

THE BELL TOWER



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

Vol. 60 No. 1

East Rockaway, N.Y.

January 2020

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT AS PERFORMED BY THE SUNDAY SCHOOL



Many thanks to all of the participants and to their teachers for helping to make Christmas even more enjoyable.



Dates to Remember:

- January 20...Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- February 2...Souper Bowl Sunday
- February 9...Undy Sunday
- February 14...Valentine's Day
- February 17...Presidents' Day
- March 8...Begin Daylight Savings Time
- March 17...St. Patrick's Day
- March 19...First Day of Spring
- April 4...Spaghetti Dinner (Men's Club)
- April 5...Palm Sunday
- April 12...Easter Sunday



FRONT OF BETHANY AT NIGHT

Happy New Year!

A while back, I read an article that claimed that the United States had become an “unhappy” country. According to an on-going study that measures happiness on a variety of scales both objective and subjective, the United States is no longer the happy and optimistic nation it once had been. We’re dissatisfied, suspicious of one another and disappointed in the institutions that we once trusted. The press for instance, a trusted pillar of our democracy, has become “fake news.” We once believed in education, in the companies we worked for, in the values of our nation and in our churches. We made jokes about politicians, but we believed in public service and we trusted in their willingness to work together, at least in times of crisis. We also believed in the march of progress, in the same way that the so-called liberal theologians of the late 19th and early 20th century Protestant church did in Europe, seeing humanity as on a path to the kingdom of God that was inevitable as the dawn comes after the darkness.

Then World War I came and as human beings outdid themselves in unleashing death and destruction on one another it became abundantly clear that the march of progress was a myth, at least in terms of the human spirit. Progress was not inevitable for the human heart in the same way it seemed to be for human technology. Instead of becoming wiser and more compassionate with one another, we have perfected the means by which we inflict suffering and death on one another. Here at the dawn of 2020 we are more polarized than ever, and no closer to solving our common problems. The illusion of inevitable progress has failed us as we have had to come to grips with the fact that fear, prejudice, even hatred are not going to go away on their own, or be resolved through advances in technology.

In the church, we have had to come to grips with the fact that passive piety while we wait for God to come sweeping down and fix us isn’t what Jesus had in mind when he called us to make disciples of the nations. Christ called us, rather, to embrace the gospel imperative to grow into com-

munion with the Divine through active engagement with the world around us. Our faith is all about actively seeking to bring the light of God’s love into the world. We have a role in our own salvation; a salvation that is corporate as much as individual, about the saving of the creation and all of us who share it, rather than about being swept up into the sky while the world we have destroyed burns and the people we see as “other” burns along with it.

Of course, we don’t seem to be doing all that well with our mission these days. The principalities and powers have been more relentless than ever in dividing God’s people, teaching us to fear one another, and rolling on with one violent incident, one act of hate after another. The institutions we trusted have proven themselves to be what they always were, flawed human creations, and well, maybe there’s a good reason why anti-depressant and anti-anxiety medications are being prescribed in record amounts these days.

Maybe, though, all this drama and confusion are part of a necessary part of a growth process for us as people and especially for us as disciples of Christ. Our faith reminds us repeatedly not to put too much stock in the “principalities and powers, including the “benign” ones like the institutions of our democracy, or the press, or even the church. These are human institutions and so are imperfect even when they are functioning the way that they should. All of us are called to be constructive and contributing members of our society, good citizens etc., but we are also called to remember that we answer ultimately to God before all others. We are disciples of Christ first and citizens second, always remembering where our ultimate allegiance lies and always remembering as well that the Great Commandments are our ultimate law, dictating not only our life priorities, but most importantly, how we go about realizing those priorities in every aspect of our lives. We believe that love, lived out not just as an aspiration for some day but in our everyday interactions is the secret to salvation for ourselves and for all of God’s creation. It is the love that the bible tells

us IS God, manifesting itself as an understanding that the other fellow is a child of God (like me), loves his or her children, (like me), and seeks the abundant life (like me) that will ultimately lead us to the kin-dom of God.

Jesus called us to: “Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this they will know that you are my disciples.” (John 13:34) Maybe he wanted us to understand that as imperfect people in an imperfect world, a world in which we will make mistakes, do the wrong thing, and fail, it is only through love that we can find redemption. There are those who challenge the “impracticality” of the gospel emphasis on love, especially in such difficult times. But the truth is that only when we learn how to live in genuine love as Christ taught us that we can begin to find our way to a redemption for all of us because only love can ultimately vanquish the fear and idolatry that divides us and keeps us from the communion that redemption requires.

