



THE BELL TOWER



"PROCLAIM GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD"

JESUS LIVES OUR GOD REIGNS"

Vol. 66 No.4

East Rockaway, NY 11518

July-August 2026



BETHANY

BEACH

PARTY!!!

SUNDAY,

AUGUST 2, 2026

*Bay Park Civic Association's
Beach House*

Times to be announced

7 East Cooke Street

*(At the end of East Boulevard in the
Bay Park section of East Rockaway)*

Dates to Remember:

August 2...Beach Party!

August 15...Feast of the Assumption

September 7...Labor Day

September 11...Patriot Day

September 11...Rosh Hashannah beg.

September 13...Grandparents Day

September 27...Rally Day

September 21...Yom Kippur

September 22...First Day of Autumn

October 31...Halloween

November 3...ELECTION DAY!

November 11...Veterans' Day

November 26...Thanksgiving Day

We would like to let everyone know that Bethany Congregational Church now has a new phone number. Going forward, please use our new number for calls and text messages whenever possible:

516-615-2795

To help make this transition as smooth as possible, our previous church phone number will remain active for the time being. However, we encourage everyone to begin using the new number moving forward. Please update your contacts at your convenience, and don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions. Feel free to send a text with your first/last name so that you can be added to the contact list!

Thank you for your continued support and cooperation!

"A Gentle Look at the Soil of Our Hearts: What Is God Growing Within Us?"

Summer has a way of inviting us outdoors. Even on the warmer days, many of us find ourselves in the garden—pulling weeds, planting seeds, watering flowers, or simply admiring what has begun to grow. There is something peaceful about tending a garden. It slows us down, teaches us patience, and reminds us that growth takes time. It also gives us a living picture of the life God nurtures within us—visible, tangible, and often unfolding slowly beneath the surface.

If you have ever cared for a garden, you know the quiet joy of seeing a tiny seed become something beautiful. A flower blooms, a tomato ripens, or a shrub fills out with fresh green leaves. There is deep satisfaction in watching life grow.

But every gardener also knows another truth: not every seed sprouts, and not every plant flourishes.

Sometimes the soil is not quite right. Sometimes there is too much rain or too little. Sometimes the sun is too harsh, or hidden pests find their way into the garden. Even when we do everything we can, some things simply do not grow as we had hoped.

Perhaps that is why Jesus so often spoke about seeds and soil. He knew that gardens have something to teach us about our own hearts.

In Matthew 13:8, Jesus says, *"Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty."* The seed is God's Word, full of life and promise. The soil is our hearts, where that Word is received and nurtured.

Over the years, I have heard this parable explained by dividing people into different kinds of soil—the good soil and the bad soil. While there is truth in that reading, I sometimes wonder if we miss something when we draw those lines too quickly. We begin asking, "Which kind of soil am I?" or even deciding what kind of soil someone else must be.

Yet that does not seem to be the way Jesus meets people.

Again and again in the Gospels, Jesus comes with invitation rather than condemnation. He draws near before He calls people to change. He offers grace before He asks for growth. He never gives up on the possibility

that a life can be renewed.

Perhaps our hearts are not just one kind of soil. Perhaps each of us carries a little of every kind.

There are places within us that have become hard through disappointment. There are places crowded with worry, fear, and endless distractions. There are places where old hurts still linger. Yet there are also places where hope quietly lives—a heart that still prays, a spirit willing to forgive, and a desire to grow closer to God.

That is where God's grace begins its work.

In a world that often encourages us to react quickly, label others, and move on, cultivating good soil may simply mean slowing down. It may look like listening before speaking, choosing kindness over criticism, making room for someone who thinks differently, and allowing God's grace to shape our hearts before our opinions shape our words.

So perhaps the better question is not, **"Am I good soil or bad soil?"** Instead, we might ask, **"What is growing in my heart today?"**

For some of us, worry has been growing like weeds after weeks of bills, doctor's appointments, family concerns, or unanswered prayers. For others, resentment has quietly taken root after being hurt or overlooked. Some carry grief that leaves the soul feeling dry. Others are simply tired from trying to hold everything together.

