



THE BELL TOWER



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

Vol. 61 No. 1

East Rockaway, N.Y.

January 2021



Dates to Remember:

(When things get back to Normal.)

January 18...Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
February 2...Groundhog Day (again)
February 12...Lunar New Year
February 14...Valentine's Day
February 15...President's Day
February 17...Ash Wednesday
March 14...Begin Daylight Savings Time
March 17...St. Patrick's Day
March 20...Spring Begins
March 27...Passover begins
March 28...Palm Sunday
April 4...Easter Sunday

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 or Stephanie Maddolone (516-355-1970)

Lay Readers will be required to assist with the service and read two (2) Bible passages for that Sunday. Please speak to Pastor Mark for further directions.

NEW OFFICE HOURS:

**Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday
9:00 A.M. to 12:00 Noon (Closed Thursdays)**

Happy New Year!

If there is one thing we can count on, (Amazon's Jeff Bezos aside), 2020 was not a good year for anybody (else). 2020 was the year when it seemed that one by one, everything in our world was shutting down. It was reported that there are over one million families this year who were missing someone at their Christmas dinner table because they had perished from COVID 19. Of course, most of us didn't have too many people at our Christmas table anyway, because this was also the year of physical isolation. We didn't see the "tips for getting along with difficult relatives," type stories, (which have become ubiquitous over the years), mostly because we didn't get to see all those difficult relatives this year. The usual kinds of worries about career issues became a concern about having a job and more importantly a paycheck, and the federal government's ineffectual gyrations while hundreds of thousands of our citizens perished and millions more were thrown out of work seemed to indicate that if we were going to get through this, well, we're going to have to count on our local officials, our neighbors, and on each other.

That may or may not be a good strategy in terms of public policy, but it's what we do. We after all, are the disciples of a Savior who proclaimed an upside-down kin-dom of God, in which the first are last and the last are first. God did not become incarnate as a king, priest, or religious leaders, because one who would aspire to rule, he told us, must be the servant of all. Jesus didn't seize the reins of government as a means of making change, he seized the hearts of the people around him, especially those who had been left out or left behind and assured them of their place in God's economy. He refused to join in the false solidarity of shared hatreds, but rather lifted up the enemies of his people in their humanness and in their divine worth and he refused to overlook suffering and injustice even as he offered the possibility of redemption to their perpetrators. Jesus' call

was to a universal solidarity of God's people, based in the obligation to love with one's whole being, recognizing that the *raison d'être* of life itself is found in the love that brought the world's into being, lived out in the lives of God's people. No one is outside the circle of God's transformational love. No one is beyond redemption and no one is unimportant.

2020 was a terrible year, the worst in my memory. But not simply because of the pandemic. As bad as that was, our way of dealing with it as a society was what made this year so terrible. We failed to live by the foolishness of the gospel. We didn't come together but decided instead to trust pundits over what we knew to be true, especially about our neighbors. It was a terrible year because in the face of a challenge to all of us, we chose to try and go "everybody for themselves" and to divide ourselves into warring clans instead of supporting and helping each other. Too many of us were more concerned with their rights and privileges rather than of the good of all of us. Let's face it, we, as a people, didn't do what we are called to do and innocent people are paying for that with their health, their livelihoods, and their lives.

So, what are we going to do about it? What does that have to do with us today as we look forward to this new year? Maybe we too can look for the value of being "bottom-up" people as we evaluate our own lives and look forward to the new year. Maybe it means that we start to see that caring for each other is the prime directive. More than our job, it is what makes life worth living. As we all struggled and continue to struggle through these tough times, we can remember who we learned we were during Superstorm Sandy and after 911 when most of us pulled together, took risks for each other, made sacrifices for each other, and put many of our differences

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aside because suddenly we were reminded how precious life is, how much we count on each other, and how the only effective response to the unfairness of life and fate is one of solidarity, from the ground up. Yes, we need the government to work, we have a right to expect that and we should be advocating for that. But more than that, we need to come together in the face of shared challenges, from the bottom up, because its down here on the ground that we determine ultimately who and whose we are.

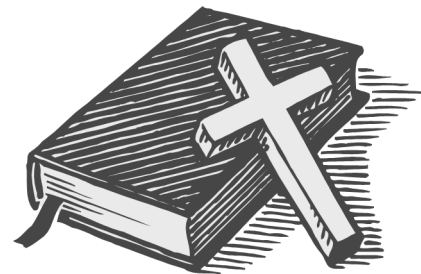
This was a tough year, but even in a tough year, God has been hard at work. Millions of us, in large and small ways, persevered in working together to get us through this pandemic. Through their efforts we can, at last, see hope that we may at least banish this bug in 2021. Many more are hard at work seeking solutions to the plagues of injustice and inequality that have been a stain on our nation since its inception, or in just keeping the world going through this wilderness time and we are called as Christ's people to be part of that as we can. We aren't called to embrace points of view we cannot agree with, but we are called to embrace the holders of those point of view, to love with generosity and extravagance, to seek ways to build bridges and to always walk that line, that

narrow line between "naming the powers," proclaiming the coming of the Kin-dom of God, and becoming just another gladiator in the arena, in other words, part of the problem.

