



THE BELL TOWER



"PROCLAIM GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD

JESUS LIVES OUR GOD REIGNS"

Vol. 65 No.5

East Rockaway, NY 11518

September-October 2025

Happy Fall!

9 Simple (and Free) Ways to Celebrate the First Day of Autumn

Make a seasonal display

Read books about the season

Make Chinese lanterns

Visit a local orchard

Prepare a harvest feast

Tell stories

Go on a nature hike

Talk about balance

Stargaze

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CHURCH**



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**on Saturday, September 27, 2025
from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM**

**PLEASE JOIN US; THERE'S
SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!**



Dates to Remember:

September 21... Rally Day
September 22... First Day of Autumn
September 23... Rosh Hashanah
September 27... Indoor Flea Market
October 2... Yom Kippur
October 13... Columbus Day
November 2... End Daylight Savings
November 4... Election Day
November 11... Veterans' Day
November 22... HurriCon
November 27... Thanksgiving
December 6... Christmas Fair
December 14... Hanukkah



HurriCon blows back into Bethany Church November 22nd! 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 Siblings in Jesus Christ,

Grace and peace to you from God, our sustainer and provider.

I write to you as your pastor and fellow pilgrim on this journey of faith. I write with a message that weighs heavily on my heart and yet lifts my spirit with hope: **“Facing Fear Through Faith.”**

We live in times filled with fears—of illness, financial trouble, relationships, and uncertainty. I am sure each one of us carries some form of fear that grips us deeply, preventing us from experiencing peace. Even within our own church, we’ve walked through seasons of testing and uncertainty. We must admit that fear is real—but so is our faith!

- We faced a deeply disturbing time during the pandemic, which disrupted our entire way of worship. There was fear: Would our community disintegrate? How would we survive as a church? Yet, we found new ways to worship—first online, and later in person. Let us not forget that God did not abandon us but proved Himself faithful.

- When families within our congregation faced difficult times or the loss of a loved one, the display of faith in action was remarkable. We rallied together, prayed together, and walked side by side through grief and loneliness.

- When our roof began to leak, there was anxiety. But our unity and generosity not only stopped the leak—it reassured us that God’s intervention never ceases. Why fear, when we stand firm in faith?

Most importantly, we found one another. These past six months together are a testament that God is leading us. Our condition was not our conclusion. The ministry continues, because God—our source—transcends distress.

Each of these moments brought fear face-to-face with us, yet we overcame—not alone, but together. And in doing so, we were presented with real opportunities to **grow** in faith.

Today, our worship can be viewed from the comfort and convenience of home, no longer confined to one hour on a Sunday morning. What once seemed limited is now expansive.

We are not the first—nor will we be the last—generation of believers to face fear. The early church endured persecution, imprisonment, and even death for their faith. Still, they moved forward, unwavering in their convictions. Christianity grew during its most challenging periods—through the very teachings and practices of Jesus Christ.

Consider the words of Paul in **2 Corinthians 4:8–9** (NRSV):

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.”

Faith is not blind optimism, nor does it deny difficulty. Faith is a divine partnership—a strength given to help us face situations that threaten to break us. I am certain each of us has a story to tell—a moment to recall when fear did not win, because faith helped us stand strong.

Let me offer **simple and tangible ways** we can *face fear through faith* as a church:

Faith in Worship: When fear tries to silence our praise, we lift our voices in worship, reminding ourselves that God is above all circumstances.

Faith in Outreach: Fear says, “Pull back.” Faith says, “Keep reaching out.” During difficult times, it’s tempting to isolate, conserve, and withdraw. But faith calls us to serve, give, and love boldly. Our contributions to the food pantry, providing for school children, and Thriftique are not just programs—they are **acts of faith** that reassure us: *“God will supply.”*

Faith in Community: Isolation feeds fear. Once exposed, fear evaporates. Let’s find ways to come together—to pray, study scripture, volunteer, or simply build friendships through faith. This creates a community where burdens are shared, and faith grows. Let us be reminded to uplift **Bill Lewald Jr.’s family**, as well as **Lori and Tom’s family**, in our prayers for comfort during their time of loss.

Faith for the Future: The future can feel overwhelming—economic pressures, political tension, cultural change. Still, our calling as a church remains: *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”* — Hebrews 13:8 (NRSV)

We move forward not because we see every step, but because we trust the One who leads.

Beloved, fear may visit us, but it does **not** have to define us. We may be in a season of distress, but it is not our conclusion. Let us be a people marked by **courage, hope, and unshakeable faith** in Jesus Christ.

Let this be our testimony:

In seasons of uncertainty, we held on to faith—and God met us there, again and again.

I am praying for each of you as we walk by faith together.

