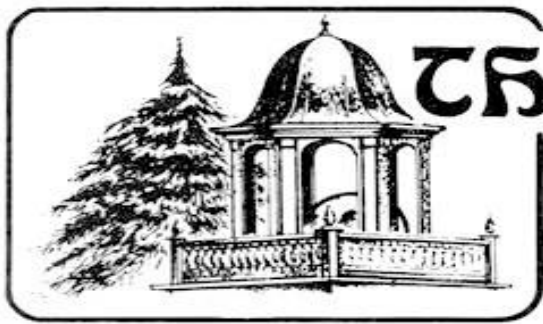




THE BELL TOWER



"PROCLAIM GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD"

JESUS LIVES OUR GOD REIGNS"

Vol. 65 No. 2

East Rockaway, NY 11518

March-April 2025



Welcome Home!

Meet our new

Pastor Every Sunday!

**Reverend Prabhu
Sigamani**

Lay Readers and Ushers are needed for Sunday Worship. Please sign up on the sheet in the hallway or speak with someone in the office (516-599-5768). Lay Readers will be required to assist with the service and read two (2) Bible passages for that Sunday. Please speak to Carol Henck for further directions.

OFFICE HOURS: Flexible. Please call the office before going.

Dates to Remember:

March 16...Comedy Night (\$5.00)

March 17...St. Patrick's Day

April 12...Begin Passover

April 13...Palm Sunday (Pageant)

April 20...Easter Sunday

May 2,3,9,10,16,17.....Strongbox
Theater

May 11...Mother's Day

May 26...Memorial Day

June 14...HurriCon Returns

June 14...Flag Day

June 15...Father's Day

June 19...Junteenth



HurriCon blows back into Bethany Church on June 14 and November 22! Come down to the Parish Hall and meet comic book artists and writers, purchase original comic art and cool comic books and other unique items. Don't miss the raffle with some amazing items up for grabs! And did we mention there will be free comic books for everybody? HurriCon!

Dear Beloved Congregation,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ. As I pen this first pastoral letter to you, my heart is filled with gratitude and joy for the privilege of shepherding this loving and devoted congregation. It is with great humility and a sense of Divine purpose that I embrace this calling, and I am eager to walk alongside each one of you on this blessed journey of faith.

In the hustle and bustle of our daily lives, it is all too easy to become overwhelmed by the demands and distractions that constantly vie for our attention. Yet, in the midst of this cacophony of need to get things done, there is a gentle whisper beckoning us to pause, to breathe, and to remember the profound truth that lies at the heart of our faith: "Be still and know that I am God!" (Psalm 46:10, NRSV).

In a world that often seems to be spinning out of control, the invitation to be still is a radical and transformative call. It challenges us to step away from the noise and the busyness, to carve out moments of quiet and reflection time, and to center our hearts and minds on the presence of God. This stillness is not merely the absence of activity, but a purposeful and intentional turning toward the Divine.

We find ourselves in a culture that prizes productivity and achievement, where rest is often seen as a luxury rather than a necessity. Yet, the very essence of our spiritual lives requires that we cultivate a rhythm of rest and renewal. Just as Jesus withdrew to solitary places to pray and recharge, so too must we find our own sacred spaces where we can reconnect with the Source of all life.

Rest is *not* a luxury: The concept of rest is woven throughout the fabric of Scripture. From the creation narrative, where God rested on the seventh day, to the teachings of Jesus, who invited the weary to come to Him for rest, we see that rest is a Divine gift. It is an act of trust, a recognition that our worth is not measured by our busyness but by our identity as beloved children of God.

In our moments of stillness, we open ourselves to the healing and transforming work of the Holy Spirit. It is in these quiet spaces that we hear the gentle whispers of God's love and guidance, that we gain clarity and perspective, and that we are reminded of our true purpose and calling.

During the Lenten days, we often "give up something." Certain foods, or habits. However, I extend an invitation to "take up" something that will deepen your

experience with God. Why should we wait for months to rest to go on a vacation? Set a time during the day for as little as 15 minutes or 30 minutes where this connection between God and you happens in most remarkable manner. Do nothing—don't think about the "to do list," let not the noise of the world drain you down.

To "know" God is not merely an intellectual exercise but an experiential and relational reality. When we reach this point of assurance in God, everything else fades away and shows our ability to manage our lives and spot our weakness. We can invite God into the most vulnerable parts of our lives and allow the Holy Spirit to help us and protect us. Some simple things can lead to mighty changes, enabling us to encounter the Living God.