And if we are honest, pride can grow surprisingly well. We water it with our certainty, feed it with our opinions, and before long it crowds out humility, compassion, and peace.

The good news is that Jesus does not stand over us criticizing the condition of our hearts.

He comes as the faithful Gardener.

With remarkable patience, He loosens what has become hard, gently removes what is choking new life, and waters us with His grace. He never rushes the seasons of growth, and He never abandons His garden.

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!

As a church family, we are invited to join Him in that work. A word of encouragement, a shared prayer, a listening ear, or a simple act of kindness can become part of how God cultivates faith in one another. Together, we become a community where hope is renewed and love bears fruit.

My prayer for each of you is that the seed of God's Word will find a welcoming place in your heart. May Christ continue His quiet work within you, bringing forth the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

As you tend your garden this summer—or simply pause to admire one in bloom—may it remind you that God is still tending the garden of your heart. Our faithful Gardener has never stopped believing that something beautiful can grow within each of us.

Grace and peace,

The Rev. Prabhu Sigamani



FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Wow! Summer is here and we're all excited! I want to thank my board for a very prosperous year. We've done a lot with the help of Michael Magliaro (L&M Improvements) and all of your assistance. (As you can see, one of the projects was to extend the handicap ramp so that it faces our parking lot!)

I do appreciate you all but we still have lots of work to do. We need help financially and physically ...so, whenever you get a chance, come talk to me or any trustee.

I'd like to welcome Corey Wilder to the board as of July 1st. He's a wonderful fit for our needs plus he is a very nice young man.

Yours in Christ, Richard Eaves, Chair of the Board of Trustees



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

Pastor: Reverend Prabhu Sigamani; Music Minister: Jae Carelli; Moderator: Janet Moser

Office Assistant: Alicia Ciullo...Office hours: Tuesday-Thursday 10:00 AM-2:00 PM, Friday 2-5 PM

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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

Happy Summer!

I hope you survived early July's heat wave without too much distress. Those temperatures were way too intense for my liking. Then on July 6th, just as I was wondering what to write for you, we had a wonderful rainy day. With a "Boom" and a "Flash", I had it. Rain!

I often hear people complain when rain is in the forecast. Personally, I enjoy a bit of rain – even a whole day of it. It's like the Irish say. "Tis a fine soft day." There is something soft and peaceful to a rainy day. Of course, we are not talking about violent storms and flooding, but a gentle steady rain. It quiets us, slows us down, and sets a mellow cadence to our day - the pitter patter beat of falling raindrops.

My inquisitive nature had me researching more information about rain and look what I found! All sorts of cool facts repeated on so many sites I am not listing citations for half the internet here.

Have you noticed the wonderful smell outdoors after, or sometimes even before a rain? It is real and is called petrichor. Plants and bacteria in the soil release a compound, geosmin, which we humans are actually good at detecting. See, it's not your imagination.

Raindrops are NOT shaped like teardrops. In fact, they are nearly round and get flattened out to little hamburger bun shapes as they fall. Picture that!

Some rain never reaches us down here. It falls from a cloud but evaporates before it reaches the earth. It is called virga and can appear like streaks or curtains hanging under the clouds.

It's raining cats and dogs. No. But it has rained fish and frogs! There are rare but documented cases of aquatic creatures falling with the rain. It is believed that waterspouts and strong storms can lift little critters from shallow waters, ponds, or lakes and carry them a bit before they fall from the sky. Makes me very grateful it doesn't rain cats and dogs!

That fluffy white cloud floating in the sky is a lot heavier than it looks. Imagine hundreds of thousands of pounds of tiny droplets of water in that cloud. Fortunately, those droplets are spread throughout a large volume of air and supported by air currents. Light as a feather may be a good analogy, but not light as a cloud. That summer thunderstorm carries a lot of weight too. Your average storm can hold hundreds of thousands of tons of water! Good thing it falls over a large area and not all at once. Ouch!



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SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday school ended May 31st wherein the kids hosted their annual “Sundae” school treat. They served ice cream, toppings and some other treats during coffee hour. Here’s a recap of the past year! Have a great Summer and see you back on September!

Rally Day and Sunday school starts September 27th. We will be doing a peanut butter and jelly drive for the food pantry.



A little recap
of the past
year’s
activities.



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 Marie Farrell - 516-528-4984 or Tina Lewald at 917-270-6509.

VENTURE CRE

Thank you to all those who helped set up our blood drive and the 25 people in total came to donate at our drive at Bethany with NYBC. We hope to continue our partnership with Bethany with more in the coming year. Meanwhile this summer our crew are out venturing at Seabase, Florida; Philmont, New Mexico; National Jamboree, West Virginia & many working at our council camp Onteora upstate.



We will be back weekly on Thursday nights starting in September; youth 14-20 welcome to stop by and see what we are all about.

VENTURE CREW 518

This is another Crew that meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 in Room 301. Most of the Crew is at Onteora, the Boy Scout Camp in the Catskills. They will be back in September when school starts.

Come on down for more information on what they do and how 17-20 year olds may join.



FROM THE EDITOR:



...to Barbara Sobey and her family on the recent passing of her brother, Ray Sumperl. Even though Ray lived out of state, the Sumperl Family was very active at Bethany a number of years ago.

...and to everyone who has recently experienced a loss of a loved one.

Please advise us directly at 516-721-8885 or cjdagostino@gmail.com if you or anyone you know need a mention here for any type of announcement.

We would like to thank everyone who attended our June Corporate Meeting. We would like to congratulate all of those who were elected to various offices, most of whom have re-upped for new terms. Among the new electees are Kaitlyn Lewald as an Executive Committee-Member-at-Large and to Cory Wilder as our newest Trustee.

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Congratulations to our latest retirees:



From Left:

Billy Lewald

Rich Eaves

David Donovan

Not pictured: Steve Richardson

We would like to acknowledge those who participated in the annual Huckleberry Frolic, particularly the Women's League, whose delicious baked goods raise money for Bethany!



BROADWAY REVIEW

For those of you who enjoy Broadway, we recently saw **Just in Time**. This is the story of Bobby Darin. He was very popular in the 1960's. It was very well done...the singers did a great job. The theater was on the smaller side with no bad seats. Sadly, he died young in 1973 at age 37. His first big hit was "Splish Splash" and he went on to make many more hits, movies and even a weekly TV Variety show.

We went to the TKTS booth on 47th and Broadway and were able to get Orchestra seats for half price. It's a long line but worth it. Bring your handicap pass, if you have one, or a military service card, and move to the Fast Pass line. Try to get there by 10-10:15 for a good place on line. It opens at 11:00 AM. Get tickets the same day...many matinees (Off-Broadway shows, too)!

In case you did not know, there is NYC Broadway Week, which is a highly anticipated biannual promotion that offers 2-for-1 tickets to participating Broadway shows. The upcoming fall event runs from September 14 to September 27, 2026, with tickets officially going on sale starting August 25, 2026, at 10:00 AM ET. (There will be another week in January, starting January 7th.)

The program typically features around 25 to 26 participating productions, ranging from long-running spectacles to newly debuted hits.

Key details for the Fall 2026 event:

- **Dates:** September 14 – September 27, 2026
- **General Ticket On-Sale:** Tuesday, August 25, 2026

If anyone has a review of their own, either for a Broadway show, Movie or Comedy Routine, please send it to us...cjdagostino@gmail.com and we will do our best to include it in a future issue.

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WHAT'S GROWING INSIDE?

The Sweetness of Staying Connected to the True Vine

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit... apart from Me you can do nothing.” — John 15:5

I heard someone say that they saw a roadside watermelon stand with a sign that read, “Holy Ghost Filled Watermelons.” It made me laugh, but the image quickly became a sermon in itself. A watermelon may have a beautiful rind, but no one buys it for the outside. Its value is discovered only when it is opened and its sweetness is revealed.



THE FRUIT BENEATH THE RIND

Our lives can resemble that watermelon. We may look faithful on the outside, yet the true evidence of our walk with Christ is revealed by what lives within. Jesus never called His followers to perfect performance; He called them to abiding. The sweetness of a believer's life comes from remaining connected to the True Vine.

CONNECTED TO THE SOURCE

A watermelon does not become sweet by trying harder. It becomes sweet because it stays connected to the vine that supplies water, nourishment, and life. Jesus teaches the same principle in John 15. As we remain in Him through His Word, prayer, worship, and obedience, His character begins to grow within us. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control become the natural fruit of a life sustained by Christ.

“Fruit always reveals the root, and what fills your heart will eventually flow from your life.”

EVERY FRUIT CONTAINS SEEDS

Hidden inside every healthy watermelon are seeds. Those seeds were never meant to stay inside the fruit—they were created to produce another harvest. In the same way, God has placed spiritual seeds within every believer. Every conversation, every encouraging word, every act of mercy, every testimony, and every prayer plants something in another person's heart.

Scripture reminds us, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45). Our words reveal our roots. They can scatter seeds of hope, peace, truth, mercy, and encouragement, or they can sow gossip, bitterness, anger, and division. Someone is always receiving the seeds we scatter.

A LIFE THAT REPRODUCES

Healthy fruit naturally produces healthy seeds. God never intended His people to simply consume His blessings without reproducing His life in others. As branches connected to the Vine, we are called to leave every conversation, every relationship, and every place carrying the fragrance of Christ.

THE GARDENER'S WORK

Jesus also reminds us that the Father is the Gardener. Through seasons of pruning, He removes attitudes and distractions that hinder our growth. Though pruning is often uncomfortable, it prepares us to bear even greater fruit for His glory.

May our lives be known not for the rind of religion, but for the sweetness of Christ within. Stay connected to the Vine. Bear fruit. Scatter life-giving seeds.

...submitted by Lily and Mike Magliaro

In Celebration of AMERICA'S 250th Birthday....

Let's enjoy a piece of American history....**The Farmer's Almanac!**

The Farmer's Almanac was first published in 1792 during George Washington's Presidency and has been published every year since then! Here are some excerpts from the 2026 issue:

THIS YEAR'S CRINGERS *(Feel free to leave the room.)*

- Just so everyone's clear, I'm going to put my glasses on.
- I once worked at a pizza shop to get by. I kneaded the dough.
- My friends and I have named our band "Duvet". It is a cover band.
- What did the surgeon say to the patient who insisted on closing up their own incision? Suture self.
- I'm trying to organize a hide-and-see tournament, but good players are hard to find.
- I've started telling everyone about the benefit of eating dried grapes. It's all about raisin' awareness.
- "Dad, are we pyromaniacs?" "Yes, we are son".
- Writing my name in cursive is my signature move. - *courtesy of D.D., Calgary, Alberta*



FOR GOOD MEASURE

- Time it takes to temporarily sail 220 yards at 1 nautical mile per hour: knotfurlong
- One-millionth of a mouthwash: microscope
- Time between slipping on a peel and hitting the pavement: bananosecond
- One million aches: megahertz
- Basic unit of laryngitis: hoarsepower
- Eight nickels: two paradigms - *courtesy of C.B., Concord, North Carolina*



AT A LOSS FOR WORDS

Over the last 20 years, humans have been speaking 3,000 fewer words a day. Research from the American Psychological Association shows the average number of daily spoken words dropped from 16,000 to around 13,000. This decline is being attributed to, what else, texting and social media. – *courtesy of F.T., Waltham, Massachusetts*

JUST CURIOUS: Did the coiner of "one-hit-wonder" have any other ideas?

WISHING YOU A WEALTH OF HEALTH ~ Carol Henck

(and remember, Laughter's the Best Medicine!!)



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Our deadline for publication in the next issue is always the 10th of the following months:

January; March; May; July; September and November. The costs would be as follows:

- 1/8 page....\$40.00/issue or \$200.00/all six
- 1/4 page ...\$75.00/issue or \$375.00/all six

Contact our editor: cjdagostino@gmail.com or Call or text: 516-721-8885 for all of the details.

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Thanks to Kaitlyn Lewald for taking charge of our Facebook Page!

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Mural in the Fellowship Hall

Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie (dec.)