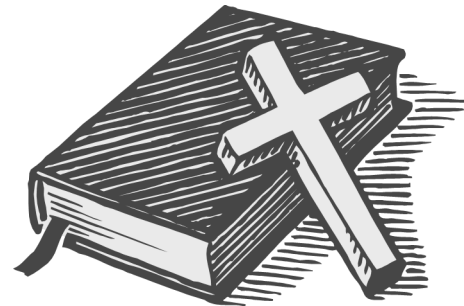
I am heartbroken to leave Bethany, but I know you got this. Remember who and whose you are: disciples of the Risen Christ, bearers of the Good News of God's eternal grace to all the broken places and people of the world. Nothing is more important than authentic worship except for authentic grace lived out in service. Remember that God really, really DOES love you and that it is growing together in communion that we realize the first fruits of that

love as we seek to live the lives Christ calls us to. And perhaps most of all, remember that people are complex and unique, each and every one of us. Our political beliefs, our struggles with our mental or physical health, our socio-economic status, race and sexual orientation are part of who we are, but none of them is as important as the image of God that shines from within all of us. In this divided and violent time, when so many others are retreating into the silos of "us vs them," it is more important than ever that we hold up the light of welcome to all of God's people, holding fast to the law of love that transcends the divisions of our culture. No one does that better than this congregation. That's why I know that the future is pregnant with possibilities for this church, and I am confident for the future, not to mention blessed and exceedingly grateful for all the gifts that you have given to my family and to me.

And, hey, if you are ever in Las Vegas....

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

May 2023 Greetings,

Remember winter? Me neither.

May has taken over in a most delightful way. Warm weather, budding trees and colorful flowers have filled our world with all the pleasures of spring. It's also now time to get out the trowel and gloves and get those gardens going. Hopefully by the time you are reading this, my own vegetable garden will be well underway with fresh produce around the corner.

That got me thinking about those war time Victory Gardens. Me, being me, I had to do a little research and learn a bit more. According to almanac.com, (which seems to be affiliated with the Farmers' Almanac), this push for home vegetable gardens started in 1917 during WWI and was initially called Liberty Gardens. The purpose was to free up crops to be used to feed our soldiers. As the war progressed and the outcome was looking favorable to the US and allies, the name was changed to Victory Gardens. Cool, but our story doesn't end there. The practice subsided until the bombing of Pearl Harbor when Eleanor Roosevelt encouraged the Gardens to be planted again. Did it catch on? You bet! By the end of the war, these home gardens, some two million of them, grew 40% of the produce consumed in the USA. Wow!

Okay, you say. Nice story but so what?

I trust you have been to the supermarket lately. If you are lucky enough to find the produce you want and it isn't mushy from being shipped from who knows where, it costs a small fortune. I think it is time to grow our home gardens again. The benefits are incredible! Fresh food without pesticides or wax. Save a bunch of money. Fresh air and exercise. Environmentally smart action. Morale - it is the greatest feeling to pick that pepper, tomato, or cucumber and say "I grew this!". Don't forget to involve the kids or grandkids. We have this terrible disconnect between the food on our plates and where it comes from. Too many of us, kids too, don't even get outside all that much. Share the miracle of gardening with them.

Wouldn't it be cool if our Bethany families grew home gardens? We could even add a food swap or giveaway table to our coffee hours. "I'll give you some cucumbers for those awesome tomatoes". Sounds good to me! Perhaps we could call them "Blessing Gardens" for that is surely what they would be.



Parish Resource Center Upcoming Events

Mini Pentecost Banner Workshop:

Saturday, May 20th from 10:30 AM to 12 noon. Cost \$10 per person

Join in the fun of banner making and leave with a completed mini size banner for your home, church or to give as a gift. This workshop is offered to new and experienced banner makers. No sewing skills required. Pre-registration is required by May 7th so supplies can be purchased and prepared. Please *call 516-285-0919* to register,

Bethany Congregational Church

2023-2024

Final Slate of Officers as elected at our Corporate Meeting on April 30, 2023

Elected Church Officers

Moderator (3 year term)	(2) Janet Moser
Financial Secretary (3 year term)	(2) Sarah Parrott
Church Treasurer (3 year term)	(3) Andrea Eaves
Church School Superintendent (3 year term)	(3) Jessie Kilgus
Official Delegates (3 year term)	(3) Tina Lewald
	(2) Jon Willston
Editor of the Church Publication	(3) Charles D'Agostino
Clerk of the Corporation (1 year term)	(1) Maryanne Walling

Board of Trustees (three year terms)

(3) Richard Eaves (chair) (1) Doug Hermann (3) William Lewald Jr (2) Charles D'Agostino
(1) David Donovan (3) John (Jack) Donovan

Diaconate (3 year term)

(2) Chair - John Farrell (3) Barbara Valis (3) Ethel Gilloon (3) Jennifer Firth (sub only)
(2) Tina Lewald (2) JoAnn Wright (2) Jessie Kilgus (sub only)
(3) Linda Donovan (sub only)

Bord of Christian Education (3 year term)

(2) Jaime Elliott (2) Tina Lewald (3) Jesse Kilgus

Executive Committee Members-at-Large (3 year term)

(3) Heidi Hofmann (3) Barbara Merna

Mission and Benevolence Committee (3 year term)

(3) Maryanne Walling (3) Barbara Merna (1) Joan Kline

Nominating Committee (3 year term)

(2) Barbara Valis (2) Tina Lewald

Outreach Committee (3 year term)

(2) Ethel Gilloon (2) Carol Henck (3) Barbara Merna
Altar Flowers – Jennifer Firth Beautification - Maryanne Walling
Memorial Fund – Jennifer Firth Historian – Stephanie Maddalone

Pulpit Search Committee:

Trustee: David Donovan Deacon: JoAnn Wright Members-At-Large: Andrea Eaves, Heidi Hofmann,
and Sarah Parrott

TROOP 121

This month Troop 121 will be attending the annual Camporee at Hempstead Lake Park on the weekend of May 20th! It is a chance to meet with other troops, build a giant campfire, put on comedy skits and earn advancements.. Hopefully there will be pictures in next month's issue.