As a spiritual practice "take up" an undertaking to create some quiet time during the day. So, you can hear the gentle whispers of God offering comfort, answers to your prayers. And most importantly you know the Divine partnership is there with you to face the challenges of life. Only in stillness we can realize that God is present, God cares, and all things are possible with God.

In closing, I invite each of you to take time this week to find moments of stillness and to seek the presence of God. Whether through prayer, meditation, reading Scripture, or simply sitting in silence, allow yourself to be drawn into the depths of His love and to be renewed by His Spirit. Seek the peace, which cannot be equated to any riches of the world.

Let us also commit to supporting one another on this journey, to being present for each other in times of need, and to celebrating together in times of joy. As we walk this path together, may we be a source of hope and light in our community and beyond.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your pastor. I look forward to the many ways in which God will work in and through us in the days to come.

With love and blessings,

The Rev. Prabhu Sigamani

Pastor



Online Lenten Meditation and Prayer

Pastor Prabhu invites you to our online Lenten Meditation and Prayer. The time is 7:30 PM to 8:00 PM. Our goal is to bring ourselves from the busy world to reflect on the scriptures, share our spiritual journey, and encourage each other, and get to know each other better.

We will use the book Lent for Everyone: Luke, Year C- A Daily Devotional by N.T Wright, to guide us through. You don't have to buy the book or prepare in advance, just show up and we will ask the Holy Spirit to lead us through sessions and the Lenten season.

Meeting Dates and scripture focus:

1. 3/13- Luke 5:1-11
2. 3/27- Luke 11:33-36
3. 4/3- Luke 15: 4-10
4. 4/10- Luke 20: 9-19

Zoom: Time: Mar 13, 2025 07:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)
Every week on Thu, with the exception of March 20 (Exec Board Mtg)

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88455155123?pwd=Whaerd7jFMueuJU0hkOG5LMncoAQSh.1>

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Bethany Bell Tower...is a bi-monthly publication of **BETHANY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**
Pastor: Reverend Prabhu Sigamani

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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

It's March 10th as I write this article. That means I am ten days from the Spring Equinox which occurs at 5:01 a.m. on March 20th. I trust it will happen without me getting up that early to witness it! The Spring Equinox is really cool because on that day we experience equal amounts of day and night. A perfect balance.

A perfect balance – I see an opportunity here. Perhaps we need our own equinox to get ourselves into balance. Have we slipped into all work and no play or maybe all play and no work? Are we filled with buckets of worries and missing the joys? Are we too lost in ourselves to engage with others? Not good. We need to get back in touch with our yin and yang to find our balance. Take a reflective moment to look deep inside and feel where the energy needs to shift. We can do this!



The Spring Equinox also sets the stage for Spring and Easter. Easter is April 20th this year. Do you know why? Why does it change every year? This is a little bizarre but it is based upon astronomical calculations. We can blame the AD 325 Council of Nicaea for this. Their method became the most widely accepted. Basically, Easter is always the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox. Huh? No, really. This year, the equinox is on March 20. We just had a full moon on March 14 so the next is not until April 13, a Sunday. So Easter is the following Sunday, April 20. Wow!

Spring for the Earth and Easter for the soul both share some common themes. It is a time of renewal and rebirth. The dormant dead-looking land bursts forth with new life, full of promise. Our souls rejoice at the victory of Jesus over sin and death. We are born anew in the promise of Easter!

That spiritual reboot and renewal allows us to refocus and try again – a fresh start. What a gift. Bethany and its congregation are blessed with a very special fresh start - our new pastor! On March 2nd, we welcomed Rev. Prabhu Sigamani as our permanent pastor. I want to thank the Pastoral Search Committee for all their work, diligence, and the selection of Pastor Prabhu. He and his wife, Ida, are welcomed members of our Bethany family.



We are truly experiencing a Fresh Start!
Be sure to join us!