In Christ’s unfailing love,

The Rev. Prabhu Sigamani



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

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



On August 12, 2025, at 5:47 am, Jack and Maria Donovan became parents to Ivy Linda Donovan! (All 8 lbs. and 21 inches of her!)

They are both on the Board of Trustees. David and Linda Donovan are Jack's parents and Ivy's proud grandparents. Pauline Donovan is Ivy's proud Great-Grandmother. Congratulations!



William Frederick Lewald

(August 5, 1930 – August 30, 2025)

Bill, beloved husband of the late Doris, passed away peacefully surrounded by family. He was the devoted father of the late Eric, Lori (Tom), and Billy (Tina); a proud grandfather to Nicole, Ruthie, William,



Kaitlyn, and James; and a loving uncle to many. For the past 18 years, he shared a cherished companionship with Dorothy Cozine. Bill also loved traveling and especially enjoyed trips with his family and friends, creating memories that will be cherished forever.

A veteran of the Korean War, Bill continued his life of service as a New York City Fireman. He was a dedicated member of Bethany Congregational Church, where he served as deacon, trustee, and active participant in the men's club. He gave generously of his time helping with flea markets, Christmas fairs, spaghetti dinners, and maintenance projects. Bill was also a long-time member and treasurer of the St. George Association of the NYFD.

He will be remembered for his faith, service, and unwavering love for his family.



Bethany Bell Tower ...is a bi-monthly publication of **BETHANY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**

Pastor: Reverend Prabhu Sigamani

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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

September/October Greetings



I blinked and it was September. Whoa! What happened to summer?

Well, regardless of my perspective, time has moved on and unofficial summer has ended. The kids are back in school, the days are getting shorter (bummer), and the Halloween candy is on display in the stores. Yikes!

Enough complaining. Let's embrace the new month by wishing a Happy Birthday to all those September babies (and adults) out there. September has a beautiful birthstone – the Sapphire. This gem is associated with creative expression and inner peace and meditation. Nice. But me being me, I had to find out where all this birthstone stuff came from. Ready? Here goes.

Believe it or not, it is believed that the origin of birthstones is linked to the breastplate worn by Aaron in Exodus. It had 12 different stones on it representing the 12 tribes of Israel. About 500 years later, a connection is made between those stones, the 12 months of the year and the 12 zodiac signs. People, especially Christians for some reason, were encouraged to collect and wear all 12 stones. Somewhere around the 8 – 9th Century, the practice shifted to wearing only one a month; that being the stone that was believed to be most powerful for that particular month. The practice shifted once again in the 16th Century to wearing only one stone, the one of your birth month. It is believed that similar Hindu traditions had influenced this whole evolution.

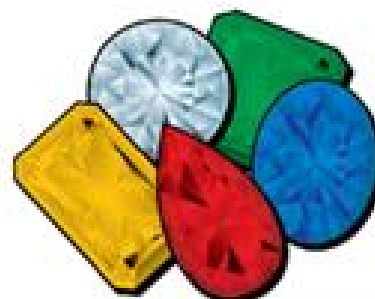
Time travel to 1912 to see American Capitalism in action. The National Association of Jewelers met and standardized a list of American monthly birthstones and their significance. Mind you, they specifically chose gems that they could obtain and sell in mass quantities. Got to love it. Kind of reminds me of Hallmark! Although the list has seen some modifications over the years, here is what we now have as the Traditional List and the Modern List.

Modern Birthstone List:

January — Garnet
February — Amethyst
March — Aquamarine
April — Diamond
May — Emerald
June — Alexandrite
July — Ruby
August — Peridot or Spinel
September — Sapphire
October — Tourmaline
November — Golden Topaz or Citrine
December — Blue Zircon, Blue Topaz, Tanzanite

Traditional List:

January -- Garnet
February -- Amethyst
March -- Bloodstone
April -- Diamond
May -- Emerald
June -- Pearl
July -- Ruby
August -- Sardonyx
September -- Sapphire
October -- Opal
November -- Topaz or Amber
December -- Turquoise or Lapis



I hope you have enjoyed this interesting but no too terribly useful information. Whatever your birth month and birthstone, enjoy every day like it was your birthday!

See you in church!

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

FROM THE EDITOR:

We hope that you like the Bi-Monthly issues. We have a number of contributors and we are happy for their collaboration. Our next issue will be November-December 2025, with deadline of November 10th. As you know, we are always open to accepting new content. We try to keep everyone interested in Bethany Church. Also, please let us know if someone would like to receive a copy, either by mail or email.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: From Stephanie Maddalone

This past August I had the pleasure of visiting Mrs. Virginia Kirch at her home in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire. Mrs. Kirch was an active member of Bethany while she lived in East Rockaway and was the first editor of The Bell Tower. Her daughter Ellen, is one of my best friends. Mrs. Kirch's son, Peter was also visiting and it was nice to reconnect with him as well. Coffee, conversations, shared memories and "after dinner Scrabble" were all on the menu.



