



THE BELL TOWER



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

Vol. 64 No. 5

East Rockaway, N.Y.

November-December 2024



ANNUAL HOLIDAY/CHRISTMAS FAIR

Saturday, December 7, 2024
10 AM - 3 PM

Bethany Congregational Church
100 Main Street
East Rockaway, NY 11518
Call (516) 599-5768 For Directions
NO VENDORS PLEASE

New Gift Items, Raffles, Jewelry, Toys,
And Gift Baskets Will Be For Sale.
There Will Also Be A Table Filled With
HOME BAKED GOODIES "TO GO"
And A "Lunch Cafe".

Come One And All; There's Something For Everyone!

VISIT WITH SANTA
FROM 10 AM
'TILL 12 NOON.
SEE YOU AT THE FAIR!!

HELP WANTED

Maryanne Walling is retiring as our secretary the end of this year. She will be happy to train the next person. Office hours are flexible. It is part-time...12 hours for the week. It pays \$17.50/hour. Please call the office and speak with Maryanne.

Thank you.

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 Maryanne for further directions.

OFFICE HOURS: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 Noon (closed Thursdays)

Dates to Remember:

- November 23...HURRICON!
- November 28...Thanksgiving Day
- December 7...Christmas Fair
- December 8...Trustees Meeting
- December 21...First Day of Winter
- December 25...Christmas Day
- December 25...First Day of Hanukkah
- January 1...New Year's Day
- January 6...the Epiphany
- January 16...Executive Board Meeting
- January 20...Martin Luther King, Jr. Bday
- February 14...Valentine's Day
- February 17...President's Day
- March 5...Ash Wednesday
- March 9...Daylight Savings Begins

HURRICON! STORMS INTO EAST ROCKAWAY!
SATURDAY 10AM - 5PM
NOVEMBER 23RD 2024
EAST ROCKAWAY, NY 11518
MEET COMIC BOOK ARTISTS AND WRITERS
COMICS TOYS ART FELLOWSHIP GREAT RAFFLES!
PROCEEDS ALL BENEFIT BETHANY CHURCH
ADMISSION \$5 DONATION
KIDS UNDER 12 IN COSTUME GET IN FREE!

HurriCon returns to Bethany Church on Saturday, November 23, 2024, from 10 AM to 4 PM. Come to the church for comics, toys, fellowship, Funco pops, unique Christmas gifts, food, The Walking Taco, original comic art, fellowship, comic book artists and writers, and an amazing raffle table. See you there!

From the Gospel of Matthew 20: 1-16

☞ For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard. When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first."

When those who were hired about five o'clock came to the vineyard, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when they first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

This Gospel reading from Matthew at the outset might be a little hard to take, and maybe a little annoying, the landowner hires different people at different times of the day and the workers all work different amounts of time. At the end of the day, the landowner pays them all the same wage! How is that fair? Think about it... if you worked for eight hours straight in the fields, that's hard work. But the next guy worked one hour and got the same pay? HUH??

This is a parable that always annoyed me. What do you mean all the workers got paid the same? Well, this is a parable told by Jesus! And what is a parable?

A parable is a simple story illustrating a moral or religious lesson. Jesus told a lot of these, and this parable is in response to Peter's question in [Matthew 19:27](#): "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" Peter wanted to know what reward would be given to those who give up everything to follow Jesus. In response, Jesus explains this truth about the kingdom of heaven.

Think about this, planting, maintaining and harvesting vineyards back in first-century Israel was strenuous work requiring hard physical labor in the heat of summer. The owner of this particular vineyard went to the marketplace at 6 in the morning to find workers for the day. He offered the wage of one denarius, at the time the equivalent of a Roman's soldier's pay for a day. The workers in the first group were more than happy to work for the generous wage.

