



THE BELL TOWER



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

Vol. 60 No. 6

East Rockaway, N.Y.

June 2020

Do not be dismayed by the
brokenness of the world.

All things break.

All things can be mended.

Not with time, as they say,
but with intention.

So go. Love intentionally,
extravagantly, unconditionally.

The broken world waits in
darkness for the light that is
you.

L.R. Knost

Dates to Remember:

(When things get back to Normal.)

June 20...First Day of Summer!

June 21...Father's Day

July 4...Independence Day

September 7...Labor Day

September 11...Patriot Day

September 13...Grandparents' Day

September 22...First Day of Fall

October 12...Columbus Day

October 31...Halloween

November 1...End Daylight Savings Time

November 3...Election Day...Please VOTE!!

November 11...Veterans' Day

The last few months have certainly tested the mettle of our character. Many of us have found that the time now afforded to us has been a productive time. Many found ways to explore new interests and hobbies. Many found ways to make our own environment a better place by organizing, purging and cleaning. During the Bubonic Plague, Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*. Many artists painted and sculpted their masterpieces during the various pandemics that have afflicted the planet.

We would like to hear from our readers as to what you were able to accomplish during these weeks of isolation and boredom.

Please submit to cjdagostino@gmail.com.

LIFE IS AMAZING AND THEN IT'S AWFUL. AND THEN IT'S AMAZING AGAIN. AND IN BETWEEN THE AMAZING AND THE AWFUL, IT'S ORDINARY AND MUNDANE AND ROUTINE. BREATHE IN THE AMAZING HOLD ON THROUGH THE AWFUL, AND RELAX AND EXHALE DURING THE ORDINARY. THAT'S JUST LIVING, HEART-BREAKING, SOUL-HEALING, AMAZING, AWFUL, ORDINARY LIFE. AND IT'S BREATHTAKINGLY

beautiful

L.R. Knost

No More Normal

"I lift up my eyes to the hills- from where will my help come?" Psalm 121

As I was sitting in yet one more zoom meeting one morning, it dawned on me, (right about the time that someone said the words, "when we return to normal,") that we are never going back to normal. At least not the way we were before. As Alice in Wonderland so famously said, "I can't go back to who I was before, because I was a different person then."

We have come to a very scary place right now. We are locked in our homes because of a disease for which we have no vaccine, worrying about our children's education, our jobs, our families, and now, we are watching on TV as our cities are erupting in flames and violence after the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis Police Officer. That crime videotaped in its entirety by a teenage girl as one officer kneeled on his neck and others stood by, ignoring the cries of both Mr Floyd as he gasped out his final breaths and those of bystanders telling them he was in trouble. All of us who were treated to that video in all of its horror were appalled as the officer smirked in the direction of the camera and the others did nothing. This on the heels of too many such incidents over the years, bringing people to the street in largely peaceful protests that have morphed in some cases into violence by an influx of extremists bent on inciting riots for the sake, it seems, of watching things burn.

Like many people, I turn to the news and depending on which channel I select, I can hear all kinds of finger pointing, the usual "suspects" trotting out themes we have all heard over and over again for purposes that can seem suspiciously convenient and self-serving. But as I listened to these talking heads, what I thought of was a frightened teenage girl, watching as the officers who were supposed to serve and protect her community killed a helpless man as he begged for his life. I thought about what it would be like to live in a country where I was vulnerable to the whims of people who hate me for the color of my skin, of being afraid of those men and women whose job it is to protect my family and me and then realized it is the same place I live in, yet not the same at all. I thought too about young men and women who chose to serve their communities as officers, and the pain they are in as well, the pain all those who seek to be the bearers of peace and safety know, when their service is dishonored or mis-used to break that peace and steal that safety in their name. I feel a little bit of that every time a pastor abuses his or her trust to inflict suffering or cause harm.

And I have heard, as we all have, the competing claims about who is inciting this violence in our cities. Many suspect that agitators from the left or the right, or both, have jumped in to stir up the violence for their own purposes.