Pictured: P. Kirch, S. Maddalone and V. Kirch

A beautiful afternoon at Albee Beach overlooking Lake Wentworth. ➡

While my stay in New Hampshire was quite short, it was so rewarding. Wolfeboro is one of the picture perfect towns surrounding Lake Winnepesaukee and I'm glad I could experience it.



SUNDAY SCHOOL:

Rally Day will be held Sunday, September 21st at 9:45 AM. This is the start of Sunday School. A Bagel Breakfast will be served! They also have their annual fundraiser of Peanut Butter and Jelly for the Long Island Food Pantry. They are looking forward to seeing everyone there. Have a great summer!

Bethany Sunday school takes place at 9:45 am with Sunday service directly following @10:30am. If you know anyone who would like to join our classes please reach out to Tina Lewald at 917-270-6509.



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

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

On Sunday, July 20th, Pastor Prabhu and Ida hosted the ladies of the Thriftique and the Choir at the parsonage for a light lunch. The hosts were presented with a cake welcoming them to Bethany!

We are blessed to have the Sigamanis a part of Bethany.



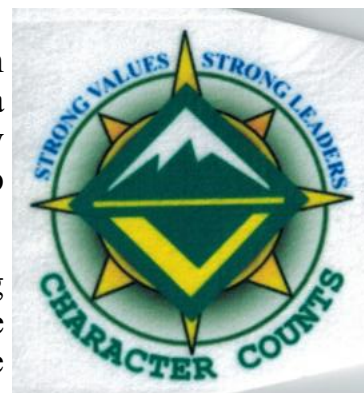
VENTURE CREW 121

What started as an Order of the Arrow ceremonial team has grown into something even greater—Venturing Crew 121! Born from a shared passion for service, ceremonies, and fellowship, our crew now has the opportunity to expand beyond the ceremonial circle and step boldly into the world of adventure.

Next weekend marks an exciting milestone: our very first camping trip as a crew! We'll be heading out to Baiting Hollow, where the trail ahead promises not just campfires and camaraderie, but also the chance to grow stronger together as brothers.

But the excitement doesn't stop there. While we're out in the woods, we'll also be sharpening our skills as the OA ceremonial team, preparing for the upcoming Induction Weekend, October 17–19. This important event is where we'll bring the spirit of the Order of the Arrow to life, and we're honored to take on the responsibility of presenting the ceremonies that welcome new members into the brotherhood.

YIS, Rebecca Sult



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



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FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

The trustees are looking forward to a new year. They are keeping our small but powerful Church moving forward! They're dedicated towards keeping your church working the best that it can.

We are going to need a lot of help, though. If you have any sort of a skill and you would like to dedicate some time to the church please, by all means, come and talk to any trustee. If you see a problem and you can fix it, please do so. Most importantly, part of being a church is keeping the community invested in the use of our facilities. This can be difficult, especially in these times, but not impossible.

With the help of every member we can do anything!
Thank you. God bless.

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

WOMEN'S LEAGUE

The Women's League held their annual luncheon at Grandpa Tony's on July 10, 2025. This is a big thank you to our hard working members.

We are always looking for new members and ways to help Bethany. Please join us the next time you see meeting notice in the weekly bulletin.

Everyone, please support our upcoming fair:



BETHANY CHRISTMAS FAIR
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10:00 AM-3:00 PM



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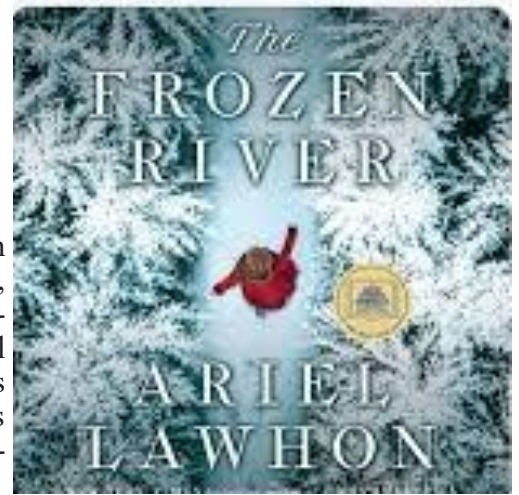
Donations may be left anytime in the sheds next to the garage!