As the day progressed and more workers were hired, the specific wage was not mentioned, but the landowner promised to pay "whatever is right." Apparently, the workers were sufficiently confident of the landowner's character that they took him at his word. Altogether, four groups of workers were hired, the last group just one hour before the end of the day. When the time came for the wages to be paid, the first group of workers saw the last group being paid a denarius and were naturally thinking they would be paid more since they had worked the longest. Their anger against the landowner spilled forth when they saw they would all be paid the same, even though they got exactly what they had agreed upon when they were hired. The landowner was forced to defend his actions to the first group, even though he had dealt with them in perfect fairness according to the contract.

The landowner, whose decision to pay all the workers the same was an act of mercy—not injustice—represents God, whose grace and mercy are

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

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

shed abundantly upon those of His choosing.

I can also relate this parable to all of us here at Bethany Congregational Church of East Rockaway. We are a small, but very active group. Being small, all of us are all called upon to wear many hats. I know, I have worn a bunch. The person who does more in the church, because they feel they have to, will receive the same reward as the person who cannot because of their personal situation and we have to respect that. One of the traits we must look for in searching for our new pastor is a person that can go into the community and inspire people to join our church. And with that, we must inspire people to join us by the example we set in the world.

I can relate my own story of how my family learned about Bethany Church because as the family legend goes, Reverend Macudary was walking down Fifth Avenue in his straw hat and invited the three Donovan boys to Sunday School. Can that still be done today? I hope so and we need a new pastor who can do that, and by example we need to do the same thing. Mention Bethany Church to the new neighbors, invite them to HurriCon on November 18th, tell them about the Thrift shop. We need to get the word out that Bethany is a welcoming place.

Whether God calls someone early or late in life to partake of His grace, the glory and praise for our salvation is His and His alone and in no way amounts to unfairness. Just as the landowner has a right to do what he wishes with his own money, so does God have the right to have mercy

on whom He will have mercy. The first group of workers in the vineyard resented receiving the same wage as the last group. Their attitude was similar to that of the Pharisees, who were incensed at Jesus' teaching that others could inherit a heavenly kingdom they thought was reserved for them alone. They despised Jesus for offering the kingdom to the poor.

The message in verse 16, "the last will be first, and the first last," is that no matter how long or how hard a believer works during his lifetime, the reward of eternal life will be the same given to all. The thief on the cross with Jesus at the end, whose life of service was limited to a moment of repentance and confession of faith in Christ, received the same reward of eternal life as the apostle Paul.

The rest of the workers received their wages without complaint or envy of others. In the same way, as Christians, we should rejoice when others come to the Savior, as we should rejoice in the service others render to Him. He is faithful to reward us for our service as He has promised, and how He rewards others should be of no consequence to us, nor should it affect our devotion to Him.

Yours in Christ,

David Donovan



Bethany Bell Tower ...is a bi-monthly publication of

BETHANY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

100 Main Street, East Rockaway, New York 11518 (516) 599-5768
Maryanne Walling, Secretary, bethanyoffice@optimum.net, www.bethanycong.org

Mildred and Art Roemer, Editors Emeritus and Guiding Lights
Charles D'Agostino, Editor, Jennifer Valis, Assistant Editor
Reach us directly at: cjdagostino@gmail.com or 516-721-8885

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

As you know, we had to switch to a bi-monthly publication of The Bell Tower due to the increase in printing costs. It seems to be working out well enough. That said, this two month period encompasses a lot, and I mean, A LOT, of important dates and celebrations.

First up is Thanksgiving, a time of gratitude for our many blessings. I, personally, am grateful to the Herrmann family for the wonderful Thanksgiving dinners they made possible for our communities for so many years. Unfortunately, we are unable to continue that tradition in their absence (they have moved out East). However, we have generous souls willing to share their personal Thanksgiving feast with shut-ins within our Bethany membership. That's the Bethany spirit!

Next is the Advent Season, a four week period of preparation, reflection, and anticipation of the coming of Christ.

That of course, brings us to Christmas, my favorite time of the year. It is a time of love, hope, and joy. People seem a little nicer as hearts grow a little warmer. Bask in that warmth when you find it. Be that warmth when you can't.