Much of the looting is probably about opportunity, criminality inclined folks taking advantage of the unrest to steal and destroy, but all of that is beside the point. Our fellow human beings are crying out in their pain. Our neighbors, friends, fellow human beings and people of faith who for centuries have borne an inordinate share of the burdens and few of the rewards of this great land, (including the coronavirus, and the economic pain of this quarantine), have come out once again in their pain, demanding only what we believe all of us are entitled to; safety, dignity, and the right to build a life for their families (like the rest of us). As Jesus tells us in the Gospel of Matthew, the pain of our neighbors is a claim on our consciences and that of our nation, that we ignore at the expense of our salvation. As Christ's people commanded to love our neighbors, as well as Americans who believe in liberty and justice for all people, we cannot ignore their unrequited love for a country that continues, after centuries to treat their humanity as an afterthought grudgingly taken on at best and a nuisance at worst, the same way that Jesus and his disciples were treated when they sought to bring a new way of being into the world, a way that lifted up the least of these and declared their primacy in the eyes of the One who created us all.

The kingdom of God cannot be built on foundations rotted by the cancer of racism and systemic inequality. As in the parable of the Sower and the Seed in which some seed grows up among weeds, that which is faithful and loving is choked out by systems that denigrate and diminish the humanity of some while raising it up in others this cancer threatens to keep us forever wandering in the wilderness of fear, making prisoners of all of us. It is not simply about policing or agitators, as much as it is about who and what we are as a people, as a nation, and what those things mean for us as people of faith. We need to train and police the police of course, because they are the people we arm and send forth to be the visible representation of our nation and her values, and because there is no harder job in a free nation than to be its police. But this dis-ease, this sin of racism that afflicts us is not simply about policing, but about wounds that have not and will not ever heal until we find the courage, to hear truths that we'd rather not hear, to listen to one another, with ears that are open to the grief of a mother, like so many of us, whose child has been ripped from her arms; or of a child, whose father will never come home again. It is about a wrongness, what we Christian call an Original Sin, that has been with us since before our birth as a nation, a sin which seems to have metastasized, its malignancy reflected in all of our institutions, and all of our lives together. It is about the outrage of people who are suffering disproportionately AGAIN, in this pandemic and for whom the promises of this land of plenty ring hollow against the reality of what they

live. People who serve in our country's military at almost twice the per capita rate of their white countrymen, people who in their bondage, built the White House, fed our country's people, and brought to this country a prosperity that they were not allowed to share.

What can we do? We can look to our faith, to Christ's call to discipleship. As the Rev Dietrich Bonhoeffer said in his epic book of the same name, that to be a disciple is to be called to the Cross with Christ. We are being called, not to return to "normal" my sisters and brothers, because normal is not the way to the kingdom of God. Normal tolerates suffering and injustice, consigning too many of God's children to suffering and death. We of Christ's people who have enjoyed the privileges of being white in this land in particular are being called by these times to witness to the Gospel, especially to those considered too long to be among the least and the last, and to bear the light of Christ, of hope, faith and love into the world as best as we are able, to seek to be a place of succor and a people of reconciliation, to LISTEN to the pain of our sisters and brothers, never forgetting that as human beings we may all be in the same boat, but that some of us are on deck and others have been locked in the holds, in a place no child of God should ever be.

As Christians, we condemn violence, but we don't leave it there, because to be silent in the face of injustice is to become its ally. Jesus told the principalities and powers that if he remained silent in the face of suffering and persecution, that "the stones themselves would cry out." We can think of our own sons and daughters, our grandchildren, and we can imagine the pain of losing them in the prime of their lives. We can look at our homes, our communities, the liberties we so rightly cherish and realize that they are out of reach, empty promises to too many of our fellow human beings and that as long as that is true, we cannot be a true community, we cannot

call ourselves a free people and we will never become the kingdom that God calls us to be. We know that Christ calls up and out of our comfort zones to heal this terrible stain on our community and our humanity that has been among us since the beginning, this disease of racism, putting a lie to our aspirations to liberty and justice for all, and that it will not stop poisoning us all until we exorcise it from our society and our souls.

God is calling us, my sisters and brothers, to get educated and to start the hard work of healing our community and our world. The yearning for freedom, for safety, for justice and for human dignity are not political positions, they are the marks of the divine, reflected in all people of faith and good will. Jesus is calling us into the fray not as partisans of the left, or the right, but of the Holy Spirit. We may not be able to solve the world's problems, but we can be a light of hope amidst the darkness. But we can be a light of welcome and a safe haven for those who have known the sting of this cancer. We can stand for the outcast, the other, the underdog the way Jesus showed us to do, we can build bridges and plant seeds of relationship that as they grow in the light of mutual trust and respect, will help to chase the shadows of this evil from our hearts, our souls and our land. Work is already underway. In fact I might've seen Christ on the news last night, as a group of officers joined protestors in marching for justice, or maybe when a young black woman confronted an officer in Pittsburgh, her tears bringing them together in a hug, as they both wept together for the lost, for the love of their city, for a world still out of reach. It's time to change that. To join with those whom God is working through right here on Long Island to listen, to share our pain, but most of all, to work together toward a new "normal." Maybe one a few steps closer to the kingdom of God. I think that may be the "normal" we're working toward.

Miss You GUYS!!!

Pastor Mark



Bethany Bell Tower ...is a monthly publication of

BETHANY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

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***Statements made in editorials, signed articles or letters, do not represent an official position in this church.
Persons with differing opinions are invited to 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

I've been rather cranky and irritable lately. The world is too much with me and probably you too. So that's it. I QUIT.

Quit what, you may ask. I quit being cranky and irritable. It's absolutely no fun! Instead, I'm going to start celebrating and July looks like the perfect month to begin.

Did you know that July 1st is *National Creative Ice Cream Flavor Day*? Seriously. I'm not making this up. Furthermore, in 1984, President Reagan declared July "National Ice Cream Month" with the third Sunday being "National Ice Cream Day". I know a lot of people who will be all about celebrating these occasions.

If ice cream isn't your scream, how about *World UFO Day* on July 2nd? You can watch E.T., scan the night sky with your binoculars or telescope, or watch some very recently declassified *US Navy UFO videos*.

July 4th, besides the obvious celebration, is also *Sidewalk Egg Frying Day*. Truthfully, I'm hoping our local weather is not conducive to this celebration.

Forget about July 5th, *International Kissing Day*. Sorry, social distancing does not allow for this. Next!

Let's jump to July 8th – *International Town Criers Day*. What fun to stand outside your front door ringing a bell crying out "Hear ye! Hear ye!" I'm in!

But wait - there's more!

July 10th is *Teddy Bear Picnic Day*

July 11th is *Slurpee Day*. Beware the brain freeze.....

July 13th is *National French Fries Day*

July 14th is *National Nude Day*. Wait just a minute.

There are laws about this type of stuff. Keep that one within the confines of your own home please!

July 19th is *National Fritch Day*. Huh? An old term about gifting newlyweds with....BACON!

July 22nd is Doonerism Say. Oops- I mean *Spoonerism Day*. Yes, the birthday of Reverend William Archibald Spooner whose famous slip of the tongue is the origin of the term spoonerism.

July 27th is *Bagpipe Appreciation Day*

July 29th is *National Lasagna Day*.

Free your inner Garfield the Cat and go for it.

So no more whining and moaning. I'm going to celebrate!
Will you join me?



FROM THE TRUSTEES:

The Board of Trustees has met twice via Zoom. We are working diligently trying to figure out how to reopen safely. We are working on a plan for when we have service and the building is ours so that we don't intersect with the Korean Church. We have to make sure that the church will be sanitized and that everyone feels safe to re-enter the sanctuary. We were looking at a partial opening but it seems a little too risky at this time because our main concern is keeping our congregation safe and that also includes our employees. We want to thank all who have tithed, either by mail or by Venmo. We are trying to make that process as easy as possible. The support of our congregation shows how much they love Bethany.

And remember, He loves you, He really, really does.

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

SUNDAY SCHOOL:

We wish everyone a wonderful summer and hope that we will all be together soon.