We, as a nation, didn't love each other well in 2020 and because of that, too many of us have endured needless suffering. Maybe this is the year that we focus on learning to do that better. If the world doesn't get that, well maybe we need to keep showing them how it's done. Many things were torn up or torn down in 2020, let's spend 2021 building. Maybe we can take this love that we have been growing right here at Bethany and spread it around because, is it needed, and we know how to do it in a way the world could use. So hey, let your light shine Bethany family! 2021 is going to be a climb, but the summit is in sight!

Happy New Year!

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 expres their views in letters to the editor.***

Are you less than perfect? Welcome! We are a community or 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

Bethany family and friends,

It is 2021. We have said our goodbyes to 2020, most of us doing so happily. In all fairness, before we kick it to the curb, let's not forget the blessings we did experience this past year. It is so easy to let the bad news steal the headlines, isn't it?

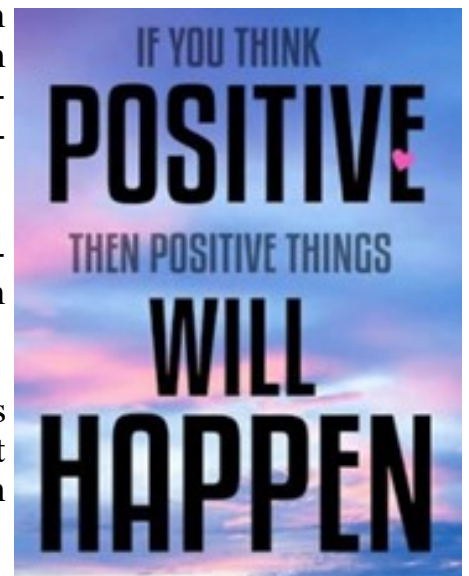
Let's look back with open eyes and recall those experiences that we are grateful for. As difficult and potentially dangerous as my teaching job became during Covid, I was aware how blessed I was not to have the financial worries so many were (and are) dealing with. I really appreciated the extra time at home to restart my yoga practice and go for enjoyable walks through the neighborhood. Not to be a total Pollyanna here, the yoga and walks were necessities as my stress levels were climbing to spontaneous combustion levels! But – as the stress levels subsided, my pleasure in those activities increased. I bet you too can find some treasures in the garbage pail of 2020. Just dig a bit. Perhaps you received some aid and comfort. Perhaps you provided some aid and comfort. Maybe you were able to strengthen relationships with family and friends. Find your blessings.

Now - back to 2021. A new year full of hope and promise. Sounds good - but hope and promise for what? What do you want to see in 2021? I think this needs to be a year of **attitude**. No, no, no! I am not talking about snarky, mean, self-centered and inconsiderate behaviors. (Can you tell I am not a fan of that?) I'm talking about **positive** attitudes. As Winston Churchill said, "attitude is a **little thing** that can **make a big difference**." Boy, did he get that right! Our attitude can easily become our destiny. Huh? Did I mention I was a sociology major in my undergraduate studies? That explains why I worked for the post office for 17 years. I can hold fascinating conversations but graduated without any job skills! Anyway, one of the fascinating tidbits I learned about was "self-fulfilling prophecies". Here's the definition: A **self-fulfilling prophecy** is a sociological term used to describe a prediction that causes itself to become true. Therefore, the process by which a person's expectations about someone can lead to that someone behaving in ways which confirm the expectations.

Okay – in other words, if a person is told that they are not too bright or stink at sports often enough, they will internalize and believe that and stop putting in the effort to improve. The prediction becomes the reality. We can do this to ourselves as well. But our predictions and internal conversations do NOT have to be negative. We can harness this phenomenon for the good.

Yes – we got our butts kicked in 2020. Surrounded by a pandemic, political chaos, and social upheaval. No place to run to and no where to hide.

What **do** you want from 2021? Remember, if you think it's going to be another crummy year, it probably will be, at least for you. Let's press reset. What would you like to see in 2021? The better question – what will you do to help it happen?



FROM THE TRUSTEES:

Boy Scout Troop 121 at Bethany completed project 2! Aidan, with the help of his troop, family and friends, installed a new floor in the Room 301, just up the stairs from the office. It is for his Eagle Scout Project and we are very proud of him and grateful for him willing to help Bethany.

If you would like to attend any Sunday, please call the office during the week so that Maryanne can reserve you a seat or two. If you cannot attend services, please remember to send in your donations to the office. Thank you.

