



THE BELL TOWER



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

Vol. 64 No. 2

East Rockaway, N.Y.

March-April 2024



Welcome Back to Bethany!

Come on back!
Sunday services have
room for many more.

Please join us.

Reservations are
NOT required.

So just come on over.

Let's worship
together.

Dates to Remember:

- March 3...Troop 121 Pancake Breakfast
- March 10...Begin Daylight Savings
- March 17... St. Patrick's Day
- March 19...First Day of Spring
- March 24...Palm Sunday
- March 29...Good Friday
- March 31...Easter Sunday
- April 22...Begin Passover
- May 12...Mother's Day
- May 19...Confirmation
- May 27...Memorial Day (Observed)
- June 2...Corporate Meeting
- June 9...Last Sunday School Class
- June 14...Flag Day
- June 16...Father's Day



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

Do you know where our form of Protestantism, “Congregationalist”, comes from?

(Reproduced from a sermon that David offered a couple years back)

I had the great pleasure to teach the confirmation class with Pastor Mark for over ten years. Pastor wanted to get the confirmation students more involved with the service, so in addition to serving communion, they also prepared the elements for our communion meal. I learned a lot from Pastor Mark during those years, and I want to share some of that with you today.

Do you know where our form of Protestantism, “Congregationalist”, comes from? The first Congregationalists were English Puritans who believed that the Church of England, the Anglican Church, was too much like the Roman Catholic church. They thought that the church should be simple and plain and follow the Bible more closely. Take a minute and look around at the layout of our church, is it very plain and simple. Some broke away and formed “nonconformist” churches, which angered the English government. These nonconformist puritans fled England for Holland and then America. They landed in 1620 at Plymouth Rock and formed the Plymouth Colony, our ancestors were known as Pilgrims and were among the first European Americans. They became concerned with education, social justice, ecumenism, and Christian unity. They founded educational institutions such as Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth, which was originally a school for Native Americans.

So, what are some of our most important beliefs as Protestants? The great reformer John Calvin stressed that our faith is not something that we do only on Sunday, it should guide our lives and our decisions every day. Today’s Gospel reading from Mark is called the “compassionate life” and it states that “You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is “You should love your neighbor as yourself”.

Did you know that Congregationalists were leaders in the abolitionist movement in England and America because we believe that all people are equal in God’s eyes and that no person should be the property of another? The word “Congregationalist” refers to the church’s belief that the local church is the gathering body of Christ, each one independent of one another but bound to the others by covenant rather than connection.

The Congregational Church was the first to ordain women in the ministry in 1836, because we believe that God calls both men and women into God’s service. Our parent organization, the United Church of Christ is a leader in the struggle for human rights and human dignity because we believe that Christ is found among the hungry and that is where we should be found as well.

Listen to this reading from Matthew 25. This is called **The Judgment of the Nations** :

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him,

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

'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

So, with everything going on in the world right now, how can we, Bethany Church, love our neighbor in this time of social distancing? Pastor Mark mentioned that many of our neighbors are facing "Food Uncertainty" right now. You can bring a donation of nonperishable food right here to church and it will go to the Long Island Council of Churches Emergency Food Pantry in Freeport. Remember, our own Wally Merna ran the Pantry for years and you can help keep his legacy alive by donating. You can also go online to donate at liccdonate.org. My wife Linda and I have been to the Pantry and have witnessed firsthand the long lines of our neighbors in need. Families need our help.

Another important belief we have as Congregational Christians is what is known as "The Priesthood Of All Believers". We are called upon to spread the good news of God's love for all people and to prove that in everything we say and do. We believe in human liberty, that there is no hi-

erarchy telling us how to worship or how to live our faith. We ourselves are responsible for living God's word and spreading his love in our own lives. Our congregation works together to help each other to become better Christians and better people. We do this to make the world a better place, for all people.

Probably our most important belief is called "Sola Gratia". *Sola gratia* is a Latin phrase that means "grace alone." *Sola gratia* means that salvation from sin and death is provided by God's unmerited favor alone, and we can do nothing to earn it. The concept is expressed in Ephesians 2 which reads, "For *by grace* you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." WE believe that you cannot earn forgiveness of sins or "buy" your way into heaven by your good works. This is because no one is ever fully free from sin. Because of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, we are able to be saved by God's grace, and we do what is right because we have faith. We trust in God's love and do our best to live that love in our daily lives.

Yours in Christ,

David Donovan



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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
March/April 2024 Greetings,

Happy Easter!

I recently had the pleasure of welcoming two new members into our Bethany family, Maria and Maureen. In preparation, we met to discuss just what it means to be a member of Bethany Congregational Church. I found the review refreshing and uplifting to me as well. So, let's talk religion, especially as to where our little Bethany church fits in the grand scheme of things. We'll start with a brief, and I mean brief, overview of the Big Five: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islamism. Each has varied traditions and sects. I will try to just touch on the shared perspectives.

Hinduism, the oldest, focuses on the oneness of all life, not just human, and the pluralistic belief that all humans are of equal value. All thought, words, and actions are to support and promote those values of truth, kindness, empathy, generosity, and equality.

Buddhism is more like a philosophy or moral code in that there is no god or deity. It provides a path of practice and spiritual development leading to Enlightenment. Buddhism is open to all peoples.

Judaism is monotheistic. There is one God responsible for everything. People are given free will but with consequences based on how they use it. Religious texts do not exactly mirror our Old Testament. The first five books, the Pentateuch, comprise the Torah. Jesus is respected but not revered. The Orthodox sect holds with strict adherence to the rules/laws of the Torah. Conservative and reformed Judaism allows for a more modern interpretation. Worship is not solely in Hebrew and men and women can sit together.

Christianity encompasses so much diversity that I'll just address Catholicism and Protestantism here in rather superficially. The Catholic faith places the church as the path to Jesus with the priests and Pope having special authority. Seven sacraments are recognized: baptism, the Eucharist (communion is not an open to all table), confirmation, confession, anointing of sick, marriage, and Ordination. Protestants belief in the power of faith alone to obtain justification by God. Salvation is from divine grace. All believers have the same standing and access as priests and there is no papal supremacy.

Islam is based upon an Arabic word meaning peace, purity, submission, and obedience to the will of Almighty God. Peace is attained by submitting one's self to the will of God. The newest of the Big Five, Islam is centered on the belief and worship of the one true God. Jesus and Mohammad are seen as prophets like Noah, Moses, and Abraham. An interesting note here – many of us might consider Islam an Arab religion but in fact, over 80 % of Muslims are non-Arab!

Please note that not one of these religions advocates harming others – in fact, quite the opposite.

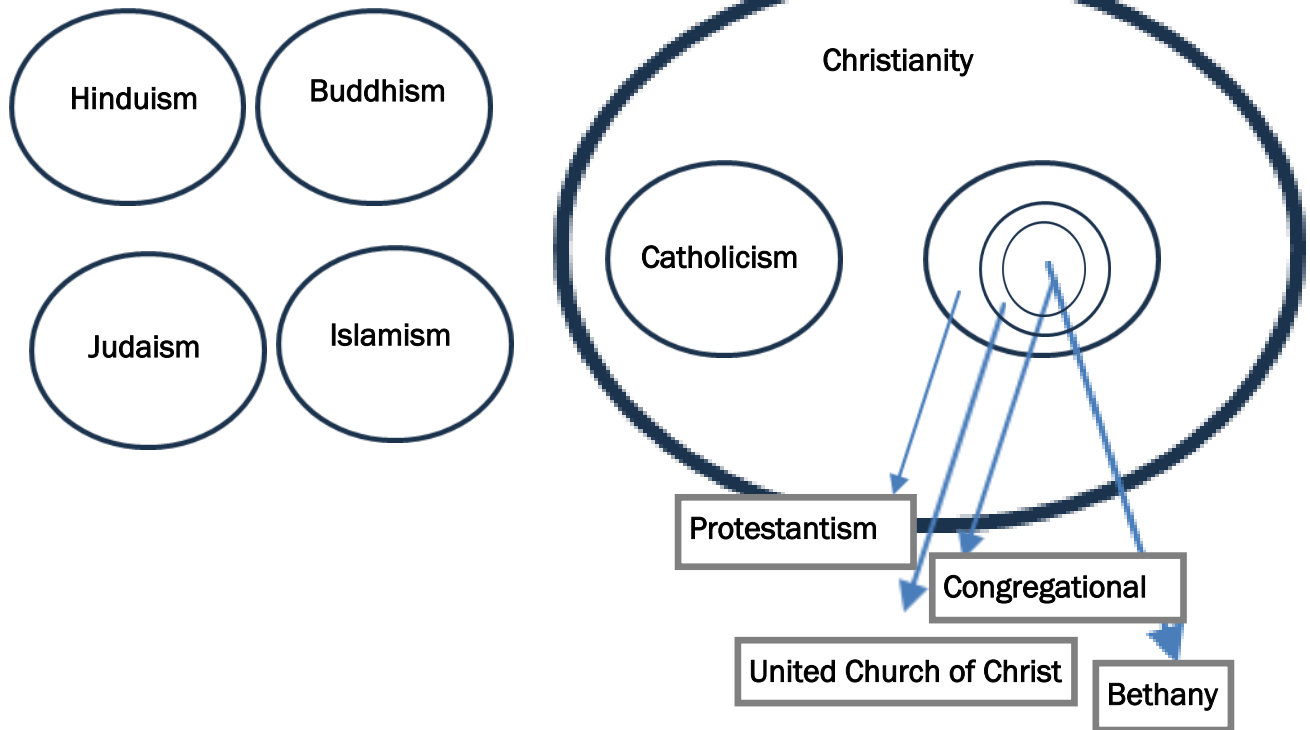
But what about Bethany?

Remember Bethany?

Here we are in the big picture. (see next page)

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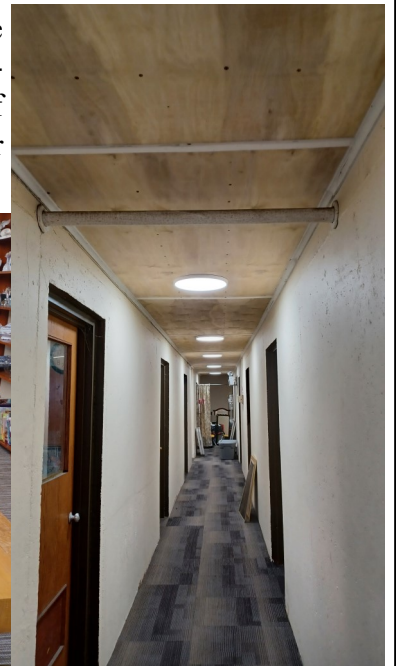
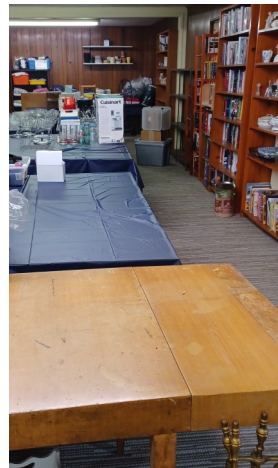
Donations may be left anytime in the shed next to the garage!



But what exactly does it mean to be part of the United Church of Christ and a Congregationalist?
 Look for the next Bell Tower issue to find out!

Thank You to the Women's League of Bethany

You are probably aware of the wonderful renovations in the Thriftique and we give thanks to everyone involved in that effort. But—did you know the Thriftique hallway has a new ceiling and much needed lighting? That, my friends, is courtesy of our own Bethany Women's League. Thank you so much, Women's League, for your caring and generosity!



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TROOP 121

BOY SCOUT TROOP 121


TODAY'S YOUTH... TOMORROW'S LEADERS

The Troop has been very active the last few months. There were two (2) mile hikes plus a 20 mile hike on March 10th. They participated in Government Night at East Rockaway Village Hall. The scouts sat in for the Mayor, Trustees, and other Village officials. They read all of the committee reports.

The Troop has three (3) new scouts from Pack 84. They arrived just in time to help at the annual Pancake Breakfast on March 3rd. Many of the local dignitaries came to support the Troop. There were over forty (40) baskets for the raffle and everyone had a great time, thanks to the hard work of the many adult volunteers who made the pancakes and handled the raffles. The scouts did an outstanding job in serving, setting up and cleaning up at the end.



FRIENDS OF BOY SCOUT TROOP 121
24th ANNUAL
PANCAKE BREAKFAST
Sunday March 3, 9am - 12pm
@ Bethany Church
100 Main Street- East Rockaway
TICKETS \$5
SENIORS AND KIDS UNDER 12 - \$4
Cub Scouts in Class A uniforms - FREE
(PANCAKES & SAUSAGE, COFFEE, JUICE)



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!!



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>

GIRL SCOUT TROOP 2503

This is a kindergarten troop that is just getting started. They meet every other Tuesday at 6:00 P.M. in Room 301 (upstairs from the office.)

For information, contact Christine at 516-320-5976

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

FROM THE EDITOR:

Condolences It is with great sadness that we share the passing this morning of Stephanie Maddalone's mother. Stephanie thanks everyone for their prayers and support.

Congratulations to Maureen Meltzer and Maria Donovan on becoming the newest members to the Bethany family! Welcome! (pictured with Janet Moser in the middle, Bethany's Co-Ordinator. Maureen is on the left.)



According to David Donovan, this month, Bethany Church donated over 100 pounds of food to the Long Island Council Of Churches Emergency Food Pantry in Freeport! Thank you for your continued donation to this much needed cause. And now, the Pantry needs a new home! They have lost their lease! The LICC needs at least a 2500 square foot location. Can you help? Get in touch 516-868-4989. Also, you can donate online at <http://www.liccdonate.org>

Bethany Church has reinvested in the Thriftique! New paint, new lighting, and new carpeting (carpeting donated by Pauline Donovan). Paint and lighting were done by 2 (two) local contractors that we can recommend for work; Mike at L & M Improvements (516-557-5051) and Tom Brolly at (516-382-2664), tell 'em Bethany sent you!

The Board of Trustees is asking all members of Bethany Church to reinvest in the church, much work has been done but much more needs to be done. If you can afford it, we are asking you to donate additional \$5 to your weekly tithe, unless you prefer to make a one time donation. We are also replacing many of the tables in the Parish Hall, the cost is \$60 per table. Thank you!

FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Busy has been the word !!! All of our trustees are putting our noses to the grindstone trying to get the parsonage fixed. We would like to thank Jason Kane for helping us with the electrical work in the parsonage. A lot more had to be done, considering we had to replace the furnace and the flue liner there. Also, we had the Thriftique updated. Thanks to Pauline Donovan, David Donovan, Linda Donovan in helping with the cost of putting carpet down and painting the walls. We would like to thank all of the folks who came down to help move our merchandise out and to have it put back in. It was a big job and everybody deserves a big pat on the back !!! All I can say is "Thank you from the bottom of my Bethany heart."

Our church is hanging in there. As you know, we're going through a really tough time looking for a new pastor and trying to keep our particular blend of Christianity going. It's about service to our community... it's about being humble and working hard to keep this wonderful community going ...it's about helping in any way that we can and- we have that in spades. It always amazes me that when I ask for help the number of people that will walk in and say "I'm here--what can I do?" It truly makes me proud to be a member of this church and community. Thank you again,

Peace and love, Richard Eaves,
Chairman of the Board of Trustees

SUNDAY SCHOOL:

We plan on doing our annual Palm Sunday pageant at the March 24th service. We will not have Sunday school on Easter Sunday. Our class is going great and children seem engaged and enjoy our lessons. We'll plan another Sunday for the children to participate in service in the upcoming months.

Bethany Sunday school takes place at 9:45 am with Sunday service directly following @10:30am. If you know anyone who would like to join our classes please reach out to Tina Lewald at 917-270-6509.

Eggs-tremely Interesting Easter Trivia Facts

Easter lilies signify the true meaning of the holiday: The Lily flower's white color can represent the purity and innocence of Jesus. There are also parallels between the lily's blooming process and Christ's resurrection. The bulb of the flower initially growing beneath Earth's surface represents Jesus' death, while the actual sprout of the flower symbolizes his resurrection.



16 billion jellybeans are produced in the U.S. every year: And not only that... There were reported to be enough Jelly Belly beans consumed throughout 2021 to circle the earth more than five times.



The red jelly bean is the most popular flavor, specifically the Very Cherry flavor! It has remained the most popular flavor for over two decades (facing a brief hiatus from 1998 to 2003 when buttered popcorn took over). However, since 2003, Very Cherry has regained its popularity.

The largest chocolate egg was over 34 feet tall: According to the Guinness World Records, a chocolate egg that was 34 feet tall and weighed almost 16,000 pounds was produced in Italy in 2011. Well, that's just a chocolate lover's dream come true!



What's the proper way to eat a chocolate bunny? It is an age ole debate: While people may be split, a 2022 survey reveals that over 78% go for the ears first!



Egg decorating started in Ukraine: Our families enjoy our longstanding Easter tradition of decorating eggs, but we have Ukraine to thank for that! Ukraine's tradition of painting pysanky was brought to the U.S.. Ukrainian women created handmade dyes and original patterns, with the purpose of transferring goodness from their households to the designs, and pushing away evil.



In Switzerland, there's an Easter bird instead of an Easter bunny: In Switzerland, it's a tale as old as time that a cuckoo bird is the animal responsible for delivering Easter eggs on the religious holiday. And if you think about it, that may make a lot more sense than the Easter Bunny!

Source: thepioneerwoman.com

WISHING YOU ALL A BLESSED EASTER!!!

(submitted by Carol Henck)



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*) Sadly, we lost our book reviewer, Lou Gaspari. Any readers out there to step up?

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!

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

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MEN'S CLUB:

POSTPONED!!

Watch the weekly bulletin for updates.



WOMEN'S LEAGUE:

**BETHANY INDOOR FLEA
MARKET**

SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 2024

10AM-3PM

**CLOTHING, HOUSEWARES,
JEWELRY, TOYS AND MUCH MORE!**

SEE YOU THERE!



Any ladies who are not on my email list and would like to be included, please let me know at cclarke724@gmail.com. I usually send out a recap after every meeting.

Happy Easter everyone! Cathy Clarke

Dear Bethany,

Warmest Greetings! and a very belated Happy New Year! I have thought of you all many times since my wonderful November 12th Coffee Hour. Thank you! I had the best time!

The Choir certainly knows how to lay out a beautiful spread with lots of delicious delectables! I remain moved by all of you who could attend and by the messages personally delivered from those who could not make it. And all of you sent me off with a most generous farewell note! Thank you very much.

Years ago a dear Texas friend told me she had decided that the key to happiness was making good memories. Well, these sixteen plus years at Bethany with Pastor Mark and Kate Lukens, my beautiful faithful and supportive Choir, and all you heartfelt hymn-singing 'People Underneath the Steeple' have given me the very best memories-and happy years! I am forever grateful!



In Love, and in Peace, Kate Whitney

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George Washington "Rules of Civility"

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Bethany Congregational Church

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Thank you.



Mural in the Fellowship Hall

Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie (dec.)