Book Recommendation:

The Frozen River by Ariel Lawhon

(New York Times Bestseller)

This historical novel is inspired by the journal of Martha Ballard, an 18th-century midwife in Hallowell Maine. The Kennebec River, which flows through the town, is integral to the livelihood of the townsfolk and becomes, in essence, a character onto itself. Martha's medical experience and expertise goes far beyond birthing babies and she is pulled into an investigation of a corpse found in the river, a death that is linked to a previous rape documented in her journal. Martha's diary becomes a central piece of evidence in the unfolding scandal.



As a midwife and healer, Martha is privy to much of what goes on behind closed doors in Hallowell. Her diary is a record of every birth and death, crime and debacle that unfolds in the close-knit community. You will be riveted by details of life in this community and Martha's first-person narration allows the reader to delve into her innermost thoughts.

Author Ariel Lawhon introduces us to an unsung heroine who refused to accept injustice when women were considered less than citizens. You will cheer for Martha, her family, and numerous residents of Hallowell who are beautifully constructed by Lawhon. Despite the passing of three centuries, current-day themes and struggles are reflected which we can easily identify. Martha doggedly pursued the truth, defied the corrupt legal system and wrote herself into history.

This is a book that was recommended to me and I in turn have recommended it to many. I promise you a page turner that will not disappoint!

Yours in Reading, *Jennifer Valis*

Fall Pumpkin Bread

1 and 3/4 cups whole wheat flour
1 cup pumpkin, baked and mashed
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ginger
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon cloves
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 eggs
1/2 cup olive oil or butter
1/4 cup maple syrup
1/4 cup honey
Handful of walnuts or raisins (optional)

Combine ingredients, mix well, and pour into an oiled bread pan.
Bake for 50 minutes to an hour. Test with a tooth pick. Cool and enjoy.

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is open Fridays
and Saturdays
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2:00 PM***

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be left anytime
in the sheds
next to the garage!***

FALL is in the Air :

10 Historical Facts about Autumn You Probably Did Not Know!

America is a melting pot, so it makes sense that our Autumn traditions and holidays come from near and far. Read on to discover the real roots behind what makes Autumn the favorite season for many folks!

Bobbing for apples was a U.K. dating technique In the U.K. from the 14th century to the 1800s, girls marked apples with their names before dumping them in a barrel of water. As boys would bob for the apples, “future couplings were determined,” per [NPR](#). It was said that if the boy bit the apple on his first try, “the pairing was fate and they were made for each other.” If he got it on his second try, the “relationship wouldn’t last long.” If it took him three or more shots to get the apple, “the pairing was ill-fated,” according to [the Daily Meal](#).



Trick-or-treating goes back to the Celts Centuries ago, Halloween was different—and more dark. It celebrated human death. In Ireland, the Celts celebrated Samhain, their October 31st holiday marking the new year. Irish legends told that on this night, the boundary between the living and the dead came down, and evil spirits roamed the Earth. They started wearing scary costumes to scare away the ghosts that they believed walked the earth on Halloween.

Jack-o-lanterns come from an Irish legend As stated above, on this Halloween night, in order to protect their homes from evil spirits, families would carve “menacing faces” into turnips and potatoes and leave them outside. Eventually, pumpkins were used for carving!



Thanksgiving gave us the TV dinner Swanson salesman Gerry Thomas thought of the idea for frozen dinners in 1953 after seeing that his company had “260 tons of frozen turkey left over after Thanksgiving, sitting in ten refrigerated railroad cars,” per the [Smithsonian](#).

Thanksgiving’s date was set to help Great Depression recovery The specific day and month to celebrate Thanksgiving varied between presidents until Pres. Lincoln declared in an [1863 proclamation](#) that it would occur on the last Thursday of November. However, mid-Depression, when Thanksgiving was going to fall on the last day of November, Pres. F.D. Roosevelt was concerned that the economy would suffer due to a shortened Christmas season. Thus, he issued a second [presidential proclamation](#) moving Thanksgiving to the second to last Thursday in November. Not all states agreed with this change, and states were divided on which day they celebrated the holiday. Two years later, Congress set the federal holiday to be the fourth Thursday of November.



Excerpts from article by Eva Terry, Sept. 2023, Deseret News

Wishing you a Wealth of Health!

Submitted by Carol Henck

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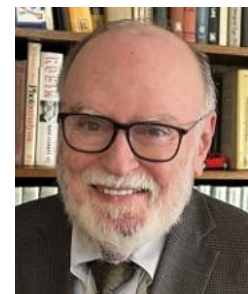
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"Every action done in company ought to be with some sign of respect for those that are present"

George Washington "Rules of Civility"

Civility Is Contagious

"So I say, live by the Spirit . . . and the fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control, and against such things there is no law."

HELP ME HELP BETHANY!

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Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie (dec.)