So buckle up because this promises to be an eventful year. But do not fear, because Christ has called us to discipleship for just such a time as this. We have a part to play, because we understand that the old chestnut, “be the change you wish to see in the world” is true, that

they will “know we are Christians by our love, “ not just on whatever barricade we might be inclined to choose, but by our willingness to acknowledge and celebrate the humanity and the worth of those who are the “other” to us. The world needs our witness. They need to see that we can learn to love those with whom we disagree and more than that, that we can honor them in our disagreement, see the light of God’s divine image in them and embrace them as they are. Finally, we are needed to bear witness to the fact that good is more powerful than evil, that the divine imperative to love will ultimately triumph and that we are the people of God who gave himself to death so that the people who killed him could be with him in paradise. It’s a tall order, but we are walking in the footsteps of Christ, and he will get us where we need to go.

Happy New Year!

Pastor Mark



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BETHANY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

100 Main Street, East Rockaway, New York 11518 (516) 599-5768

Maryanne Walling, Secretary

bethanyoffice@optimum.net

www.bethanycong.org

revlu@aol.com

Reverend Mark Lukens, Pastor

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 expres their views in letters to the editor.



Greetings from your Bethany Moderator

In peace, Janet Moser, Bethany Moderator

On January 6th I had to report for jury duty. I was one of many in a line that stretched far ahead and continued far behind. The area was strangely quiet – as in “no voices” quiet. It was the type of quiet that let you notice the little shuffle sound as the line moved forward. You could hear the hum of the building’s heating unit pumping out some warmth. Of course, at this time no one knew each other yet and, oh - did I mention they had confiscated all our phones and such? It felt to me like a nice kind of quiet and an incredible boost for literacy. Everywhere I looked I saw people reading!

Nonetheless, I really needed to be back at my job as an elementary school librarian. It was the start of a new month filled with special events. The week of January 13th was to be “No Name Calling Week”, a special time in which the school guidance counselor and I co-teach all my classes focusing on Martin Luther King’s power of words and the power of people to initiate change for the better. We address everything from bullying, upstanding, gender roles and identities to tolerance and kindness. A resource I found for our program this year was a kid friendly YouTube video on how to disagree. Wow! We all could use some lessons on that!

How can we better disagree with each other? Well, as ‘Kid President’ tells us it is NOT by yelling in each other’s faces but by listening. We’re not talking about that sulky cold silent listening or uh huh stuff. Really listen to that person’s thoughts and opinions. Ask appropriate questions to better understand their position. Hopefully, they will do the same for you. You may well end up still disagreeing but in a civil fashion with greater understanding. When you learn what a person’s fears and concerns really are you develop a base for moving forward with support and even compassion.

As we move into a new and troubled year, let’s all practice quieting our voices to allow us to really hear each other. By the way – did you realize? An anagram of ‘silent’ is ‘listen’.

PS. The days are getting longer now. Be mindful. Don’t miss it!



Especially for our “Out of Town” friends -

This link will let you read all the reports submitted for 2019

<https://tinyurl.com/y4ms4rgw>

204th Corporate Meeting of Bethany Congregational Church
Annual Reports September 15, 2019

Write for The Bell Tower

The Bethany *Bell Tower* is **our** newsletter.

Let's make it really ours by submitting articles of interest.

Do you know some Bethany history? A person of interest for a Spotlight article? Let's hear it.

We know that some of our congregants are personally involved with a variety of charities. For example, "Locks for Love". If you are involved or know of someone, please drop us a note. Everyone would love to hear about it.

Have you read a great book recently? Have you seen a great movie lately?

Share a book or movie review. Perhaps a product review?

How about having a recipe swap? A 30 minute meal for during the work week?

Do you have a favorite poem or prayer? How about a nice clean joke?

Do you have a favorite restaurant? Find a new one? Give us a review.

Great vacation? Fun getaway place? Tell us.

The possibilities are endless!

You can email submissions to Charles D'Agostino at cjdagostino@gmail.com or drop them off to the Church office.

You can even mail to him directly: 70 Sunrise Drive, Lynbrook, NY 11563. Thank you!

TROOP 121

For more information, please visit the troop's website: <http://troop121ny.org>

BOY SCOUT TROOP 121
TODAY'S YOUTH... TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Slow Cooker Corned Beef & Cabbage

Traditional corned beef and cabbage takes a while to cook on the stovetop—about 3 hours, depending on the size of your brisket. This recipe adds a couple hours to the overall time, but it also makes your life easier. Mainly because you don't need to check the meat every 30 minutes and constantly add more water. You just throw everything in the slow cooker—first the beef, veggies, herbs, and spices, then the cabbage.



INGREDIENTS

1 medium yellow onion, cut into large wedges; 3 large carrots, cut into thirds; 2 stalks celery, cut into thirds; 1/2 lb. baby potatoes, halved; 1 corned beef brisket (2-3 lbs); kosher salt; freshly ground black pepper; 1 packed pickling spice; 3 sprigs thyme; 2 bay leaves; 1/2 green cabbage, cut into large wedges

DIRECTIONS

Add onion, carrots, celery and potatoes to bowl of your crock pot. Place corned beef on top and season generously with salt, pepper, and pickling spices. Scatter thyme and bay leaves over meat and fill slow cooker bowl with water until it is almost completely covering the meat.

Cook on high for 4 to 4 1/2 hours, until meat is tender. Add cabbage to crock pot and cook on high for 45 minutes to 1 hour more until cabbage is tender and cooked through. Remove meat and vegetables from slow cooker, slice and serve.

In time for St. Patrick's Day! Submitted by Charles D'Agostino for your epicurian enjoyment.

BOOK REVIEW by Lou Gaspari

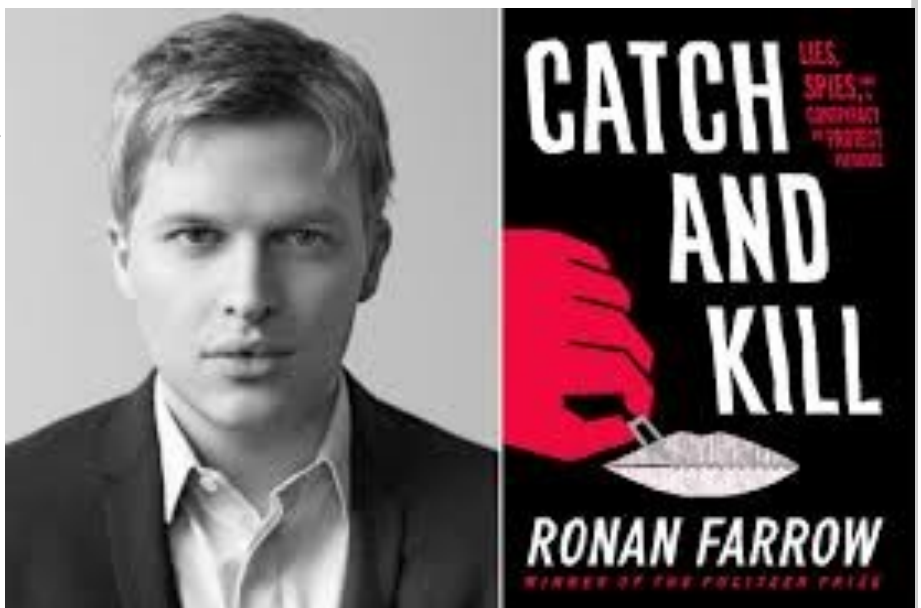
Catch and Kill

by Ronan Farrow

This book by Ronan Farrow, the son of Woody Allen and Mia Farrow, is an excellent investigative journalism book. It gets behind the scenes of major newsrooms and networks and shows how they cover up for executives, producers and stars.

You can, in essence, see how putting profits about accountability are their main concerns. Of course the book delves into the Weinstein and Lauer cover-ups.

This book is intense and it is a must for those who know and enjoy investigative journalism.



Make Eye Health a New Year's Resolution

Get a dilated eye exam

Every New Year, you make a list of things you will do to stay healthy so you can feel your best. But, did you realize that feeling your best includes seeing your best too? January is Glaucoma Awareness Month – the perfect time to spread the word about the disease. So, this year, add learning about glaucoma to your list! Your eyes will thank you for it.

1. Glaucoma can cause vision loss and blindness, which can't be reversed. Glaucoma causes fluid to build up in your eye, causing pressure that can damage the optic nerve, which transfers visual images to your brain. But, you can save your vision with early detection and treatment.

2. There are no early symptoms. Glaucoma often has no early warning signs. No pain. No discomfort. No blurry vision. Only advanced glaucoma will affect your vision. Don't wait for symptoms to visit your eye doctor!

3. In the United States, half the people who have glaucoma don't know they do. Nearly 3 million Americans have glaucoma. Lack of awareness and the absence of symptoms are preventing people from detecting the disease early. You can change that! Find out if you have glaucoma.

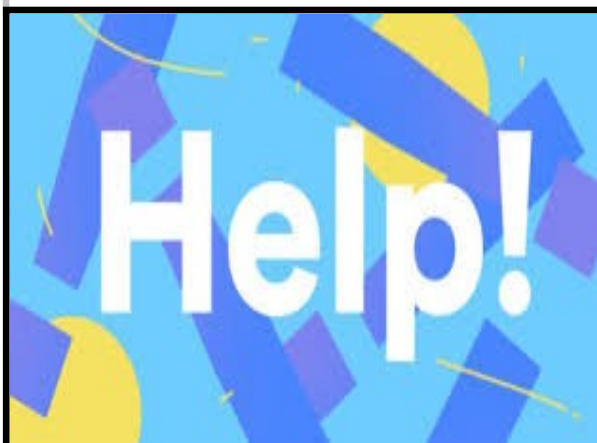
4. Some people are at higher risk than others. African Americans over 40, adults over 60 – especially Hispanics/Latinos, and people with a family history of glaucoma are at higher risk, making early detection especially important. Are you at higher risk? Talk to your family about glaucoma.

