



THE BELL TOWER



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

Vol. 64 No. 3

East Rockaway, N.Y.

May-June 2024

BETHANY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The Two Hundred and Thirteenth Corporate Meeting of your church will be held on Sunday, June 2, 2024, at 11:30 a.m. (By-Laws Article VI, Section 2c) for the following purposes:

1. To elect church officers for the year 2024-2025.
2. To review and approve the church budget as presented by the Board of Trustees for 2024-2025.
3. To consider and vote upon such other business that may be legally called before the Corporate Body.

Respectfully submitted,

Maryanne Walling
Clerk of the Corporation

Welcome Back !

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:

May 19...Confirmation
 May 27...Memorial Day (Observed)
 June 2...Corporate Meeting
 June 8...Huckleberry Frolic
 June 9...Last Sunday School Class
 June 14...Flag Day
 June 16...Father's Day
 June 19...Juneteenth (Federal Holiday)
 June 20...First Day of Summer
 July 4...Independence Day
 July 20...HURRICON!
 August 15...Feast of the Assumption
 September 2...Labor Day
September 10...Deadline for Bell Tower
 September 11...Patriot 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)

A Benefit Comic Convention for Bethany Congregational Church
HURRICON
NO. 889



2 SHOWS
IN 2024!

20TH
JUL
2024

&

23RD
NOV
2024

Bethany
Congregational
Church -
East Rockaway,
New York



“The Priesthood of All Believers”

The Priesthood of All Believers” is when 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, and that there is no hierarchy telling us how to worship or how to live our faith. We are responsible for living God’s word and spreading his love in our own lives.

Pastor Mark has told me in the past, that to grow our church, it is up to us! Sure, the pastor can go out and meet people and invite them to worship BUT studies have shown that if we THE CONGREGATION invite them in, they are more likely to attend and stay. It is up to us as we search for a new pastor to keep Bethany Congregational Church going, keeping this place alive! I am on the Pastor Search Committee and I ask you to be PATIENT and have faith that the Lord will send us the right person at the right time! PATIENCE my brothers and sisters will win the day!

Pastor Mark has incorporated the great theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer into many of his sermons, but do you know who Bonhoeffer is? He is a very cool character, Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor and theologian who took part in resisting the Nazi government during World War II. He opposed Hitler’s anti-Semitic rhetoric and actions. In his book the Cost of Discipleship warns believers against “cheap grace,” the idea of allowing oneself to become too comfortable as a disciple of Christ. In April 1943, Bonhoeffer was arrested and imprisoned at Tegel for smuggling Jews from Germany into Switzerland. On April 9, 1945, less than one month before Germany surrendered to the Allies, Bonhoeffer was executed by hanging with six other dissenters. Here is what he said about Cheap Grace:

“Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, Baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”

So that is pretty heavy, so I’ll leave you with some of his other lighter quotes, where he sounds almost like a religious Yogi Berra, “The biggest mistake you can make in your life is to be always afraid of making a mistake.” “Comfort the troubled, and trouble the comfortable.” And, my personal favorite: “No matter where you go, there you are.” Ok, that one is not by Bonhoeffer, that’s from Dr. Buckaroo Banzai.

But, we are losing our beloved spiritual leader after 25 years, how did he put up with us, some of us are loud and obnoxious. Oops, wait that’s me? First of all, he dealt with us all those years, well that makes him a superhero, and believe me, I know what a super-

hero is! And I have 150 thousand comic books to prove it! I have seen him rush to the aid of a parishioner like the Flash during the very infamous dark Men’s Club Spaghetti Dinner Incident. Want to know more about that? Ask Richard Eaves, he was there!

Think about it, when Mark, Kate, Ben, and James came to us, what was Mark’s OTHER JOB? Anybody know? He was the CEO of Crystal Run Village, a large human service agency that served both the cognitively disabled and severely mentally ill in three upstate counties. For most of the week, he wore a suit and tie and went to an office, sound familiar? And he fought for their human rights And then on Sunday, he changes into his costume and becomes our spiritual leader... just like a superhero!

And guess what, we could have lost him! Yes, Mark did such a great job and was so innovative and creative that agencies around the country courted him, but as he told Kate, “he had a calling”. God was speaking to him. He stayed with us. And he put up with us, he counseled us when we lost a family member, he was there for us, he married some of us, he confirmed us, and baptized us, and he led in service even during the pandemic when no one was here! He was our Pastor and so much more!

And now we have our mission as we go forward into our post-COVID church life. Many challenges now face us; we must attract new members **and** a new pastor. We must continue to be open to everyone who enters these church doors. Showing them love, and mercy. For the church to survive, we must adopt a philosophy that I learned from the television series, the original Star Trek, and the Vulcan belief of IDIC which stands for Infinite Diversity in Infinite Combinations. The basis of Vulcan philosophy. “It represents a Vulcan belief that beauty, growth, progress — all result from the union of the unlike.” Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry himself said it’s “an ideal based on learning to delight in our essential differences as well as learning to recognize our similarities.” Hatred, bigotry, and discrimination of any kind – the concept that a person’s differences make them “lesser” – has no place in *Star Trek*, or in Christianity. Here at Bethany Church, all are welcome! And let’s not forget the Vulcan salute! This will come in handy later on in the service, so pay attention! Did you know the story behind it? As Leonard Nimoy, who played the role of Mr. Spock explains: “*I grew up in an interesting inner-city neighborhood in Boston. The area was known as the West End. The population was mostly immigrants. Maybe 70% Italian and 25% Jewish. My family attended services in an Orthodox Jewish Synagogue, or*

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

“Shul.” We were especially attentive to the high holidays, Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Since I was somewhat musical, I was hired as a young boy to sing in choirs for the holidays and I was therefore exposed to all of the rituals firsthand. I still have a vivid memory of the first time I saw the use of the split-fingered hands being extended to the congregation in blessing. There were a group of five or six men facing the congregation and chanting in passionate shouts of a Hebrew benediction. It would translate to ‘May the Lord bless you and keep you.’ My Dad said, “Don’t look.” I learned later that it is believed that during this prayer, the “Shekhina,” the feminine aspect of God comes into the temple to bless the congregation. The light from this Deity could be very damaging. So we are told to protect ourselves by closing our eyes. I peeked. And when I saw the split-fingered gesture of these men... I was entranced. I learned to do it simply because it seemed so magical. It was probably 25 years later that I introduced that gesture as a Vulcan greeting in *Star Trek* and it has resonated with fans around the world ever since. It gives me great pleasure since it is, after all, a blessing.” Live Long And Prosper, Pastor Mark and Kate.

I going to leave you with this Pastor Mark, I asked your Bethany family to describe you in one word, here are some of the responses I got:

Inspirational
Faithful
Kind
Advocate
Witty
Encouraging
Incorrigible
Humble
Special

Compassionate
Gracious
Shepard
Reverent
Caring
Hope
Amazing
Inspiring
Caring
Helpful
Relevant
Thought
Provoking
Awesome
Accepting
Inclusive

Pastor Mark’s leaving is like the end of an epic, multi-issue, limited series 12 issue storyline but now is the time for a brand new, exciting, all-new #1 issue!

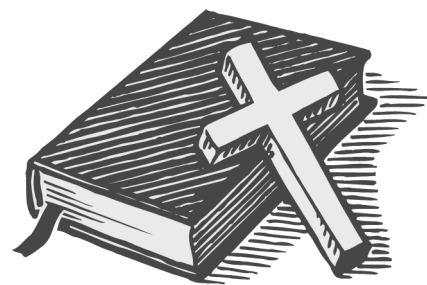
Bethany Assemble! We have a long journey ahead, but it is an exciting journey and we must embrace it!

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we seek your guidance, wisdom, and strength in the days ahead. We have a long journey ahead, help us to be the people you want us to be and the people we know we can be. **Amen.**

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
Summer 2024 Greetings

Last issue we looked at world religions and located Bethany as a little dot within the Congregationalists, within the circle of United Church of Christ, within the bigger circle of Protestantism, within the huge circle of Christianity. Wow!

As promised, what exactly does it mean to us to be part of the United Church of Christ and a Congregationalist? A pleasant surprise for me was in that same Bell Tower issue, David Donovan provided the history and core beliefs of Congregationalism. Thank you, David! Let's look some more, especially at the UCC.

The United Church of Christ came to be, (same as me!) in 1957. It was/is composed of many different protestant denominations but it did not look to lock all into one way of belief or practice. The autonomy of each individual church is UCC constitutionally protected. Pretty cool.

Here are some of the UCC core beliefs:

- Emphasis on unity within the church and a unifying spirit to heal divisions. Seek unity in essentials while allowing diversity in non-essentials with a charitable attitude toward disagreement. (I love that phrasing. We can indeed agree to disagree while maintaining civility).
- Congregations and their members are not required to follow a creed. The only profession necessary is LOVE. (anybody else hearing the music? 🎵 All You Need is Love🎵)
- UCC beliefs do not allow for discrimination of any kind.
- The belief that God gives believers eternal life. This does not require adherence to a heaven/hell model but it's okay if you do.
- Belief in the triune God – Creator God, Resurrected Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
- Each person is unique and valuable.
- Doing justice, seeking peace, and building community are central to UCC identity. Our actions to create and foster economic, environmental, and racial justice are rooted in the teachings of the Scriptures. In other words, we are a faith of action.

Another belief that sets UCC apart from other denominations is the emphasis on our faith as an active, living, and growing faith in which God is still speaking to their followers today.

Congregationalism, as David shared previously, fits beautifully into the UCC foundation. We believe that each person is capable of interpreting God's Word for themselves as all church members are spiritually equal. This diversity in thought and practice becomes our strength as we grow and learn from each other - which we can do because love reigns supreme.

You know, I knew I liked Bethany from the first day I walked through the doors. Now, after reviewing our background, core beliefs, and priorities, I know why.

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!

FROM THE EDITOR:

We hope that you are getting used to the Bi-Monthly issues. We know it's not ideal but at least we are able to keep you up to date on a regular basis. We have a number of contributors and we are happy for their collaboration. Just a reminder: there will not be a summer edition. Our next issue will be the September-October one, with deadline of September 10th. As you know, we are always open to accepting new content. We try to keep everyone interested in Bethany Church.



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!*

Letter to the Editor:

Robert John Dever, 102, of Utica, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, April 10, 2024 at the Mason Care Community. He was born on October 30th, 1921 in Philadelphia, PA, son of James Joseph Dever and Oneita (Greisheimer) Dever. As a teen, he loved the outdoors and nature, and became an Eagle Scout at a young age. At SUNY New Paltz Bob met Dorothy Kirch, the love of his life. Both graduated with degrees in education. Robert and many of his classmates immediately left to serve in WW II. Enlisting in the Marines, he served as a Second Lieutenant defending our country in the battle for Okinawa in the South Pacific.

Bob is remembered by many as a hard-working man, deeply committed to his wife and family. He was a teacher and later the Principal of Wheeler Avenue Elementary School in Valley Stream, NY. During his 26 years as Principal he greatly impacted thousands of lives, in both his school and community, retiring with many life-long friends. Bob's investment in people rather than things seemed to be the key to his influence.

Robert and Dorothy raised their family in East Rockaway, NY, where they made many life-long friends both in their neighborhood as well as Bethany Congregational Church.

After retirement Bob and Dorothy spend 20 years in Brewster, NY, living in an apartment overlooking a reservoir on their son John's property. There he formed new friendships thru the Brewster Baptist Church and by walking with a group each morning in the Danbury Mall. Life was also enriched by joining two clock repair clubs and attending luncheons with his 1939 graduating class from Peekskill High School. Bob enjoyed gardening, fishing, woodworking, reading and crossword puzzles. He especially looked forward to our annual October 'workday', a time when the whole family gathered.

Robert spent 10 years living with Dorothy at Acacia Village in Utica, NY. He formed new friendships with staff and residents, and enjoyed many family gatherings for birthdays and anniversaries. Bob became known for his humorous jokes, and free watch repair services. Acacia Village was a wonderful place to live and flourish, with an exceptionally attentive and deeply caring staff.

Bob was predeceased by his loving and devoted wife Dorothy, and is survived by son Jim and his wife Sue of Sauquoit, NY, son John and his wife Christine of Purcellville, VA, son Tom and his wife Wendy of Hamden CT, daughter Kathy and her husband Dave Zimpelman of Ventura, CA, and son Dan and his wife Linda of White Plains, NY. Bob's memory will live on in his 13 cherished grandchildren and 23 great grandchildren. Many nieces and nephews will remember Uncle Bob with fondness. He maintained many lasting friendships with his teaching staff, church friends and Masonic Care Community staff and care givers.

His family extends special thanks to the staff at Acacia Village, and the Pavillion for their friendship and excellent care. A celebration of life will be held at a future date. Arrangements are with Smith Funeral Home, 3022 Oneida St., Sauquoit. Online tributes at www.smith-funeralhome.com

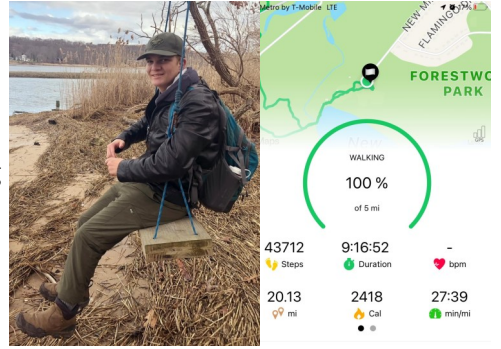
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Donations may be left anytime in the shed next to the garage!

TROOP 121

The Boys have been active with a couple of hikes and camping trips, plus the usual Monday Evening meetings.

On March 12 they went on a nice Sunday hike 20 Miles on the Long Island Greenbelt Trail from Blydenburgh Park to Sunken Meadow State Park



On March 16, the Troop helped at the Garden City Bird Sanctuary



On May 3-5..the boys went camping in Alpine, New Jersey:



On May 17-19 is the Annual Camporee at Hempstead Lake. Last year, they got rained out. They are hoping for better weather this year.

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

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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FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

The Trustees are non-stop busy. In addition to our usual order of business with the budget and finances, we have been working feverishly to get the Parsonage ready for a new pastor (as soon as the committee chooses the best candidate.)

We have had the entire home painted (LHS Key Club), all of the electric has been updated (thanks to Jason Kane), the basement has been cleaned out (thanks to some of the scouts of Troop 121), the floors have been scraped and finished, a few windows were replaced, some plumbing was needed (all thanks to Mike Magliaro of L & M Improvements).

Coming up, we expect to replace the kitchen floor in the parsonage, and we hope to have the backyard cleaned out and planted with grass. That would leave just a few minor details to take care of. We also hope to have the potholes in our parking lot filled.

We have had a number of volunteers who have helped on a numerous occasions. We really appreciate all of the help we can get. Please let us know how you can help.

Yours in Christ, Rich Eaves, Chairman of the Board of Trustees



SUNDAY SCHOOL:



Congratulations to our Confirmands

**Anthony Kilgus, Quinn Meltzer,
and Kennedy Meltzer**

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.

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BETHANY CONGREGATION OUTREACH INFANT LAYETTE PROGRAM

*Lutheran Social Services of New York
New LIFE Center Long Island
311 Uniondale Avenue
Uniondale, NY 11553*

THE OUTREACH COMMITTEE IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE

another opportunity for our Church Family to help others in need. The Infant Layette Program of Lutheran Social Services of New York is a ministry that helps mothers and families in need by providing them with basic necessities for their new babies. The mothers that are referred by social service agencies, hospitals and clergy, receive a generous amount of infant clothing sized Newborn to 24 months (packaged as a layette.) They also receive diapers, formula, blankets, and many of the other essential items listed below. The New LIFE Center has been blessed to have generous support from many congregations, organizations, and individuals. Through baby showers, social ministry projects, and individual donations, they are able to reach out to many families who struggle to provide even the basics for their infants.

The Outreach Committee is requesting your donations of the following items that are currently needed by the Infant Layette Program:

Items with ** denotes items MOST NEEDED! Please donate only specific items listed!

Diapers (newborn to size 6) **	Shampoo**
Diaper bags**	Baby Wash**
Receiving blankets**	Lotion**
Fleece blankets**	Soft shoes** (age newborn to 24 m)
Bottles**	Infant socks** (newborn to 24 m)
Pacifiers**	Onesies ** (newborn to 24 m)
Bibs**	Stretchies** (newborn to 24 m)
Burpcloths**	Infant toys (small)**
Baby towels/washcloths	Infant stuffed toys (small)**
Baby wipes	Cloth baby books**
Q-Tip's/cotton balls	Sleepers/Sleep sacks (newborn-24)
Safety items	Outfits (newborn – 24 months)
Crib sheets/ Changing pads	Baby jackets/sweaters (newborn- 24)

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BETHANY CONGREGATION OUTREACH INFANT LAYETTE PROGRAM

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

Bring donations to Church Service on Sundays: June 2nd and June 9th

Bring donations to Church Office any time during office hours between June 2nd and June 7th

MONETARY DONATIONS are appreciated as well!

- ♦ **Cash/Check** submit to Carol Henck or Church Office. Please indicate Layette Program on check memo line.
- ♦ **VENMO**- Venmo@Bethany-EastRock. Please indicate Layette Program on memo line.

Please join us in this opportunity to support

New LIFE Center-Infant Layette Program!

THANK YOU!! Outreach Committee (Carol Henck, Barbara Merna, Ethel Gilloon)

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

WOMEN'S LEAGUE:

Thank you to everyone who helped us out for our first Indoor Flea Market. Thursday night had a great turnout. With all who came out, it only took us a half hour to bring everything up. A big thank you to Danny for setting the tables up for us. This made Thursday night go quicker.

Thanks to the Women's League who worked all day Saturday. We set up early, worked the Flea Market and packed everything up. However, we packed up a lot less! We took in \$1,416.85. Nice job everyone!

Our next event is the Huckleberry Frolic scheduled for Saturday, June 8, 2024. We will be selling our baked goods. We try to look as represented as possible at this event, so if you can march, that would be great. Come visit us at the Bethany booth! Thank you again! Cathy



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(516) 485-5577

E-mail: pcurryesq@aol.com

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George Washington "Rules of Civility"

Civility Is Contagious

"So I say, live by the Spirit . . . and the fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control, and against such things there is no law."

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Barbara Valis

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Church. It helps to offset costs.



Mural in the Fellowship Hall

Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie (dec.)