Lastly on my list is the start of the Epiphany season on January 6th. This date is also known as Three Kings' Day, commemorating the Magi's visit to baby Jesus. The story of the Magi as told in Matthew goes like this. After the birth of Jesus, wise men from the East, (perhaps astrologers), came to Jerusalem inquiring the whereabouts of the new king of the Jews whose star they had observed and followed. King Herod freaked out. Prophets had claimed the ruler would be born in Bethlehem so Herod sent them there, imploring them to return to him with the location so he could worship the new king also. Right. The Magi went on their way, found the child, gave gifts and worshipped him. Fortunately, they were warned in a dream about King Herod's true intention and made a crucial choice. They returned to their homes by a different route, ignoring the worldly dictates of Herod. Phew, thank goodness!

Great story, right? But what does this have to do with us in our day and age? Well, those Magi recognized something special. They fixed their eyes upon that star, the Christ Star, and did not turn away. They did not do so looking for political favors or recognition. Instead, they sacrificed (expensive gifts), payed homage and worshipped.

So, my friends, what star will we fix our eyes upon in 2025? Where will our journey take us? Will we get derailed by desires for wealth, fame, reward, recognition? Will our desire for attention thwart our pure objectives? The reports of the Magi do not show them filled with self-importance; quite the opposite. Perhaps if we, like the Magi, fix our gaze upon the Star of Christ, our journey will lead us, like the Magi, closer and closer to Jesus. One last note – paths are seldom straight. The Magi had a choice to make. Accept the dream message and stay true to their spiritual commitment or follow the dictates of the powers of the world and report to Herod. We face choices as well, often on a daily basis! When in doubt, follow your heart.

Where ever you find yourself on your journey, don't forget the path to Bethany. Your welcome has no expiration date and is always sincere. We may not have all the answers but we are happy to discuss the questions. We'll work the rest out together.



FROM THE EDITOR:



Baptism of twins Emerson and Riley Boll on October 13. Parents are Mathew, (grandson of Barbara Sobey), and Heather Boll.



DEEPEST
CONDOLENCES

We are sharing the sad news of the passing of Joseph Mihalik, the father-in-law of Kenny Gilloon and father of Robyn Gilloon. Please keep the Gilloon family in your prayers during this difficult time.

Poinsettias are a Christmas Tradition here at Bethany Church.

Submitted by Jennifer Firth, Flower Fund

As you know we always have a beautiful display of Poinsettias for our Christmas Eve service. I found this article I'd like to share with you about the history of the Poinsettias. If you'd like to order Poinsettias for the holiday season, please fill out the order form that will be available in church beginning December 1st and ending December 15th.



“This Is Why Poinsettias Are the Official Christmas Flower”

By Claire Nowak, Readers Digest

There's no denying that poinsettias make bright, festive decorations during winter months. But they're native to Central America, particularly southern Mexico, and they're actually colorful leaves, not flowers. So why do we consider them the official Christmas flowers anyway?

The reason we associate poinsettias with the holidays comes from an old Mexican legend. A young girl named Pepita was sad that she didn't have a gift to leave for the baby Jesus at Christmas Eve services. Her cousin tried to comfort her and said that Jesus would love any present from her, even the smallest one. With no money to buy a real gift, Pepita picked a bouquet of weeds that she walked past on the way to church. (Other versions of the story say an angel came to her and instructed her to pick the plants.) When she got there, she left the weeds at the bottom of the nativity scene. All of a sudden, the weeds transformed into beautiful red flowers.

From that day on, they became known as “Flores de Noche Buena,” or “Flowers of the Holy Night.”

Poinsettias get their American name from Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico, who brought them to the states from Mexico in the early 1800s. They didn't become traditional holiday decorations until the entrepreneurial Ecke family started promoting them a century later. Paul Ecke Jr. sent free poinsettia plants to TV studios across the country, including “The Tonight Show” and Bob Hope's holiday specials. Eventually, the trend caught on, and now poinsettias are among the most popular plants sold in the U.S. Congress even declared December 12 to be National Poinsettia Day, the anniversary of Poinsett's death.

Source: <https://www.rd.com/culture/poinsettias-official-christmas-flower/>

Bethany is in the process of updating our Church Directory. We wish to include our friends, members and supporters. Please complete the following form and return to the Church Office by January 5, 2025. Thank you!

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Family members who live at same address:

Address: _____ Town: _____ ST: _____ ZIP: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell: _____

Email: _____

TROOP 121



In October, Troop 121 embarked on a journey to the Hudson Highlands. The troop took the opportunity to experience some landmarks on the trail. They explored an abandoned barn and looked at the ruins of the Cornish estate. The hike was seven (7) miles and it was not easy, with an elevation of over 1,000 feet! The troop members, new and old, had a blast and continue searching for new adventures.

On the weekend of November 8-9, the troop ventured out to Baiting Hollow Scout Reservation. The troop hosted its annual "Turkey Trip" with an open invitation to previous and present members and their families. They had a traditional thanksgiving feast with homemade sides and a turkey cooked over hot coals. Scoutmaster Hugh Boyle announced his retirement at the end of this year, and is looking for someone to open a new chapter with the troop.



Troop 121 would like to remind the readers of this publication that new members are always welcome.



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

Congratulations to our local Daisy Troop 2503 who bridged to Brownie in June. They will be kicking off the year with a Toy Drive Take Action Plan. They will be collecting unopened toys for donation to The Coalition for the Homeless. Please drop all unopened toys in the box marked Brownie Troop 2503 located @ Bethany Church. Donations will be accepted until November 29.

If you have a 2nd grade girl interested in joining Brownies, you can reach out to Christine for more into (516) 320-5976

They meet every other Friday at 3:30-4:30 P.M. in Room 301 (upstairs from the office.)

FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Let's talk about Bethany. Let's talk about how impressed I am with the entire congregation. When we stand in front of you and we ask for help, you guys just show up and say we're here...let me help. It is truly the way.

Now, what's going on in our small but powerful Church? Prioritizing what needs to get done can be difficult but having a board that focuses on our needs and helps guide me as to what needs to be done is truly amazing. I just want to give you an idea of how I come up with what needs to be done. I start by discussing and these discussions can go on for up to a year, if it's a big project and we basically break it down and we figure out the best way to handle the problem at hand. Once we get to a solution, it's a matter of paying for it. That could be difficult. If we have somebody in our congregation who is an expert we ask for help and, amazingly, the project starts. Also, while this discussion is going on we start saving to be able to finish the project and complete it. This can be frustrating for people who are not at the meetings when I talk about certain things and they don't see any progress but they have to understand we don't have the funds available yet to be able to do a certain project but by keeping it fresh and talking about the project we never lose sight of our goal.

The parsonage is finished except for some gardening that needs to be done. The parking lot has been repaired and this will give us another two (2) years to save some more money to rip up the old parking lot, fix the draining cisterns and lay down new asphalt. The gutters have all been completed. We are in the beginning stages of putting an electric sign facing the CVS parking lot. We have a good plan and we should have it completed sometime in February or early spring. We are looking at a new type of paint it is an acrylic paint that can go over all the old paint making this job a little easier and less expensive. It is a very high priority to make sure that our church will have better curb appeal. This will also probably happen in the early spring. We have some large branches that need to be trimmed and we're looking at that also.

Financially, we're hanging tight...okay not great but not bad. That is the Bethany way. I want to thank everybody! Let's keep up the good work. Because God really loves you, he really really does!!!! Richard Eaves Bethany chairman of the board of Trustees

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

SUNDAY SCHOOL:

Classes are in session and well attended. We are bringing back the "change for Church" pocket. Don't let your loose change wear you down... Leave it for Bethany!

The Sunday school will be hosting a fundraiser. Starting in mid November you can purchase \$10 football Super Bowl boxes. We hope to raise at least \$400 for the church!