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

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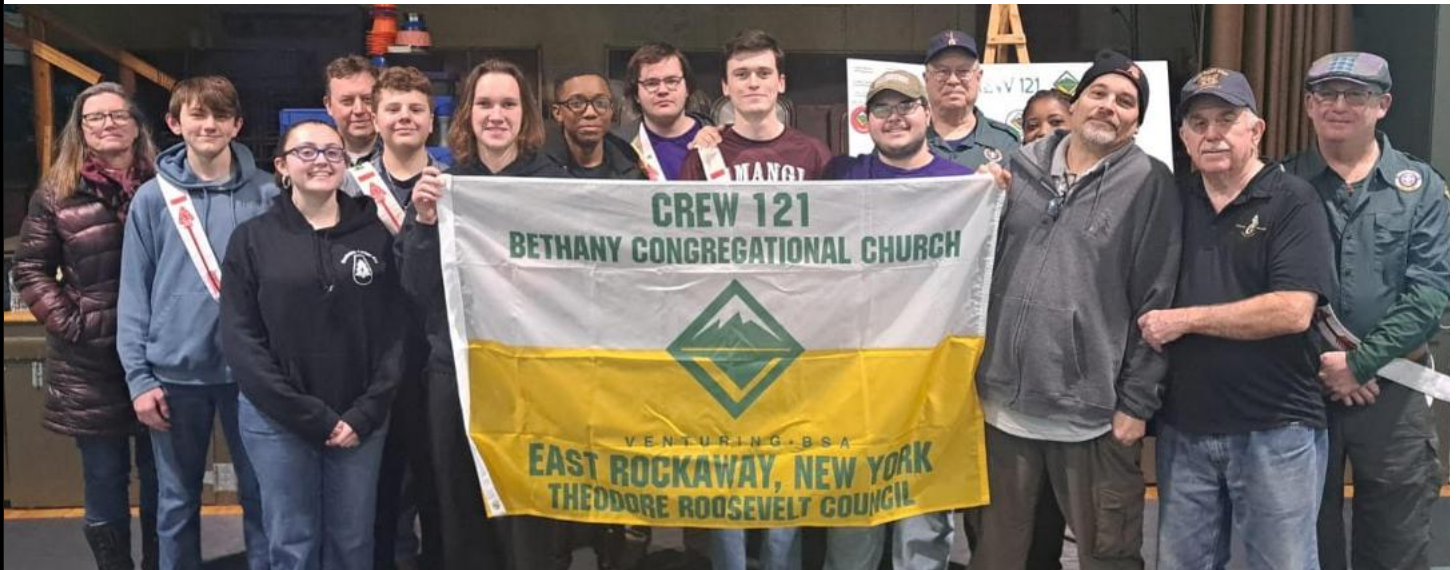
Write for The Bell Tower: Movie or TV Review? Recipe? Restaurant Review? Play Review? Book Review? Local History or reminiscences? Concert Review? Announcement? *(No political positioning, please)* Sadly, we lost our book reviewer, Lou Gaspari. Any readers out there to step up?

You can email submissions to Charles D'Agostino at cjdagostino@gmail.com or drop them off to the Church office. Or mail to him directly: 70 Sunrise Drive, Lynbrook, NY 11563. Thank you!

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!

CREW 121



The Venturers, of newly minted Crew 121, have accomplished a lot in a short period of time. Shortly after our first election, we are already organizing outings, practicing lines in cooperation with the Ceremonial team and we have forged new bonds between crew members. Officially chartered in December, we successfully filled all elected positions and organized our supply closet.

Additionally, one of our very own Crew members, Esias Ellis has been selected as the Theodore Roosevelt Council's candidate for NESA's Glenn A. And Melinda W. Adams National Eagle Scout Service Project of the year award. Esias renovated a classroom at his local church for their Sunday School Program. We would also like to extend our gratitude once again to our Charter Organization Bethany Congregational because without their continued support none of this would be possible. Thank You.

Article written by Amelia Wolkoff
(Crew 121 Guide)



GIRL SCOUT TROOP 2503

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

They meet every other Tuesday at 6:00 P.M. in Room 301 (upstairs from the office.)

For information, contact Christine at 516-320-5976

FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

The trustees would like to welcome our new pastor, Rev. Prabhu Sigamani, to our small but unique and powerful church.

We found streaming is extremely important and that is why we have a new account with Verizon to continue to stream. We want to keep our homebound folks in the loop.

We are working on various projects and hope to have them completed come the warm weather. We need to have the roof over the Parish Hall (gym) taken care of. We are hoping to have the trim to the church building painted. We may be changing the stove in the kitchen, and we have not forgotten about installing AC for the Thriftique. We have had some furnace issues and some plumbing issues that required our immediate attention.

We certainly have some interesting times coming at us and we will need to be flexible and helping.

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



Pastor Prabhu's First Day

March 2, 2025.

