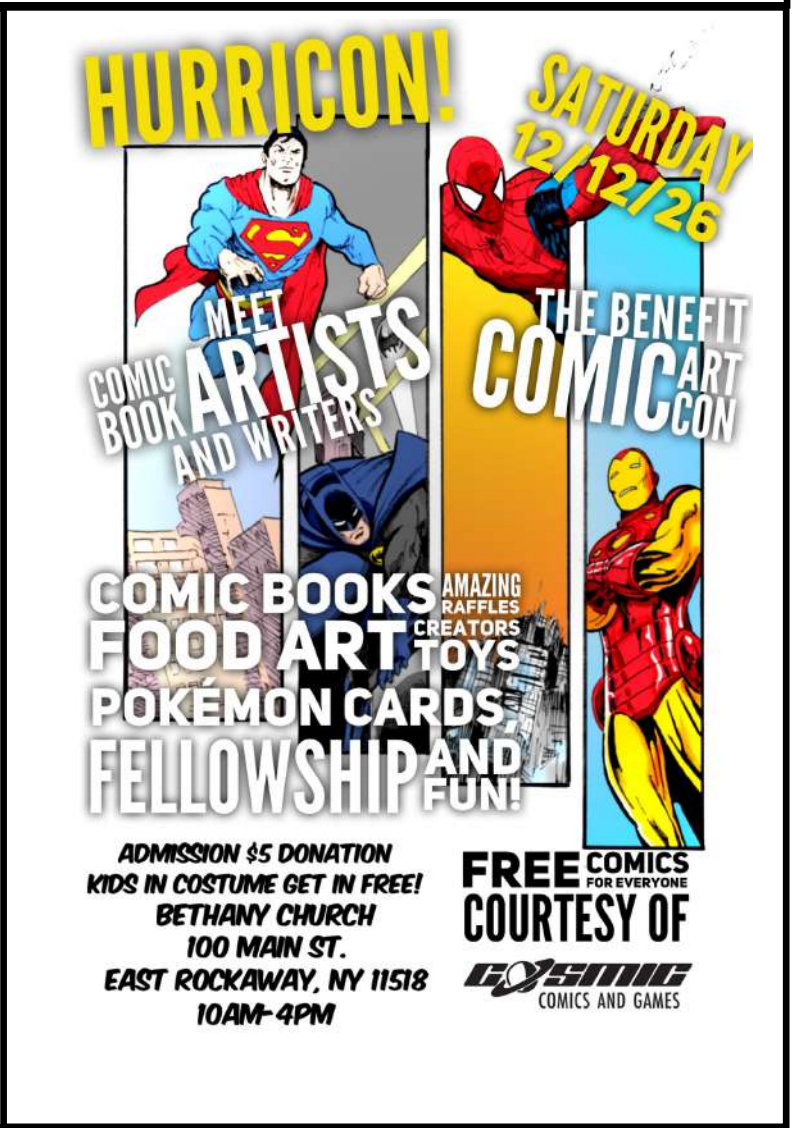
THE BELL TOWER

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

Vol. 66 No. 6 East Rockaway, NY 11518 November-December 2026





Dates to Remember:

November 22...CVS Clinic in Gym
November 26...Thanksgiving Day
December 4...Chanukah
December 5...Christmas Fair
December 7...Pearl Harbor Day
December 8…Immaculate Conception
December 12...Hurricon
December 20...Christmas Pageant
December 21...First Day of Winter
December 25...Christmas Day



Grateful Hearts, Advent Light

1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NRSV) Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Isaiah 9:2 (NRSV) The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.

The peace of Jesus Christ be with you!

Read the verses above aloud—perhaps over morning coffee or in a quiet moment with the Bell Tower. You may not hear the bell ringing, but I pray you will hear God's voice through these words.

Apostle Paul calls us to give thanks in all circumstances; Isaiah speaks of a people upon whom light has shined. Together, these verses invite us to move from personal gratitude to shared life in God's light.

Giving thanks in all circumstances is not easy. We miss loved ones, face unexpected setbacks, and struggle with strained relationships. Gratitude does not mean pretending that every circumstance is good. It means making room, even in our sorrow, to recognize a gift: a quiet moment, a kind word, or someone willing to walk beside us.

As we practice thanksgiving, simple gifts become harder to overlook. Appreciation deepens into care: we do more than thank people for what they do; we value who they are. We listen, encourage, and carry one another's burdens. Gratitude becomes shared joy.

May this Thanksgiving renew our gratitude to God and to one another—not only around our tables, but throughout our life as a church.

And here Isaiah joins us at the Thanksgiving table. Notice that he says "the people," not "the person." Perhaps we can leave our separate flashlights—and our five competing ideas about which way to go—at the door! "On them light has shined." Isaiah's words invite us to see ourselves as a people receiving God's light together. Our congregation has energy, imagination, and a willingness to try new things. Let us nurture those gifts through a shared rhythm: listening carefully, making room for one another, and faithfully doing our part. Structure need not dim our enthusiasm; it can help us move together without leaving anyone behind.

The connection is simple: gratitude helps us value one another; shared light invites us to walk together. What might that look like in our worship and service?

In worship, we can be warm and welcoming while making room for silence, reverence, and order. These are not barriers to joy; they help us attend to God and to one another. In fellowship, ministry, and volunteering, gratitude can take the shape of a listening ear, a willing hand, and a promise kept.

Before you set this letter aside, pause for two questions. What is one gift you are thankful for in this very moment—something you have overlooked or taken for granted? Name it, give thanks to God for it, and, if that gift is a person, let them know you appreciate them.

And as God's light shines upon us, ask yourself: am I walking with others, or trying to make the journey alone? If you are walking alone, take a step toward someone. If you already have companions, make room for someone new. Let gratitude open your heart, and let God's light widen our circle.

Church is not something any one of us can be alone. It is a life we share—with many hands, feets, minds, and hearts offering their gifts together. This Thanksgiving, let us turn our thanks into care and our good intentions into faithful col**labor**ative action. Let us leave no one to carry the load alone, and no one to walk alone. With grateful hearts, let us walk together in the light God has given us.

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!

FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

We've had an interesting two months. Three of our Trustees have retired, including myself. They now have the time to help their community and their church and they're doing a wonderful job. We need the next generation to come on board and learn how to do this. All of the executive positions need help with the running of our church and we need to be proactive about this. I do have the younger generation on the trustee board and I have nothing but confidence that they will step forward, but we need more for this small but powerful Church to remain active in the community.

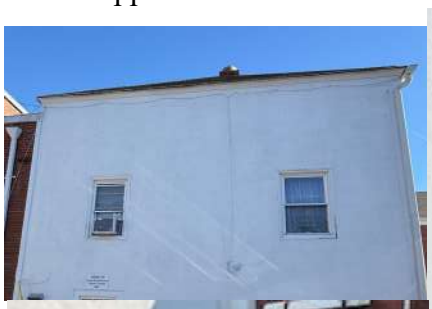
The second half of the church has been painted, we just have the front and the Bell Tower to finish. We are also looking into the outside locks for the church, so we are testing one in the Thrift Store door. It seems to be working well. There have been times when folks try to force the doors open, so we needed to address this. New mulch has been laid down and I think it helps our curb appeal.

Thank you for your time and your patience.

Yours in Christ, Rich Eaves,

Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

We accept Venmo…@Bethany-Eastrock













Bethany Bell Tower ...is a bi-monthly publication of **BETHANY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**
Pastor: Reverend Prabhu Sigamani; Music Minister: Jae Carelli; Moderator: Janet Moser

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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 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



….for November and December!

Wait a minute – how can that be? Where did September and October go? Well, ready or not, November is here and December is a mere blink of the eye away.

We are now in the seasons of **Gratitude, Kindness, and Generosity**. As you and I both know, it should always be the season for these wonderful virtues, but it doesn't hurt to highlight them now and again.

Thanksgiving, even in its name, reminds us to look for and cherish all the many blessings that we have.

I'll go first. I am so grateful for all of you. We had our Fall Corporate Meeting on October 18th. The reports submitted and the conversations shared illustrated the magic that is Bethany Congregational. We have a wonderful mix of "old-timers" and younger folk moving us into an exciting future filled with new ideas and the energy to make them happen! Don't think I don't appreciate those of you who are not on committees and such. I see you out there with your good deeds and friendly smiles. You are valued.

Kindness. Christmas is my favorite time of year for many reasons but primarily for how it seems to make people act a bit nicer to each other. That "good will toward men" (humanity) seems to actually happen, at least some of the time. Tied into that is generosity. Giving is a blessing, not a burden. I've written before about how volunteering and giving truly has documentable positive impact not just on the recipient, but on the giver. A win-win situation. Giving doesn't have to fall into the trap of materialism. Check out the December Kindness calendar below. See how many you can make happen!

Wishing everyone a grateful Thanksgiving, a kind and generous Christmas season, and an early but sincere happy and healthy New Year. Janet Moser, Bethany Moderator



SUNDAY SCHOOL



Sunday School started the year on October 4th with its Annual Rally Day and Peanut Butter and Jelly Drive. We had a lovely breakfast while the kids had a great time making some crafts. Sunday school lessons last month highlighted God's love and we also discussed reasons we are grateful. We did some Q-Tip art and played some games.

The Sunday school kids also showed their appreciation for Ms. Heidi on Oct. 25th by reciting a poem and singing some songs at her retirement party. We are grateful for Ms. Heidi and her wonderful help with the Sunday school lessons. Her support is very much appreciated.

Lastly, Bethany's Sunday school hosted a Halloween Pot-luck Party. Everyone brought in a dish to share. We had games and craft activities for the kids. Even the adults had a great time playing games like Kerplunk and Guess Who. The event ended with a mini Karaoke session with the kids and Pastor Prabhu. This was a memorable event for the kids and we want to thank everyone who participated and helped make this a success.









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.





There was a celebration of Heidi Hoffman's retirement with a heart-felt tribute in song from some of the Sunday School Students!



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

VENTURE CREW 121

Crew 121 has resumed yearly meetings. They are excited to hit the ground running. Over the summer many of our members were part of the Onteora camp staff. They got the opportunity to enrich the lives of many scouts with a variety of different skills, knowledge and experiences. Also, some of the Crew members participated in the National Scout Jamboree in West Virginia at Summit Bechtel Reserve. They had the opportunity to connect with many scouts from across the country. They experienced unique adventures unlike no other...such as Whitewater Rafting, extreme zip-lining and shooting Crossbows. We are enthusiastic about strengthening our partnership with Bethany Congregational Church. This will be done by providing community service.

The Crew meets every Thursday at 7:30 in the Gym.

They accept young men and women between the ages of 17 and 21. If you know any one who may be interested, come on down!

VENTURE CREW 518

This is another Crew that meets on Tuesdays in Room 301.

Come on down for more information on what they do and how 17-21 year olds may join.

FROM THE EDITOR:



Last issue we celebrated Dot Cozine's 100th Birthday. Sadly, she passed a little while afterwards. We would extend like to our condolences to all of her friends and family, especially the Lewald family who embraced her into their hearts.

Pastor Prabhu has suggested that we start a Testimony Page in The Bell Tower. We would accept anecdotes and remembrances of how God helps you or has helped you in the past. You may email your thoughts to the the editor: cjdagostino@gmail.com or snail mail them to The Bell Tower, c/o Bethany Church, 100 Main Street, East Rockaway, NY 11518. We will publish anonymously if you prefer but let us know in your correspondence.

Write for The Bell Tower:

We are always looking for input from our readers. This month we have received a Restaurant Review, a Theater Review and a recipe. Thank you one and all! Keep them coming!

CVS Clinic

in Bethany Gym...November 22, 2026...11:30-3:00 PM...Flu shots and other vaccines will be provided by our CVS neighbor. Most or all vaccines are free with many insurances.



RESTAURANT REVIEW…Submitted by Barbara Valis

Speak Easy, 451 Atlantic Avenue, East Rockaway, NY. (516)-341-0599

When deciding where to go for my daughter's birthday, we picked Speak Easy. It is a Tapas bar that offers a variety of small plates. They also make some really good cocktails. We enjoyed their Cozze (mussels), Brisket Sliders, Arancini (rice balls), Pasta Fritta (fried pasta)and Poupette (meatballs). There are many other choices. The food was good, the service was great and we enjoyed it all. I am confident that you will too!

THEATER REVIEW…Submitted by Jennifer Valis

Strongbox Theater, 40 Main St, East Rockaway, NY (516) 855-0744

A new gem has opened in East Rockaway! The Strongbox Theater, located right on Main Street, has taken over the historic bank building and transformed it into a beautiful space encompassing an intimate theater, cocktail and bar area serving libations and light fare with cozy seating, and a lovely back patio. The original bank vault has been built into the bar area creating lots of interest. We recently went to see *Over the River and Through the Woods*, a familial comedy written by Joe DePietro. We laughed, we cried and we were thoroughly entertained by the plotline and the actors. Prior to the show we enjoyed cappuccinos on the back patio and got to chat with a lovely group of theatergoers. Upcoming shows and events include dramas, musicals, comedy shows, headlining musicians and even book signings! Check out the theater online for a full list of upcoming events. You will not be disappointed.

Sharing Christmas Joy at Bethany!





The Outreach Committee is happy to announce:

This Christmas Season we will once again

"Adopt – a – Family"

from the **Mary Brennan Inn** in Hempstead!

We are blessed with the opportunity to provide

our gifts to brighten the Christmas season for a new family.

Please "stay tuned" to Bethany emails, Church announcements and bulletin inserts for more details!

With Joy,

Carol Henck and Barbara Merna (Outreach Committee)

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!

Add a Heart-Filled Serving of Gratitude to your Family Thanksgiving Celebration!

This Thanksgiving, perhaps you can create a new Family Tradition by choosing one of these engaging, hands-on Thanksgiving gratitude activities that help bridge generations, spark meaningful conversation, and make thankfulness fun for both kids and adults!

Interactive Table & Discussion Games

- **A–Z Gratitude Round:** Go around the dinner table and have each person name something they are grateful for in alphabetical order (A for art, B for books…)
- **The Appreciation Chair:** Place an empty chair in the center of the room. Have family members take turns sitting in it while everyone else shares specific praise, encouragement, and thankfulness for them.
- **Guess Who Said It?:** Have everyone write down a unique memory, funny moment, or thing they are grateful for on a slip of paper before dinner. Put them in a bowl, draw them out one by one, and let the family guess who wrote what.
- **Gratitude Dice or Roll-a-Prompt:** Roll a die to match a list of fun sharing prompts (e.g., roll a 3 and name three things that made you smile this week).

Creative & Hands-On Crafts

- **The Gratitude Tree:** Arrange bare tree branches in a vase or pot. Cut out paper leaves, let family members write or draw what they appreciate on them, and hang them from the branches as a living centerpiece.
- **Pass-the-Tablecloth:** Cover the Thanksgiving table with a paper kraft tablecloth or fabric sheet, and leave markers or fabric pens out so everyone can doodle, write favorite memories, or list what they are thankful for right on the table.
- **The Gratitude Jar Countdown:** Throughout November, family members drop written notes of thanks into a decorated jar. Read them aloud together around the Thanksgiving table after the meal.

Active & Service-Oriented Ideas

- **Thanksgiving Gratitude Scavenger Hunt:** Send kids (or teams) around the house or yard with a list to find, draw, or photograph items that represent blessings or specific prompts (something soft, something that helps you cook, something green).
- **One Note Before Pie:** Challenge everyone to write and address a real, handwritten thank-you card to someone outside the immediate family (a teacher, neighbor, or distant relative) before dessert is served, and actually mail it.
- **Community Service Care Packages:** Spend a morning putting together care packages, baking treats for neighbors, or volunteering together through local churches or organizations.

Wishing you and your family Thanksgiving Blessings and a Wealth of Health! Carol Henck

WOMEN'S LEAGUE:

The Christmas Fair will be here the week after Thanksgiving. The ladies will need a lot of help a day or 2 before to set up. Watch your email for updates. Any questions, please contact Cathy Clarke at 516-205-4309. ***Let's make this the best one ever!***



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HurriCon, the only benefit comic art convention in New York, returns to Bethany Church on Saturday, December 12, 2026. With over 33 tables filled with comics, art, toys, collectibles, and more; you will find that holiday gift for the person you think has everything! Comic book artists Sean Chen, Andy McDonald, John Broglia, and Ken Landgraf are featured guests along with Spider Verse Maze creator Sean Jackson and Star Trek novelist Michael Jan Freidman.



Don't miss one of Bethany's biggest fund raisers! Bring your friends and make sure to order the amazing "Walking Taco" from the kitchen.

Pastor Prabhu was missing at the pulpit at Bethany Church on Sunday, November 8. Where was he? Our pastor preached the sermon "Start Small And Think Big" at the Old First Reformed Church in Park Slope, Brooklyn that morning. His old friend from his seminary days, the Rev. Cheri Kroon invited him. Pastor's wife Ida and David Donovan accompanied him.



The Old First has been part of the Brooklyn community since the late 1800s. Photos of the church can be seen at ***https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1541824171325748&id=100064945380445#.*** The interior of the church is magnificent with many amazing stained glass windows. The Old First is in the middle of a restoration of 3 rose windows and could use your help. Check out oldfirstbrooklyn.org to find out how you can become involved in the project.

Many thanks to Rev. Kroon and the congregants for a wonderful worship service full of music and the word. A lovely lunch followed the service. God Bless you all!...David Donovan

APPLE CAKE

INGREDIENTS:

4 OR 5 APPLES PEELED AND SLICED-GRANNY AND MAC WORK WELL

5 TABLESPOON SUGAR

2 TEASPOON CINNAMON

3 CUPS SIFTED FLOUR

2 CUPS SUGAR

1 CUP VEGETABLE OIL

4 EGGS

¼ CUP ORANGE JUICE

3 TEASPOON BAKING POWDER

2 1/2 TEASPOON VANILLA

½ TEASPOON SALT

1 CUP WALNUTS (OPTIONAL)

BLEND 5 TABLESPOON SUGAR AND CINNAMON SPRINKLE OVER APPLES, SET ASIDE

SIFT FLOUR, SALT AND BAKING POWDER TOGETHER IN SEPARATE BOWL

BEAT EGGS, SUGAR, OIL, ORANGE JUICE AND VANILLA

ADD FLOUR AND MIX WELL

ADD WALNUTS

POUR HALF THE BATTER IN A TUBE PAN, THEN HALF THE APPLES, THEN THE REST OF BATTER AND APPLES ON TOP. IF ANY JUICE IN APPLES, JUST ADD IT.

BAKE AT 350 DEGREES FOR ONE AND HALF HOURS. TEST CAKE, IT MIGHT NEED ANOTHER 5 MINUTES.

ALLOW TO COOL BEFORE REMOVING FROM PAN

THIS CAKE CAN BE FROZEN

(Submitted by Andrea Eaves)

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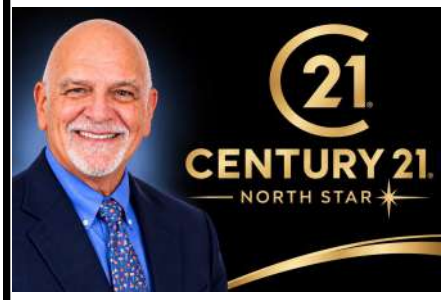