Dates to remember in November and December:

Sunday school will meet on: November 17,24; December 8,15

December 22 will be our Christmas Pageant!

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.

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!

Sharing Christmas Joy at Bethany!

This Christmas Season we “adopted” one family from the **Mary Brennan Inn** in Hempstead! We are blessed with the opportunity to provide Christmas gifts to brighten the Holiday season for this family.

The Outreach Committee is requesting donations of specific clothing items and toys on the children’s Christmas Lists, as well as cash donations.

Meet our Family!

Mother ~ Mary Ellen P., Malcolm age 14, David age 10, Lee Ann age 8, Ashley age 6

How can you help?

COME TO CHURCH! A Christmas Display with gift requests for each child will be available for you to select gift options during each Sunday Church Service/ Coffee Hour, as well as within Church Office hours during the week.

MONETARY DONATION: Cash donations are also requested as we need to purchase a gift card for the parent. Cash may also be donated for us to purchase gifts.

CASH/CHECK to *Carol Henck* or *Bethany Congregational Church*. Please indicate Adopt-A-Family on check memo. **VENMO-** Venmo@Bethany-Eastrock (Include Adopt-A-Family on memo line)

GIFT DROP OFF: ****All Gifts must be UNWRAPPED! ****Please include label with **NAME of Child** on each donated gift. ****Gifts may be dropped off at Sunday Church Service or at the Church Office during office hours.**

****SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8th** is the **FINAL DAY** for submitting gifts or monetary donations.

*Thank you all for your Generous spirit in helping our
“Adopt-A-Family”*

Parish Resource Center® Saturday December 7th, 2024 from 11am to 1pm
Join Us For A Christmas Holiday Celebration
Festival of Miniature Trees and More!

Beautiful, one of a kind, hand decorated miniature Christmas trees, holiday wreaths and decorations will be on display, and then raffled off on December 7th at 12pm. Winners need not be present at time of drawing. Raffle tickets \$1.00 each or a book of 6 for \$5.00
Raffle tickets may be purchased at the door, by stopping by, or calling the center



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Thanks to Bethany Congregational Church of East Rockaway, UCC, East Rockaway Kiwanis Club, and AMC B&T for their generosity that made this delivery to the Mary Brennan INN in Hempstead this past Monday (October 28, 2024) possible!
Thank you!!

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

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

COMEDY NIGHT AT BETHANY

November 3, 2024

Five stand up comedians and an Improv Group, featuring our own Maureen Meltzer, entertained our congregation

Thanks to David Donovan for spearheading the undertaking.

Snacks and drinks were available for purchase...a fun time was had by all who attended!



Bethany Church Presents:
**Coffee, Cookies,
Comedy, And Cake!**
SUNDAY NOVEMBER 3RD @ 7PM
In The Parish Hall \$ 5 Tickets

COMEDIANS: Improv From BAM?
Joe Pontillo Featuring
Matt Vita Our Very Own
Mike Keegan Maureen Meltzer!
Victor Pleacoff

Refreshments And Snacks Will Be Available!
100 Main Street East Rockaway NY 11518



WOMEN'S LEAGUE:



BETHANY CHRISTMAS FAIR SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2024

10AM - 3PM JOIN US IN OUR CAFÉ FOR LUNCH

RAFFLES, NEW TOYS, JEWELRY, LOTS OF NEW CLOTHING

LOT OF FUN! Hope to see you there!

If you have any questions, please see Cathy Clarke.

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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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Bethany Congregational Church

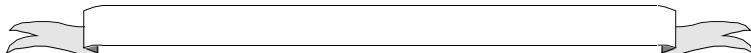
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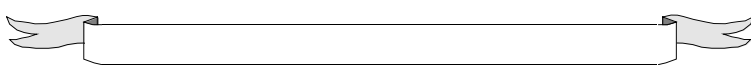
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It helps to offset costs.
Thank you!



Mural in the Fellowship Hall

Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie (dec.)