Also, Maryanne Walling's retirement party.

A great time was had by all!



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!

Laughter's the Best Medicine

April Fools' Day—occurring on April 1 each year—has been celebrated for several centuries by different cultures, though its exact origins remain a mystery. April Fools' Day traditions include playing hoaxes or practical jokes on others, often yelling “April Fools!” at the end.



Oorigin--Some historians speculate that April Fools' Day dates back to 1582, when France switched from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. Before this change, people celebrated the new year near the vernal equinox in April. When the date moved to January 1st, some people continued to celebrate it in April and became the good-natured targets for pranks and were called “April Fools”. People playfully stick paper fish on each other’s backs, saying “poisson d’avril!” (which means “April Fish”)

. The tradition continues today.

During the 18th century in Scotland, the tradition became a two-day event, starting April 1 with “hunting the gowk,” in which people were sent on phony errands (gowk = cuckoo bird, a symbol for fool) and followed on April 2 by Tailie Day, which involved pranks played on people's derrieres, such as pinning fake tails or “kick me” signs on them.

In 1957, the BBC fooled viewers with a news report that Swiss farmers were experiencing a record-high spaghetti crop! The TV segment showed footage of women harvesting spaghetti from trees! People were so convinced, the BBC got flooded with requests to buy their own plants. The next day, they had to come clean, but it remains in the Hall of Fame of April Fool's Day pranks.

In 1985, *Sports Illustrated* writer George Plimpton tricked many readers when he published a made-up article about a rookie NY Mets pitcher named Sidd Finch who could throw a fastball over 168 miles per hour. Many fans fell for the story, one of the greatest pranks April Fool's sports history.



In 1996, Taco Bell played a memorable April Fool's Day joke by buying a full-page ad in several major newspapers, claiming they had bought the Liberty Bell to help reduce the national debt. The ad said that they would rename it the "Taco Liberty Bell." The prank had many people concerned over the sale of the national symbol. The U.S. National Park Service finally had to clarify that it was just a joke.

The famous comic strip “Peanuts” created by Charles Schulz featured a character named April Fool, who played pranks on his friends.

For the average trickster, there is always the classic April Fools' Day prank of covering the toilet with plastic wrap ☹ (You didn't hear that from me.....)

Submitted by Carol Henck

Sources: History.com; AARP Bulletin 3/24; www.newporttoyota.com

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



The Strongbox Theater of East Rockaway will be performing in the Parish Hall the first three weekends in May. The shows will be Friday night and Saturday matinees and evenings. Please come out and support our neighbors! More

SUNDAY SCHOOL:

Sunday school has had a busy and productive start to 2025! Our annual Super Bowl Sunday fundraiser raised \$400 for Bethany. This money will be used towards the church's needs. Thank you to all who donated and congratulations to our four winners of \$150 each.

The Sunday school has been busy with weekly lessons and craft time to reinforce them. Thank you, Maria, Jesse and Heidi for making Sunday school classes run so smoothly.

We are looking forward to our upcoming Easter pageant held on Palm Sunday, April 13. We hope everyone can enjoy our presentation in person or via live stream Join us for church services at 10:30 AM.

We wish everybody a wonderful spring season and a blessed Easter.
Respectfully, Bethany Sunday School team.

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.

WOMEN'S LEAGUE:

Breakfast March 2 ...Fun for all!

Coming soon! The Women's League is planning a Family Fun Game Night with refreshments and a 50/50! Stayed tuned for details!



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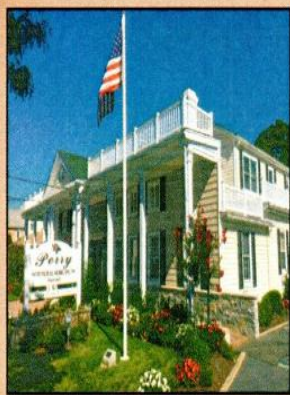
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- 1/8 page....\$40.00/issue or \$175.00/all five
- 1/4 page ...\$70.00/issue or \$325.00/all five

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"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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Thinking Real Estate?

As a member of Bethany Church, I will gladly donate to the Church 25% of my earned income (in your name) coming from a referral from any member of Bethany or reader of *The Bell Tower*, whether it is for yourself, friend, or relative! This includes any rental or the sale of any residential, condo, co-op, commercial or investment property. I am in business since 1994!! I have experience and knowledge. I come to you!

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Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie (dec.)