Yours in Christ, Richard Eaves

www.bethanycong.com

Souper Bowl of Caring

Sunday

February 7, 2021:

For over 30 years, the Souper Bowl of Caring has been driving grassroots efforts using the energy of the Big Game to illustrate the collective impact of tackling hunger locally. Each year, churches, schools, and civic groups around the country join us and host food and fundraising campaigns that benefit charities in their own neighborhoods. Since 1990, over \$163 million has been raised for almost 10,000 local charities around the nation and the world.



On Sunday, February 7th, 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.

We also ask that you bring in cans of soup to be donated to the Food Pantry as well. If you are not yet attending church in person, you may drop off your donations to the church office during regular office hours from 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday the week before Souper Bowl Sunday.

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

-Your Missions Committee

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

FROM THE EDITOR:

Please keep those contributions coming in. It is so nice to hear from new voices. Thanks again to our regular contributors: Pastor Mark, Janet Moser, Rich Eaves (Trustees), Lou Gaspari (Book Review), Carol Henck (Health and well-being), Nick Sincinito (Troop 121), Cathie Clark (Women's League), Maryann Walling (Missions and General Announcements), Jessie Kilgus (Sunday School) and Don Gillies (correspondent and historian). There is room for more! Send your ideas to us at cjdagostino@gmail.com.. I hope I didn't leave anyone out!

Puns for educated minds

1. The fattest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.
2. I thought I saw an eye-doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.
3. She was only a whisky-maker, but he loved her still.
4. A rubber-band pistol was confiscated from an algebra class because it was a weapon of math disruption.
5. No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.
6. A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.
7. A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blownapart.
8. Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.
9. A hole has been found in the nudist-camp wall...The police are looking into it.
10. Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.
11. Atheism is a non-prophet organization
- 12.. Two hats were hanging on a hat rack in the hallway. One hat said to the other: 'You stay here; I'll go on a head.'
13. I wondered why the baseball kept getting bigger. Then it hit me.
14. A sign on the lawn at a drug rehab centre said: 'Keep off the Grass.'
15. The midget fortune-teller who escaped from prison was a small medium at large.
16. The soldier who survived mustard gas and pepper spray is now a seasoned veteran.
17. A backward poet writes inverse.
18. In a democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism it's your count that votes.
19. When cannibals ate a missionary, they got a taste of religion.
20. If you jumped off the bridge in Paris, you'd be in Seine.
21. A vulture carrying two dead raccoons boards an airplane. The stewardess looks at him and says, 'I'm sorry, sir, only one carrion allowed per passenger.'
22. Two fish swim into a concrete wall. One turns to the other and says, 'Dam!'
23. Two Eskimos sitting in a kayak were chilly, so they lit a fire in the craft. Unsurprisingly, it sank, proving once again that you can't have your kayak and heat it too.
24. Two hydrogen atoms meet. One says, 'I've lost my electron.' The other says, 'Are you sure?' The first replies, 'Yes, I'm positive.'
25. Did you hear about the Buddhist who refused Novocain during a root-canal? His goal: transcendental medication.
26. There was the person who sent ten puns to friends, with the hope that at least one of the puns would make them laugh. No pun in ten did.

Thanks to Don Gillies!

**Bethany Congregational is indeed in the 21st century
and now our hymnal will be too!**

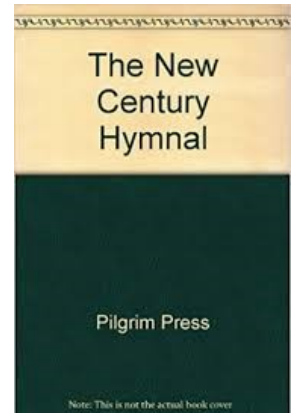
**Join us in this timely upgrade by “purchasing” a hymnal for Bethany.
Although this was inspired as a memorial to our dear friend Wally Merna,
each hymnal may be dedicated to whomever you choose.
Hymnals are \$20 each.**

The New Century Hymnal | Pew Edition

The New Century Hymnal invites the Church into the 21st century. The best hymns of the past are combined with exciting new hymnody from some of the finest contemporary poets and composers. *The New Century Hymnal* reflects a high level of musical and theological scholarship -- including fresh adaptations of original texts, honoring tradition while at the same time using inclusive language that will welcome and affirm all as members of Christ's church. It includes:

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In Honor of _____

In Memory of _____

In Honor of _____

In Memory of _____

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HOW TO BEAT THE WINTER BLUES

Dark mornings, darker evenings, and chilly gray days in between mean winter is here — and with the coldest season come the winter blues. There’s no clinical diagnosis for the “winter blues,” but experts at the National Institutes of Health say the so-called winter blues are fairly common and are usually marked by feeling more down than usual, or less energized.

Try these bad-mood zappers to beat the winter blues and feel more upbeat all winter long!