Jessie Kilgus, Tina Lewald, Jen Valis

FREEPORT EMERGENCY FOOD PANTRY

The pantry is always in need of non-perishable food items for families who do not have enough to eat. Please remember the pantry when you go food shopping. Here is a list of suggested items:

Canned Vegetables/Soups/Fruit/Beans, 100% Fruit Juice (not fruit drink) Dry Milk/Parmalat, Pasta, Rice, Tomato/Spaghetti Sauce, Complete Pancake Mix/Syrup, Hot/cold Cereals, Canned Tuna/Chicken/Salmon (in water)/Stew, Peanut Butter & Jelly, Infant Formula — Enfamil w/Lipil/Simalac Advance, Shampoo/Soap, Toothpaste/Brushes toiletries, Diapers/Paper Towels/Toilet Paper. Low Sodium Items are needed as well

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.

A BIT OF LEVITY:

A man walking along a California beach was deep in prayer. All of a sudden, he said out loud, "Lord, grant me one wish." Suddenly the sky clouded above his head, and in a booming voice, the Lord said, "Because you have TRIED to be faithful to me in all ways, I will grant you one wish." The man said, "Build a bridge to Hawaii so I can drive over anytime I want to."

The Lord said, "Your request is very materialistic. Think of the logistics of that kind of undertaking. The supports are required to reach the bottom of the Pacific! The amount of concrete and steel it would take! I can do it, but it is hard for me to justify your desire for worldly things. Take a little more time and think of another wish, a wish you think would honor and glorify me."

The man thought about it for a long time. Finally, he said, "Lord, I wish that I could understand women. I want to know how they feel inside, what they are thinking when they give me the silent treatment, why they cry, what they mean when they say 'nothing,' and how I can make a woman truly happy." After a few minutes God said, "You want two or four lanes on that bridge?"

Author Unknown – *(submitted by Cathy Clarke)*

Greetings Members & friends of Long Island Council of Churches,

Thank you to all of those who have donated to the LICC Emergency Food Pantry through our LICCDonate.org website during this urgent time. WE have raised almost \$6,000.00 for direct food purchase. With all of the gracious donations we have received, we still your help as the need for food grows with all of our Neighbors. Please read the following message and support the LICC in combating food insecurity in our communiutes. Thank you.

During this time of uncertainty with many of our *Neighbors* facing times of unprecedented closings and layoffs the Long Island Council of Churches (LICC) needs your support in keeping our shelves stocked so we may keep our doors open to continue in *Serving Our Neighbors in Need*.

While many of our religious institutions are practicing social distancing with closings, the LICC Emergency Food Pantry **WILL CONTINUE** to stay open. However, we have seen a sharp decline in direct delivery food donations from Churches and Congregations. At this time of social awareness, in an effort to support social distancing and promote healthy living, we are asking for your support to continue in *Serving Our Neighbors in Need* with donations by alternative means, please see below:

LICC website, LICCDonate.org. OR Amazon.com and have items shipped directly to: (OR Mail a check to:)

**Long Island Council of Churches
Attn: Emergency Food Drive
230 Hanse Avenue
Freeport, New York 11520-1009**

Emergency Items Needed:

Dry Cereal (Cold); **Hot Cereal** (Grits; oatmeal); **Vegetables** (Canned corn; carrots; spinach, collard and green beans, etc.); **Jelly** (plastic bottles preferred); **Soup** (any kind); **Pasta** (any kind); **Pasta Sauce**; **Rice** (1- or 2-pound bags); **Shelf stable milk**; **Canned meats** (Chicken; spam; Vienna sausage), **Toiletries** (Toothpaste; Toothbrushes; soap; deodorant; feminine products; razors; shampoo; conditioner); **Baby diapers** (All sizes)

If you have any questions, please contact the Freeport Emergency Food Pantry at 516-868-4989.

Thank you from the hungry Long Islanders we serve, staff, and Long Island Council of Churches' Administrative Board for your support in helping us in *Serving Our Neighbors in Need*.

Anthony Achong, Director of Administration and Operations

FROM THE EDITOR:

We are working from home as are many of you. We sincerely hope that everyone is healthy and safe and that we will all see each other in the not too distant future. We will publish *The Bell Tower* each month as long as the printer is working and the post office is operational. If anyone would like an issue emailed just send your best email to: cjdagostino@gmail.com. It is in PDF form and that is how we get to the printer each month. The pictures are in color! Or, if you go to Bethany's website, www.bethanycong.com you will find *The Bell Tower* when you click on "Newsletter". Every issue for 2020 is there...in color! Enjoy.



We would like extend our deepest condolences to Jennifer Valis on the passing of her step-mother, Lauren Valis. Lauren suffered for many years with Parkinson's Disease and was in an assisted living at the time of her passing, May she rest in peace.

Dear Brethren,

Wow! What a challenging time for us all. Like the Israelites in Egypt, most of us are hunkering down, social distancing and hoping for the best as this sickness passes slowly over our country. Others are going to work at jobs that are deemed “essential” or “first responder” or “front line” from nurses to grocery store workers. Still others, like teachers and business people and pastors, are struggling to adapt the work we do to meet the challenges of this time of quarantine. For most of us, money is uncertain and tight, and we must prioritize our spending.

That is why we are writing. Bethany is working to be the place of grace that it has always been both for its members and for this community at large. Our tiny staff is still working as hard and long as ever. We thank those who have been sending in pledges and gifts and we ask that all of our members to please try and do the same or even think about increasing your giving if you can. Pastor Mark and the rest of our staff are struggling to make sure that Bethany is what it has always been— a little church with a great, holy and loving Spirit. Please help us if you can. Every small bit helps to keep our ministry afloat and our essential staff working.

To that end, we have adopted several methods of online giving: Get [tithe.ly](https://tithely.com) and www.venmo.com. [Tithe.ly](https://tithely.com) was created for churches. By simply downloading the app on your smartphone or creating an account on the very user-friendly website, you can give to your church by the click of a button. Simply create an account and find Bethany Congregational's name. It asks for a credit or debit card for your donations. This service does charge the recipient, Bethany, a fee. It offers the giver an option to include that fee in the donation but that is up to you. It is rather easy to set up and start.

Venmo is another option for online donations. Venmo is an app for your smartphone or can be accessed on your computer at [Venmo.com](https://venmo.com). You will need to set up an account which will be securely linked to your bank account. Please check the privacy settings. There are three levels. One is totally public (NO), another shows your name as donating without a monetary amount shared (Better), and the third is totally private between you and Bethany (my personal choice). It may ask for the last four digits, 7350, of the Bethany Venmo phone number. The benefit of **Venmo** is, unlike [tithe.ly](https://tithely.com), there are no fees involved. Whatever you are comfortable with - the choice is yours.

Of course, you may still mail your donations and pledges to:
Bethany Congregational Church - 100 Main Street, East Rockaway, NY 11518

If you need us, of course, we're still maintaining our regular office hours (9am-noon, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 2pm to 5pm on Thursday) and Pastor Mark is available as always at 516 599-5768 and 516 458-1622 respectively or by e-mail at Bethanyoffice@optonline.net or e-mail pastor directly at revlu@aol.com. Remember that even as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we need fear no evil, because God is with us always! We will get through this together!

Yours in Christ,

Richard Eaves – Board of Trustees – chairperson

Janet Moser – Bethany Moderator

COVID FUN

- New monthly budget:
Gas \$0, Entertainment \$0, Clothes \$0, **Groceries \$2,799.**
- Breaking News: Wearing a mask inside your home is now highly recommended. Not so much to stop COVID-19, but to stop eating.
- Low maintenance women are having their moment right now. We don't have nails to file and paint, roots to dye, and are thrilled not to have to get dressed every day. I have been training for this moment my entire life!
- When this quarantine is over, let's not tell some people.
- I stepped on my scale this morning. It said: "Please practice social distancing. Only one person at a time on scale."
- Not to brag, but I haven't been late to anything in over 8 weeks.
- They can open things up this month, I'm staying in through July to see what happens to you all first.
- People keep asking: "Is coronavirus REALLY all that serious?" Listen folks, the churches and casinos are closed. When heaven and hell agree on the same thing it's probably pretty serious!
- Never in a million years could I have imagined I would go up to a bank teller wearing a mask and ask for money.
- Home school Day 1: I'm trying to figure out how I can get this kid transferred out of my class.
- Coronavirus has turned us all into dogs. We wander around the house looking for food. We get told "No" if we get too close to strangers and we get really excited about going for walks and car rides.
- The most foolish thing I've ever bought was a 2020 planner ...

Submitted by Carol Henck

TROOP 121 (For more information, please visit the troop's website: <http://troop121ny.org>)

First off, we hope that everyone at Bethany is doing well during these difficult times. We hope to see you as soon as things get back to normal.

COVID-19 has been a difficult time for almost everybody, and this includes the Boy Scouts of America. By mandate, Boy Scouts are not allowed to conduct meetings in person whatsoever under BSA. Despite the circumstances, Troop 121 is still fighting through and has started conducting meetings over Zoom, an online video calling program. The troop is using these meetings to discuss the future of the scouting year during the turbulence of the pandemic. Examples of prominent talking points include what is going to happen and what could be done to continue the spirit of scouting despite the restrictions.

The troop is expecting to have a "virtual camping event" later this month and will be attending a virtual summer camp later this year. We will update you on how the virtual camping goes.

Your friends from Troop 121.

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

Parish Resource Center of Long Island West, Inc.

Greetings,

We are pleased to announce that as of today, the center will begin to re-open with limited hours and services.

Beginning June 2, we will be available for you to drop off and pick up resource materials. Just give us a call, and we will be ready to meet you at the door to deliver or receive resources.

We will be open: Tuesday 10am to 2pm

Wednesday 10am to 2pm

Thursday 1pm to 7pm

Friday 10am to 3pm

Saturday 10am to 2pm



We are also available for email, phone or online consultations upon request.

We hope to re-open for on-site consultations beginning July 14, 2020.

Until then, we continue to pray for all of you, and look forward to seeing you again soon.

Faithfully,

Karla McKenzie and Staff
Parish Resource Center of Long Island West, Inc

919 Elmont Rd. Valley Stream, NY 11580

Phone 516-285-0919

Email: Consultant@cpr4church.org

BOOK REVIEW

By Lou Gaspari

Nothing More Dangerous

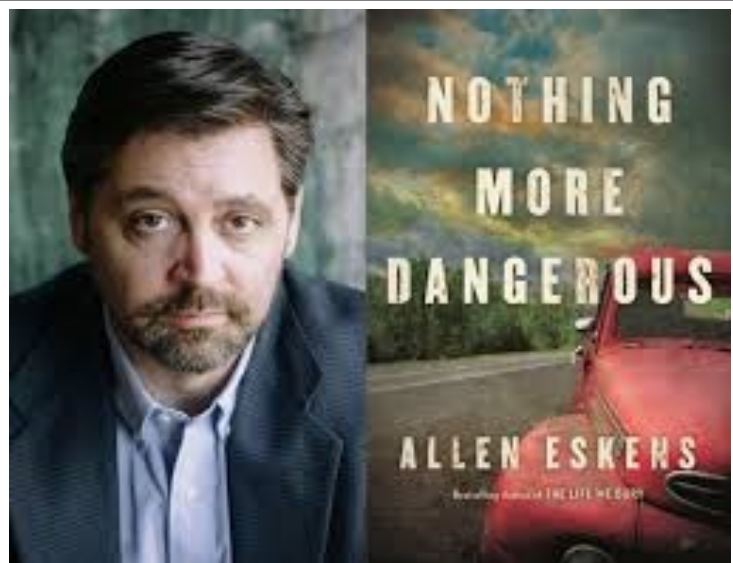
By

Allen Eskens

If you enjoyed Harper Lee's To Kill A Mockingbird you will love this novel. Mr. Eskens' book exposes the ugliness of racial prejudice.

It is a well written story of a white teenager's awakening of racial tensions that go through a Missouri town in the 1970's. This is a tale that is superbly told. It is a stunning mystery-- suspenseful, historical fiction. It is a story that is very timely, specifically at the point the USA is in at the present time.

If you read only one book this year choose Nothing More Dangerous.



Change In Thrift Shop Hours:

As a preventive precaution
against the Coronavirus,
Bethany's Thriftique will
be closed as of Friday,
March 13, 2020 until
further notice.

We thank you for your
patronage, apologize for
any inconvenience and
hope to reopen soon.

Bethany is looking for a **Not-For-Profit** Organization to rent the space that we have downstairs.

We are looking to rent the large room, smaller room and 3 small office size rooms plus two (2) large storage areas. If you know of any interested group, please have them contact :

Charlie D'Agostino 516-721-8885

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