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

BOOK CLUB

Join the Bethany Book Club!

Looking for a good read and maybe some good fellowship to go with it? Join us for Bethany Book Group, Tuesday evening at 7pm on Zoom! We are currently reading Spiritual Disciplines by Dr. Howard Thurman. All are welcome, just call us at 516 599-5768 or e mail us at BethanyOffice@optonline.net for the zoom codes!

The Women's League

The Women's League yard sale is on Saturday May 20 from 9-3. We will be participating in the Village-wide yard sale.



Also, we will be participating in the Huckleberry Frolic with our bake stand on Saturday June 10th. Please contact Cathy Clarke if you want to help or if you just have questions.



Strengthen the Church Offering – May 28, 2023:

The Strengthen the Church offering supports the expansion of ministry and growth of UCC local congregations. Your support of this offering will help the UCC fulfill on its commitment to creating a just world for all by investing in new ministries and practices that meet the emerging needs of local communities.

As God calls our congregations to be the church in new ways, your generosity will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults. We will receive the STC offering on Pentecost Sunday, May 28, 2023.



FROM THE EDITOR:

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.

Envelopes for tithing are now available in the office. So many have been mailing in their donations or using Venmo that it was decided to stop ordering for envelopes everyone but rather just offer them to those who prefer the traditional method of contributing.



Colleen & Kathleen hosted coffee hour at church on April 23rd in honor of their Mom, Jane O'Hara. All snacks were displayed on their Mom's depression glass that she collected over the years. Jane was an active member of Bethany for many years and is greatly missed by all who knew her.

SPRING HAS SPRUNG!

**Please help our Community of Faith
BLOOM
by joining us for In-Person Worship at Bethany!**

SUNDAY SCHOOL:

May 21.... Confirmation Sunday

This will be Pastor Mark's last Confirmation. The confirmed will be Jack, Julia, Danilynn and Taryn

By the way, they were the narrator's at the Palm Sunday Pageant. Tyler was Jesus, Anthony was the donkey. The disciples were David and Connor. The town crowd was Joey, Dylan and Maddie

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

Donations may be left anytime in the shed next to the garage!



Bethany Family's **MOMMAS HOUSE OUTREACH**



The Outreach Committee is pleased to announce the latest opportunity for our Church Family to help others in need. MOMMAS House, located in Levittown, established in 1986, is the only Transitional Residential Program on Long Island created specifically for Young Mothers and Babies.

MOMMAS House makes it possible for a young mother to raise her baby in a caring and supportive environment while she works toward reaching her full potential and develops in her role as a mother. (Website: mommashouse.org)

Serves young mothers ages 18-24, pregnant and/or parenting, and their children (ages 0-5)
Offers a unique stay of up to 2 years, because we know change cannot occur overnight.
Promotes healthy birth outcomes and fosters a healthy lifestyle.

The Outreach Committee is requesting your donations of the following items that are currently needed by the MOMMAS House mothers and babies:

(Please donate only the specific items listed! Thank you!)

- Health Care Kit for Babies
- (Aspirator, thermometer, nail clippers)
- First Aid Kits
- Baby Monitors
- Pac & Play crib sheets
- Regular size Crib Sheets
- Crib Mattress Covers
- 5T – 6T Pull ups
- Newborn diapers
- Size #1 Diapers
- *All Sizes* Spring & Summer Clothes, boys and girls
- Socks for all sizes Babies – Toddlers

Donated items will be collected at Bethany Congregational Church as follows:

Bring donations to Church Service on **Sundays: May 7th and May 28th**

Bring donations to Church Office any time during office hours between **May 7 – May 26**

MONETARY DONATIONS are appreciated as well (We will do the shopping!)

Cash/Check submit to Carol Henck or Church Office. Please indicate Momma's House on check memo line.

VENMO- Venmo@Bethany-EastRock. Please indicate Momma's House on memo line.

Questions? Please contact Carol Henck (516-650-3800)

Ethel Gilloon or Barbara Merna

Please join us in this opportunity to support MOMMAS House!

With Thanks, Outreach Committee

HurriCon returns to Bethany Church on June 17 and November 11, 2023!

This is one of the church's biggest fund raisers of the year, so make sure you mark your calendar and come to the church to support HurriCon!

What will you find at HurriCon 2023?

Comic Books, Writers, Artists, Food, Toys, Action Figures, Comic Book Art, and that unique gift you have been looking for! Come for the food! The Walking Taco will return!

Support the comic art convention that benefits the church that supports the community!
Nuff Said!



In case you did not know, the money raised by these HurriCons benefits Bethany Church directly. Originally, the intent was to repair the gym floor after it was ruined after Hurricane Sandy. (Hence the name). Last year, one of the furnaces at Bethany was replaced. As you can imagine, a building the size of Bethany is constantly in need of repairs and upgrades. Thanks for your help!

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

Donations may be left anytime in the shed next to the garage!

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- Space is now available for advertising. (No full or half pages)
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- 1/8 page....\$200.00/year; \$25.00/month
- 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.
- Send us camera-ready artwork or we will create your ad for you.
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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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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!*



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Bethany Congregational Church

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If you enjoy ***The Bell Tower***
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Thank you.



Mural in the Fellowship Hall

Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie (dec.)