1. Lace Up Your Walking Shoes and Get Moving Getting at least 20 minutes of vigorous activity four times a week has many positive health benefits and has been shown to reduce a depressive mood as well. We may not want to head to a gym these days, but there are workouts of many kinds available online. Many local libraries have Zoom sessions of chair yoga and other activities as well! Walk up and down the stairs, park further from your destination and walk, find any opportunity to move more!

2. Set Your Alarm Clock and Stick to a Sleep Routine Tempting as it might be to sleep in on dark mornings, it’s best to stick with a regular sleep schedule — which means waking up at the same times on weekdays and weekends. Establish a routine wake-up time and a soothing bedtime ritual, and if you aren’t already in this habit, allow three or four weeks to get used to it. It’s important to get at least seven hours of sleep every night for your overall health, according to guidelines from the National Sleep Foundation. Also, make sure that your sleeping area is comfortable, slightly cool, and free of noisy distractions.

3. Queue Up a Stream of Laugh-Out-Loud Films Experts believe that laughter actually stimulates processes in your brain that counter depressive symptoms. Find some funny movies on Netflix or an “old movie” channel on TV. And since chuckling is downright contagious, you can invite your housemates to share the popcorn.

4. Warm Yourself Up With a Mug of Real Hot Cocoa Get cozy with some homemade hot chocolate, using natural cocoa powder (which is high in heart-healthy and mood-boosting flavonoids). According to Susan Kleiner, PhD, RD, author of *The Good Mood Diet*, this drink gives a wonderful sense of something delicious, and a ritual to look forward to. Make it with fortified milk, which provides a combination of carbohydrate, protein, and vitamin D — the combination helps increase serotonin levels, which help us relax.

5. Give Yourself a Manageable Task to Accomplish It’s important to build activities into your day — even chores, like housecleaning— that will give you a sense of accomplishment. Balance the hard work with little things that bring you pleasure, like treating yourself with fresh flowers or, yes, that homemade cup of hot cocoa!

6. Catch some rays! It’s dark when you leave for work and dark when you get home, so how are you going to get your daily dose of natural sunshine? And if you don’t think less sunlight during winter months can affect you, your mood, or your energy levels, think again. A decrease in sunlight can disrupt your body’s circadian rhythms and cause a drop in serotonin levels and Vitamin D levels, which can darken your mood. If you have the flexibility and the weather allows for it, schedule in an early-morning walk or lunchtime stroll. If you are often confined to your home, like many of us these days, try to spend part of the day sitting in the brightest sunniest spot you can find!

7. Don’t Hesitate to See Your Healthcare Professional if your mood becomes a concern. Seasonal depressive disorder, chronic pain, headaches, sleep disorders, and even heart disease can all be linked to depression symptoms, so check in with your healthcare provider to make sure your winter blues aren’t something more serious.

Submitted by Carol Henck

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FINALLY. It's 2021! The new year brings new opportunities.

What's the best way to feel good about yourself? – Help someone else.

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Our companion care company is looking for new employees to assist our great seniors.

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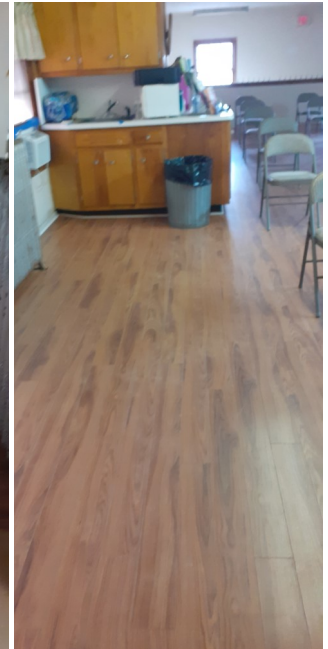
Families in need of help may use the same number:

516-599-5870

STAY SAFE!



TROOP 121



Here are a few pictures of Aidan's Eagle Scout Project. This is Room 301 which is up the stairs from Bethany's Office. It is a vast improvement over the previous tile floor. There should be more information and pictures in next month's issue.

There should be more information and pictures in next month's issue.

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

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

THRIFTique

We are pleased to announce that the Thrift Shop at Bethany Congregational Church located at 100 Main Street, East Rockaway, NY, is open for business once again. Our hours are Friday and Saturday from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Entry of people will be limited to few at a time, temperatures will be taken, hand sanitizer and masks must be used and social distancing will be put into practice to help keep both customers and staff healthy and safe.

We carry many items in our shop and there's something for everyone!

Looking forward to seeing friends
- old and new - real 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 :

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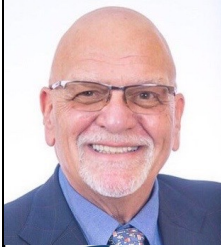
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Bethany Congregational Church

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Mural in the Fellowship Hall

Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie