The Voice of Bellmore - Merrick

Saint John's Lutheran Church & School

"St. John's Early Childhood Center"

MARCH ~ 2026

Dear Friends in Christ!

Ever notice those tree branches that still have a few of those "hold-out" dried leaves just hanging on and never letting go over the last days of the fall season throughout winter and into early spring? They seem sad at first … just hanging there on those predominantly barren tree limbs… and yet, when you think of it – they can be, for us, an amazing example of faith. We tend to dry up a bit here in there in our walk of life and faith. Some of us fall off and come back. Some of us never seem to return after falling away. And yet there are others that just tend to "hang-in-there" no matter what, waiting for something else, something new to happen.

As we officially move from winter into the season of spring, we are reminded that this transition often times brings with it the journey through the valley of shadows in Lent and Holy Week with Jesus toward the cross of Calvary. Like with many disciples, some fell away… some stayed at a safe distance out of doubt or utter fear, and some hung in there to the bitter end to see something else happen, something new.

Our Bellmore—Merrick congregational endeavor to bring two church communities together is very much a similar journey of transition. In the now, six years, of our congregational conversations and experimental trials, we are continuing a trek through pathways and valleys that can often be dark, dried up and shadowy as it clouds our vision. Many of us are becoming tired of the journey and some have fallen away already out of sheer disillusionment. Some express their anger with a seemingly unknown process, even the possibilities of leaving familiar physical locations or practices to try anything new. Some are trying to remain on the path, but at a safe distance out of fear and anxiety. And then there are others who, as an act of faith just "hang-in-there" waiting for something else to happen, something new.

Since the last printing of our collaborative newsletter back in October 2025 – the councils prepared the congregations for a new venture with a strategic planner, **Mark Nocero.** We established a special retreat to rework and take deeper ownership of a new mission statement (reminding us who we are and to share it with our community at large) in connection with several goals to help us envision the next five years of life as a Bellmore—Merrick collaborative endeavor that seeks to involve its community. The retreat day on January 31st of 2026 was an exciting time for us to gather. As a combined group, our efforts established important work that day. Mark helped us to see our need for a new "10" since our current vision was no longer working for us… we've offered only a few examples of what went on at the retreat with two temple talks during worship so far. We are hoping to have more volunteers share their experience during worship in April.

Strange thing about those "hold-out" leaves just hanging on to those barren tree limbs… they seem sad at first but can be a real inspiration to us as a people of faith… often times, just "hanging-in-there"… to see what else might happen, something new. Those dried leaves will see new growth spring forth… the disciples did encounter a risen Savior and … you and I too, will see a new vision of our future as God leads us through the dark and dry valley to the promised land flowing with milk and honey… where we work together, have faith and "hang-in-there" to see something amazing happen! Wouldn't you want to be a part of it?

Holy Week Blessings in Christ Crucified and Him Risen! ✠Pastor Kirschbaum

Saint John's Lutheran Church of Bellmore & Merrick

Welcome to Worship – Sundays at 9:30 a.m.

2150 Centre Avenue, Bellmore, NY 11710
Office – 516-785-4331
Email – stjbellmore@gmail.com
Website – saintjohnbellmore.org

1 Van Roo Avenue, Merrick, NY 11566
Office/Fax – 516-379-3858/3681
ECC Office – 516-378-4ECC (4322)
Email – stjmerrick@gmail.com
Website – stjohnsmerrick.org

Mission Statement: **The mission of Saint John's Lutheran Church of Bellmore-Merrick, a nurturing community, is to live the way Jesus taught us by spreading the message of His unconditional love through joyful acceptance because we are all God's children.**

By 2031, Saint John's Lutheran Church of Bellmore- Merrick will…

- ✠ develop a comprehensive youth program
- ✠ increase active and diverse participation
- ✠ increase and improve our outreach programs
- ✠ broaden our social media activity

Congregational Council

President: Craig Medico
Vice President: Nina Thilesen
Secretary: Margaret Neverka
Recording Secretary: Karen Brucia
Co-Treasurers: Charlene Drews/Ira Bergman

Jerilyn Hunsinger
Nancy Kamps - Cook
Jennifer Pagano
Craig Preattle
Christa Tuccillo
Lori Vanderwaren

President: Heidi Kohler
Vice President: Barbara Entenza
Secretary: Dawn Kohler
Treasurer: Ken Glupe

Michael Chin
Gerry Finck
Barbara Kohler
Lisa Reisner
Marge Scarangella

Church Staff

The Reverend Perry J. Kirschbaum, Pastor
Ms. Charlene Drewes, Deacon
Mrs. Anita Fiedel, Church Admin. Assistant
Ms. Quinn Anderson, Organist
Ms. Deborah Stanczuk, ECC Director
Mrs. Bernadette Murray, ECC Admin.Assistant

Early Childhood Center Teachers

Ms. Michelle Alessi
Ms. Daisy Galan
Ms. Christina Kublo
Ms. Lisa Luchsinger
Ms. Mikalah Perrotta
Ms. Lisa Zachar
Ms. Sharon Loscalzo

Online Worship

Worship will be live streamed on the St. John's Merrick Facebook page on Sunday morning at 9:30 a.m. and shared to the Saint John Bellmore Facebook page.

https://www.facebook.com/stjohnsmerrick/
https://www.facebook.com/saintjohnbellmore

Worship Server Schedule

	Assisting Minister	Acolyte	Usher	Lector	Altar Guild
4/2	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	Barbara E
4/3	Charlene	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
4/5	Charlene	Cole	Craig/Mike T	Kathy G	Carol/Nancy D
4/12	Gail	Zachary	Jim/Nicholas	Gail	Marge/Lori
4/19	Nancy KC	Adrian	Annamarie/Craig	Nancy KC	Carol/Barbara E
4/26	Gerry	Gavin	Nancy KC/Angel	June	Marge/Nina

April Birthdays

Aria Kugler	April 9th
Nina Thilesen & Stephanie Kugler	April 13th
Eric Sargent	April 17th
Lynda O'Keefe DiTuri	April 29th

If you would like to add your name to the birthday list, please contact the church office.

Altar Flowers

The Altar Flower Calendar is hanging on the bulletin board in the Narthex. Select a Sunday to offer a gift of flowers to be given In Honor of or In Memory of … a loved one or a special occasion. A contribution of **$30** is requested for each single-face floral arrangement. Please fill out an Altar Flower envelope found in any pew rack and place it into the offering plate. The same information can also be mailed to the church office with a check at least 2 weeks in advance of the date you choose.

Food Pantry

If you would like to help out with the Pantry, our most needed items at this time are:

Dish soap, syrup, coffee, tea, hot chocolate, jello, mac & cheese, stew, salad dressing, mayo, mustard, ketchup, cooking oil. NO green beans, peas or salmon please – we have plenty.

Spring Craft Fair

Save the date for our Spring Craft Fair on **Saturday, June 6 from 10am – 4pm**. We are looking for homemade craft vendors. If you are interested, please contact Lisa Reisner at reisnercpa@aol.com.

Women of the ELCA

The next bible study will take place on **Thursday, April 16th** at St. David's in Massapequa Park. We will be continuing looking at the "I Am" statements of Jesus. If you have any questions, please text or call Carol Scherer at 516-672-6344.

✞ In Our Prayers ✞

We lift in prayer our elected & lay leaders in both ecumenical and inter-faith relationships… for all associates in ministry, deacons, pastors and bishops, especially for: Yehiel Curry, our newly installed *ELCA Presiding Bishop;* Katrina Foster, *Synod Bishop-Elect of Metro New York soon to be consecrated and installed on November 22;* Christopher Vergara, *Synod VP* … for our Co-Deans: Pr. Sheridan & Pr. Hickey; along with the congregations of our Eastern Nassau Conference; for all congregations in transition and discernment… especially for our Bellmore/Merrick Collaborative – for the work of our B/M Transition Team; for the Huntington Collaborative with Pastor Cedarstrom now become United Lutheran Church of Long Island and Pr. Pollicino officially retiring…

For our E.C.C. Ministry; Deborah Stanzuk, E.C.C. Director; for our joint B/M Church Councils along with a dedicated host of volunteers; our Companion Synod [diocese] of Tanzania; for these United States of America; our current Administration and for help to combat racism, white privilege, prejudice, gun-violence, hatred and war… for Ukraine & Russia; the Middle East crisis; for all in need of healing; for those who faithfully serve in our Military and for our Police Officers; for yourself and your family that you might find strength of faith in good times as well as in times of trial… for all who continue to struggle with Long Covid and yet another surge of Covid variants, flu strains and RSV; for the vaccinated and the unvaccinated; all who have died…, for all teachers, parents, first responders, doctors, nurses, medical teams, scientists and all essential workers…

We lift in prayer the following servants of God who are in need of healing & wholeness during the month of…

March ~ 2026

Valentina Allesandra	Barbara Entenza	Sue Loheide	Fran Saperstein
Marilyn Anderson	Charlie Etherson	Linda Lown	Jonathon Scarduzio
Mike Annarelli	Doreen Etienne	Christina Maddalena	Baby Holland Schofield
Sam Barbella	Jenny Finck	Jane, Joseph & Steve Marrin	Freta Schubert
Jim Batcher	Ric Flanagan	Robert Martorella	Pat Schubert
Judy & Neil Bene	Chris Foley	Rev. John H. Matby	Marion Schurade
Ira & Jennifer Bergman	Ken Glupe	Carol McCrystal	Kathy Scott
Donna Boulder	Laura Hackel	Brian McLafferty	Connie Sestito
Joe Brucia	Barbara Haase	Dorothy Medico	Tom Smart
Lorraine Buck	Kristen Hahn	Melissa & Nathaniel Milaccio	Jean Tatum
Joni Caggiano	Theresa Heenan	Justin Nieves	Christ Thieme & Family
Amanda Caponi	Betsy Hirsch	Bruce Oehler	Sal Vassallo
Pete Cappisillo	Dolores Hohen	Rosario Panzica	Cliff Vooris
Dona Caragol	Marylou Hyland	Marissa Paolercio	Pat Waring
Irma Caragol	Daniel Johnson	Sharon Parinello	Arthur Wehrman
Peg Crawley	Karen Joyce	Anthony Politi	Dorothy Williamson
Colin Deady	William R. Kamps	Maria Pusateri	Margaret Wilson
Mark DeFilippis	Kevin Kilgallin	Ryan Ramapol	Bobby, Charley & Erica Woell
Addalina DiTierri	Richard Knoll	Dana Roberts	Yuan Zhang
The Duncan Family	Fung Lee	Kathy Rollando	Bruce Zimmerman
Maria Ege	Hope Leys	Joe Salow	Michelle & Dan

To include someone on our "Prayer List," please fill out a Prayer List Request Form printed on "blue" colored paper located on the information table in the narthex or you may call or email the church office. You can also call or email t let us know when someone can be taken off the list.

Social Ministry Committee

The Social Ministry Committee met at St. John's Merrick following the March Soup to Nuts/INN Cook. (The February cook was canceled due to a winter storm.) We extend our sincere thanks to all who participated in preparing and serving the meal, as well as those who contributed food and desserts. Special thanks to Janice Eastlund for her assistance and for donating two large turkeys, which will be used for the April meal.

The March cook featured a ham-themed menu as the group continues to expand its culinary repertoire. The meal included sliced ham with pineapple, macaroni and cheese, baked beans, spinach with white beans, applesauce, cranberry sauce, and a variety of desserts. In addition, 240 Easter eggs were prepared at the same time and were delivered along with the meal.

The committee also reviewed food pantry operations. Recent efforts have focused on improving organization, restocking shelves, and removing excess or underutilized items. A second successful pickup of surplus goods by Lutheran Social Services (LSS) was completed, and this process will continue periodically. The group is also exploring ways to incorporate pantry items, such as canned goods, into future meals.

The next Soup to Nuts Cook is scheduled for April 18 at 9:00 a.m., with plans to prepare a turkey tetrazzini meal. Volunteers are already coordinating responsibilities, including cooking turkeys, preparing pasta, vegetables, and side dishes.

Additional discussion topics included the handling of Social Ministry funds and donated gift cards, as well as opportunities to engage the congregation through Thrivent programs and grants. The committee will also be working on developing goals and an action plan to support a broader five-year ministry plan.

On Saturday, March 14th, our Social Ministry Committee prepared a wonderful meal for the **Soup 2 Nuts Soup Kitchen**. This month's menu included sliced ham, baked beans with bacon, macaroni and cheese, healthy spinach with white beans and garlic, apple and cranberry sauces, and an assortment of desserts. This ministry is one meaningful way our congregation helps care for neighbors in need. We are grateful to everyone who helps cook, prepare, and donate food. If you would like to be part of this effort, we would love to have you join us! You can help by assisting with meal preparation or by donating desserts or other food items for future meals. **If you're interested in helping, please speak to Sue Loheide, Lisa Reisner or Deacon Charlene Drewes.**

Our Pastoral Care Ministry

PLEASE REMEMBER TO INFORM YOUR CHURCH with information you might have of any hospital admissions or emergencies. We can assist the *Pastoral Care Ministry* of our parish by keeping the church office up to date with what is going on in our lives as part of God's family...for example**...**

- You are in need of prayer.
- You are ill or hospitalized.
- A baby is born into your family.
- A family member has died.
- Funeral Arrangements need to be planned.
- You are making plans for your Marriage.
- You wish to receive Holy Communion.
- You are moving/transferring to a new Parish.
- You or someone you know should be on our Prayer List - OR - you or someone you know has now recovered and the list can gladly be updated.

<u>The Holy Communion</u> *(in special circumstances);* the <u>Anointing of the Sick</u> for healing and wholeness are both available for all who desire. <u>Blessing of a Dwelling</u> is also available for all who have moved into a new living space *(i.e., new apartment or house)* and seek God's blessing. Be open to the gracious gifts of God in the power of the Holy Spirit received in Living Faith.

Thank you to all the St. John's Lutheran Church families that contributed to our school supply drive!! Our goal was to collect 100 items, and we have far exceeded that expectation! This was a partnership with Thrivent Financial. We are now in the running to receive a $1,000 grant!

~ St. John's Early Childhood Center

Such a fun Saturday at our **Children's St. Patrick's Day Scavenger Hunt on March 21!** ☘️💚
We loved seeing all the smiles and excitement as everyone searched for clues and treasures.
Thanks to all the families who joined us! Check out some highlights below 📸👇

St. John's Early Childhood Center Ministry

March ~ 2026

Dear Friends,

St. John's Early Childhood Center has a busy and exciting month ahead! Our school is buzzing with activity as we welcome the arrival of spring. We began the month by stepping into the whimsical world of beloved children's author Dr. Seuss. From flipping Green Eggs and Ham to counting along with One Fish, Two Fish, each story became a fun and engaging learning adventure. Next, we enjoyed a special in-house field trip with Brittany Georgalis, children's librarian from the North Merrick Library. Miss Brittany shared a delightful story, along with music and movement activities. The children had so much fun singing, dancing, and laughing together.

Earlier this month, we held our Spring Parent-Teacher Conferences. Families were invited into their child's classroom to learn more about their child's growth and development—socially, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually—throughout the school year. We also celebrated St. Patrick's Day with a variety of fun classroom activities. Our three-year olds baked rainbow cookies, while the two-year-olds enjoyed rainbow goldfish snacks. Throughout the month, the children searched for a mischievous leprechaun who left behind playful messes, glittery trails, and even the occasional gold coin! Many ECC families also joined in the church's St. Patrick's Day celebration, where children participated in a festive scavenger hunt to find the leprechaun's gold. The morning was filled with crafts, delicious food, and plenty of smiles—especially during the adorable photo opportunity with a "real" leprechaun!

We are also proud to partner with Thrivent Financial for a special service project during the month of March. Our goal is to collect 100 school supply items, which will put us in the running to potentially receive a $1,000 Thrivent grant. ECC families brought in items during our Parent/Teacher conferences and continue to do so. Donations from our church family can be placed on the table in the Narthex. We are truly grateful to everyone who supports us in this mission and helps teach our children the importance of giving back.

With Easter just around the corner, our classrooms are now filled with songs, crafts, and lessons centered on the Easter story. Earlier this month, ECC families took part in a meaningful Easter egg-dying event, where donated eggs were colored and shared with those in need through the Freeport Soup 2 Nuts Kitchen. We believe it is important to teach children the value of giving and caring for others. ECC families are also invited to join us for our upcoming class Easter celebrations, including a special Easter egg hunt to enjoy with their children. It is sure to be a joyful and memorable time for all!

Regards,

Deborah Stanczuk

Deborah Stanczuk, Director
Phone: (516) 378-4322
E-mail: ecc@stjohnsmerrick.org
Website: www.stjohnsmerrick.org

SAINT JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF BELLMORE - MERRICK
MERRICK AVE & MARGARET BLVD.
516-379-3858

HOLY WEEK

Palm Sunday of the Passion- March 29

9:30 am - Solemn Holy Eucharist with blessing and distribution of palms

Maundy Thursday - April 2

12:30 pm & 7:30 pm - Solemn Holy Eucharist
Concludes with the stripping of the altar at 7:30 pm service

Good Friday - April 3

10:00 am - Children's Easter story with craft
12:30 pm - Way of the Cross
7:30 pm - Tenebrae

Easter Sunday - April 5

Feast Day of the Resurrection of Our Lord
9:30 am - Festive Holy Eucharist

Saint John's Lutheran Church of Bellmore - Merrick
Merrick Ave. & Margaret Blvd.
516-379-3858

GOOD FRIDAY CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY

April 3, 2026

10am – 12pm

All are welcome!

Each year we gather our children on Good Friday to prepare for Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday.

We start at 10:00am with an Easter story to review the days of Holy Week. There will be craft tables for the children and they will also make "Resurrection cookies."

Worship service will follow at 12:30pm.

SAINT JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BELLMORE - MERRICK

MERRICK AVE. & MARGARET BLVD.

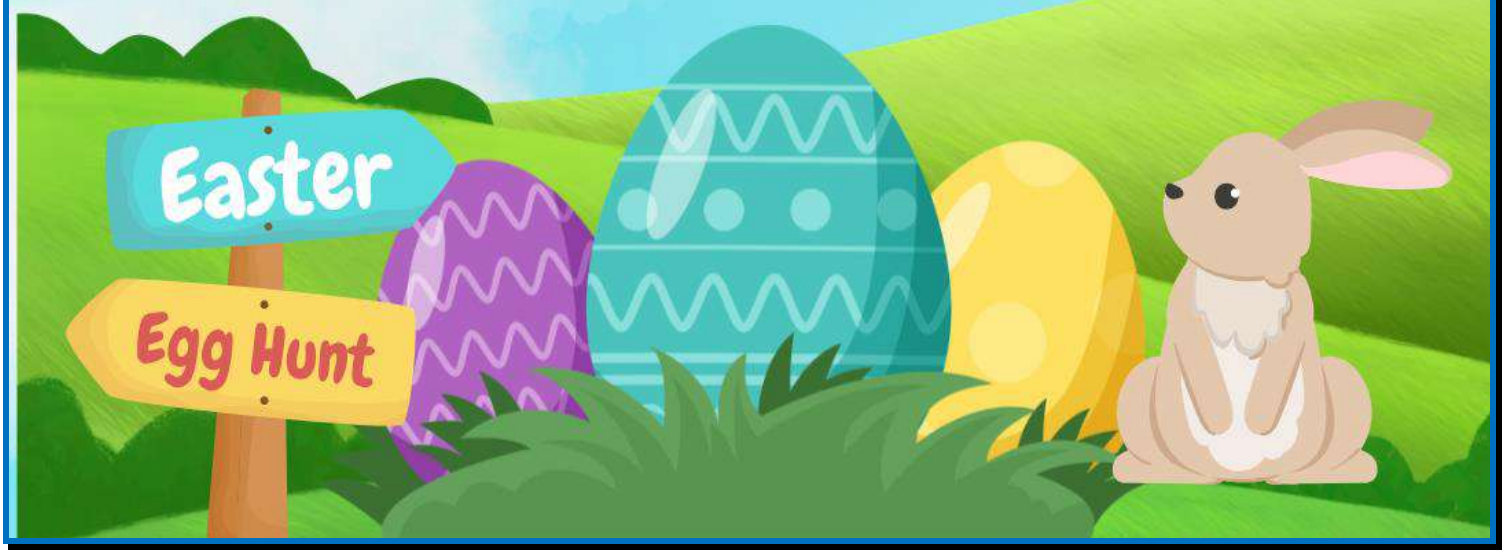
516-379-3858

EASTER EGG HUNT

SATURDAY, APRIL 4

10:00 AM

Gather your family and friends for joy, laughter, and the thrill of the egg hunt. Snacks provided.
All are welcome!



St. John's ECC

SPRING PLANT SALE

Jamesport Greenhouses

Flats, Pots, Baskets, Flowers,

Vegetables, Herbs

Orders Due by Friday, April 17th

Pick up at St. John's ECC on Wednesday, April 29th

Saint John's Lutheran Church of Bellmore-Merrick ~ April 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Holy Wednesday 6:30pm – Lenten Soup Supper @ SJ/M	2 Maundy Thursday **12:30pm – Holy Eucharist @ SJ/M** **7:30pm – Holy Eucharist @ SJ/M** ECC Closed	3 Good Friday **10:00am - Children's Easter Story & Craft @ SJ/M** **12:30pm – Way of the Cross @ SJ/M** **7:30pm – Tenebrae @ SJ/M** ECC Closed	4 Holy Saturday **10am - Egg Hunt @ SJ/M** **Decorate Sanctuary for Easter**
5 **The Resurrection of Our Lord – Easter Sunday** **9:30am – Holy Eucharist @ SJ/M w/ Coffee Hour**	6 ECC & Church Office Closed	7 ECC & Church Office Closed **10am – Soup Kitchen Cook at SJ/B** **6:30pm -Exec. Comm. Mtg. @ SJ/M**	8 ECC Closed **7pm – Budget Mtg. & SJ/M**	9 ECC Closed	10 ECC Closed	11
12 **2nd Sunday of Easter** **9:30am – Holy Eucharist @ SJ/M w/Coffee Hour**	13	14 12:15pm – ECC Staff Mtg. @ SJM **7pm – Joint Council Mtg. @ SJ/M**	15 **6:30pm – Finance Comm. Mtg. @ SJ/B**	16 10am – WLECA Bible Study @ St. David's 12:30pm – ECC Comm. Mtg. @ SJ/M	17	18 9am – Soup Kitchen Cook/ Soc. Ministry Mtg. @ SJ/M Mark, Evangelist
19 **3rd Sunday of Easter** **9:30am – Holy Eucharist @ SJ/M w/ Sunday School & Coffee Hour**	20	21	22	23 9:45am - ECC Chapel Time @ SJ/M 5:30pm – ECC Art Show @ SJ/M	24	25 9am - Caregivers Group Mtg. & SJ/M 11am – Earth Day Event @ SJ/M
26 **4th Sunday of Easter** **9:30am – Holy Eucharist @ SJ/M w/Myotto baptism. Sunday School & Coffee Hour/Bag Lunch Ministry**	27	28	29 **7:00pm – Worship & Music Mtg. @ SJ/B**	30	**Save the Date – Merrick Campus Annual Congregational Meeting Sunday, May 3, 2026 following worship & coffee hour**	
	2pm – Bagel Ministry @ SJ/M **7pm - Recovery – Group @ SJ/M** **7pm – GA Mtg @ SJ/B**	**10am – Morning Social @ SJ/B** **10:30am – Pastor's Text Study @ SJ/M** **12-2pm – GA Mtg @ SJ/B**	**5:30pm - Karate @ SJ/B**	**5:30pm - Karate @ SJ/B** **7:30pm - Choir Rehearsal @ SJ/M**	**7:30pm – AA @ SJ/B**	**WEEKLY EVENTS**

GRACE'S CALENDAR FOR APRIL 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	3/30 Lutheran Service of the Rosary 7:00 pm at Grace	3/31 Thrift shop 1-5 PM	1 April Fools' Day	2 Maundy Thursday Services will be held at Saint Johns' Merrick Thrift shop 1-5 PM	3 Good Friday Stations Of The Cross @Grace 12:00 noon Egg coloring NJPT 7:30-9:30pm	4 NJPT-AM
5 9:00 AM Easter Breakfast, Egg Hunt 10:00 Worship & Sunday School 10:30 AM Coffee Social NJPT 12-3pm 6-8pm AA – 7:00pm	6 1:30 PM Art Group	7 Thrift shop 1-5 PM	8 WELCA @ 12:30 pm Grace AA – 7:00 PM	9 Thrift shop 1-5 PM	10 NJPT – 7:30-9:30pm	11 NJPT - AM
12 9:30 AM Sunday Worship & Sunday School 10:30 AM Coffee Social NJPT 12-2pm AA – 7:00 PM	13 1:30 PM Art Group	14 Council Meeting 7pm @ Grace Thrift shop 1-5 PM	15 AA – 7:00 PM	16 WELCA Bible Study @ St. David's Massapequa PK @ 10:00am Thrift shop 1-5 PM	17 NJPT-7:30-9:30pm	18 NJPT - AM
19 9:30 AM Worship & Sunday School 10:30 AM Coffee Social NJPT 12-2pm AA- 7:00pm	20 Grace Literary Society 7pm 1:30 PM Art Group	21 Thrift shop 1-5 PM	22 AA – 7:00 PM	23 Thrift shop 1-5 PM	24 NJPT-7:30-9:30pm	25 Thrift shop 9am-1pm NJPT - AM
26 9:30 AM Worship & Sunday School 10:30 AM Coffee Social NJPT 12-2pm AA – 7:00 PM	27 1:30 PM Art Group	28 Thrift shop 1-5 PM	29	30 Thrift shop 1-5 PM		