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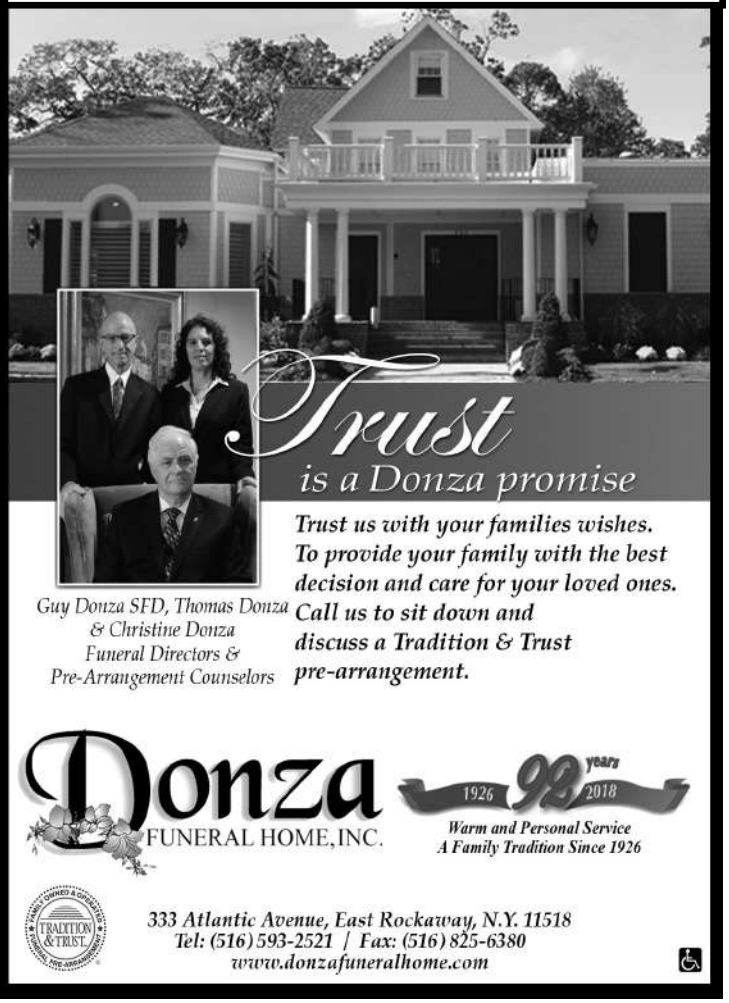

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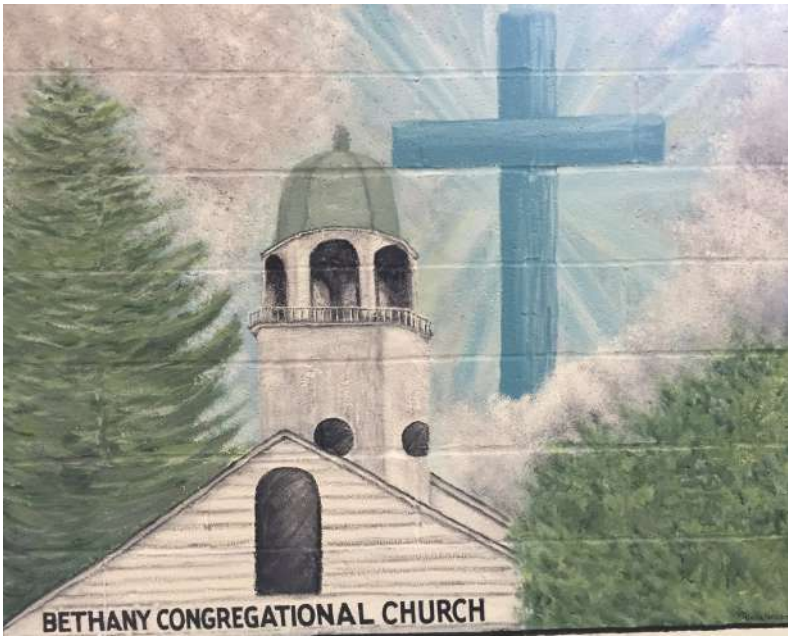

Mural in the Fellowship Hall

Courtesy of Diana Harrison and Anthony Claverie (dec.)