5. There is only one way to know if you have glaucoma. Getting a comprehensive dilated eye exam is the only way to find out if you have glaucoma. During the exam, an eye care professional places drops in your eyes to widen the pupils and looks for signs of the disease in the optic nerve. Now that you've got the facts about glaucoma, make a resolution for healthier vision. Schedule a comprehensive dilated eye exam today! And encourage your friends and loved ones to do the same.

To learn more about glaucoma, visit www.nei.nih.gov/glaucoma

Submitted by Carol Henck

Wishing You and Your Family a WEALTH OF HEALTH IN 2020!!



The Bethany Thrift Shop is in desperate need of helpers. Please see Barbara Sobey or Chris Padjus at church any Sunday or call the office for more information.

516-599-5768

They are open Fridays and Saturdays between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM every week!



Now through February 2, 2020.

Through the month of January and culminating on February 2nd (Super Bowl Sunday), we will be participating in the “Souper Bowl of Caring.” This is an opportunity for us to remind ourselves through this cold month of January as we shop for our own comfort items to pick up an extra item for our neighbors in need. “Souper Bowl” is a youth-inspired movement so you are encouraged to involve the whole family in choosing items (cans of “soup”, etc.) and placing them in our Long Island Council of Churches Food Pantry collection boxes outside the Sanctuary. Together, we can help keep the LICC Pantry shelves stocked!

On Sunday, February 2nd, we will be asking you to drop a dollar into the Soup Pots after church service. One Hundred (100%) Percent of these funds will go directly to the LICC Food Pantry. Our totals will be posted to the Souper Bowl of Caring Website.

In Romans 12:13 we are told: Share with God’s people who are in need.

-Your Missions Committee

USHERS NEEDED — Anyone who would like to be an Usher or Greeter on Sunday mornings, please give Maryanne a call at the church office, and she will add your name to the list. Being an usher is a good way to get involved with the Sunday morning worship service without incurring a big commitment. It is a good way to get to know other members of our church.

COFFEE HOURS — Help is really needed on Communion Sundays (the First and Third Sundays of each month). Our Deacons are extra busy with setting up and cleaning up the communion elements so if you can help serve and/or clean up afterwards, it would be greatly appreciated. Besides, coffee hour after morning worship is a great way to catch up with church friends and meet anyone new who comes to worship with us. Please add your name to the sign-up sheet posted in the hallway or speak with Ethel Gilloon. Thank You.

FREEPORT EMERGENCY FOOD PANTRY -- The Pantry really needs help. When you do your own grocery shopping, please purchase one or more nonperishable items for the Food Pantry and leave them in the bin outside the office door or outside the sanctuary on Sunday mornings. Every little bit helps. A suggested list of items is available. Also, bring in your unwanted coupons. We will give them to the Freeport Pantry where the staff cuts them apart and sorts them, so their clients can go through them.

Help is needed to transport the food items collected to the Freeport Food Pantry. If you can do this once, twice or want to be a regular, please let the office know. This was Wally Merna’s passion. Please donate in his name at www.liccdoante.org. Thank you for your continuing generosity.

We are collecting *School Supplies* to be given to the children of the families served by our Long Island Council of Churches Food Pantry in Freeport. Please bring to the Church Office or leave near the sanctuary.

THANK YOU!

Undy Sunday

February 9, 2020

Nothing says you care like underwear!

For most people, putting on “clean” underwear is probably something you do on a daily basis without even thinking. But, if you do not have a place to call home, live on the streets or in a local shelter, “clean” underwear is not usually an easy thing to come by. In fact, socks and underwear are the least likely items to be donated.

So, on Sunday, February 9th, 2020, Bethany Congregational Church, 100 Main Street, East Rockaway, New York, will be holding a Special Collection of new/unused underwear and socks for men, women and children.

We will be collecting briefs, boxers and t-shirts for men; panties and bras for women, and underwear for children - don't forget the “socks.”

All items donated will be distributed through the Long Island Coalition For The Homeless.

Church Office Hours are Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday from 9 a.m. to noon, and Thursday from 2 - 5 p.m. Bins will be provided for your donations.

-THE MISSIONS COMMITTEE

Undies for Everyone



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Volunteers are needed! HELP!

"Something for Everyone"



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scheduling! 516-599-5768

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Bethany Congregational Church

100 Main Street

East Rockaway, N.Y. 11518

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Thank you.



Mural in the Fellowship Hall

Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie

