

The Master's Message

The Newsletter of the Church of the Master

October, 2023

Virtual Adult Bible Study
Wednesday, 7:00 PM
Saturday, 12:00

2783 Lafayette Avenue
Bronx, N.Y. 10465
718-597-6298

Sunday Worship
Sunday 11:00 am

cotm47@verizon.net

WWW.COTMBRONX.ORG

Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden, Pastor

Reformation Day, October 31st

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe—
His craft and pow'r are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not His equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing,
Were not the right man on our side,
The man of God's own choosing.
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He—
Lord Sabaoth His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
We tremble not for him—
His rage we can endure,
For lo! his doom is sure:
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly pow'rs,
No thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
Through Him who with us sideth.
Let goods and kindred go,

This mortal life also—
The body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still:
His kingdom is forever.

Martin Luther (1483–1546)
Translated by Frederick H. Hedge (1805–1890)

AFTER POSTING his ninety-five theses on the door of Wittenberg's Castle Church in October 1517, Martin Luther faced many years of trials and persecution. And during the years of the ensuing Protestant Reformation, Luther came to know better than most the gracious power of God's sheltering hand. He confidently stepped forward to defend the truth he found in God's Word, despite excommunication from the Roman church, continual threats to his life and freedom, and times of intense spiritual battle.

In the comforting words of Psalm 46, Luther found the inspiration for this hymn that would become the battle cry of the Protestant Reformation. Many who suffered for their faith during that time found solid comfort in Luther's words of faith and praise. "A mighty fortress is our God!"

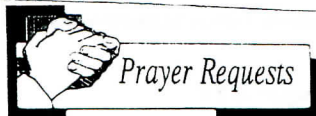


God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Psalm 46:1-3

SPECIAL DATES*

- **October: Pastor Appreciation Month**
- World Communion Sunday, *October 1st*
- Columbus/Indigenous Peoples' Day, *October 9th*
- Reformation Sunday, *October 29th*
- Reformation Day, *October 31st*
- Halloween, *October 31st*

News From the Pews



Continue praying for:
Allen Ford, Carole Mahon,
Loretta Byrd, Alice & Alex Rivera

Everyone is invited to join our virtual **"Hour of Prayer Power"** every Friday at 7:00 PM. The conference call-in number is 605-475-4860, code: 371231#

Our **Online Bible Study** meets
Wednesday at 7:00 PM and Saturday at 12:00.
Contact Ron Rivera (917-716-8273)
for information on joining



Appreciate — and act

October is Pastor (or Clergy) Appreciation Month, reminding church members to thank their hardworking ministry leaders. But the people in the pews — though they might lack official church titles — also play important roles in doing God's work.

In *User Friendly Churches* (Regal Books), researcher George Barna compares the behavior of people in growing vs. stagnant or declining churches. Members of growing churches actively participate in the church's ministry. "They did not divorce their faith from their lifestyle; their faith was their lifestyle," Barna writes. "They took seriously the classical Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers."

By contrast, laypeople in stagnant churches tend to observe rather than participate. "They perceived their role as being in the audience in the stands," Barna notes, "nodding approvingly in efforts to demonstrate religious behavior as the clergy went through their paces."

Appreciate your pastors, but then follow their example by living out your beliefs!

CHURCH CHUCKLES

The senior pastor and his youth pastor found a great fishing spot created by a tree downed in a recent storm. Before they began to fish, though, they made a large sign and taped it to the back of the pastor's truck: "The end is near! Stop! Make a U-turn before it's too late!"

When a car drove by, the pastors pointed at the sign and shouted at the driver, to no avail. The driver slowed down and hollered back, "You religious nuts drive me crazy. Mind your own business!" A moment later they heard a loud slash. The senior pastor looked at his friend and asked, "Do you think we should have just written 'Bridge Out' on the sign?"

Church Notes:

For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

Saul knew he had moved to a heavily Christian town when he was watching the *Star Wars* trilogy at the local movie theater. Every time the phrase "May the force be with you," was uttered on-screen, the audience replied, "And also with you."



Women of the Reformation

Although the names most often associated with the Reformation are male, women also played key roles in maintaining the integrity of the church. "Most were wives and mothers," professor Justin Holcomb writes. "Some were also authors, apologists, ex-nuns and queens. All were faithful servants of Jesus."

Women who made notable contributions include:

- Katherine von Bora, the former nun who married former-priest Martin Luther
- Argula von Grumbach, a Bavarian noblewoman who published letters and debated with university faculty.
- Olympia Fulvia Morata, an Italian scholar who lectured on the teachings of Luther and Calvin — and was persecuted and imprisoned
- Jeanne d'Albret, queen of Navarre and a leader in France's Huguenot movement, who tried to peacefully resolve tensions between Catholics and Protestants
- Marie Dentière, an aristocrat who left an Augustinian monastery to speak in public — even on street corners! — about church reform



The beautiful, well-versed 83 year old lady, fully dressed every morning at 8 am sharp, with her hair done in fashion and perfectly applied makeup, is moving to a retirement home. Her husband recently died, which motivated her move.

After many hours of patiently waiting in the hall of the home, she smiled sweetly, when told her room was ready. As she moved her walker toward the elevator, she was given a detailed description of her small room, including the curtains hanging from her window.

"I love it", she said, with the enthusiasm of a 8-year-old girl who was just handed over a new pet.

- Mrs. Jones; you haven't seen the room, just wait.

- That doesn't matter, she replied.

Happiness is something you decide over time. Whether or not I like my room doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged, it depends on how I arrange my mind.

I've already decided that I like it. It's a decision I make every morning when I wake up. I have the choice; I can spend the day in bed, going through the difficulty I have with my body parts that don't work, or get out of bed and be thankful for the parts that do work.

Every day is a gift, and as long as my eyes open, I will focus on the new day and the happy memories I've stored just for this time in my life.

HAPPINESS is like a bank account: you withdraw from it, what you deposit.

So my advice would be to deposit a lot of happiness into your memory account.

Remember these five simple things:

- 1.- Free your heart from hate/discord.
- 2.- Free your mind from worries.
- 3.- Live Simply.
- 4.- Give more.
- 5.- Take less.

"Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths."

—Etty Hillesum

"To stay," not Tuesday

I was leading a Sunday school class in the singing of "I've Got the Joy." With smiles on their faces, the children sang, "I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart. (Where?)

Down in my heart to stay!"

When he heard that last phrase, one 5-year-old boy looked up at me with a puzzled look on his face and asked, "On Tuesday?"

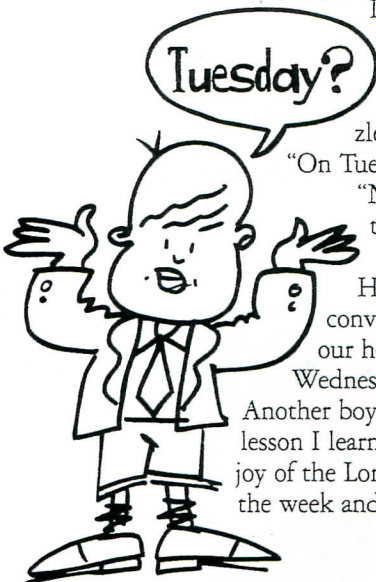
"No," I laughed, "Not Tuesday, to stay."

"But YOU said, 'Tuesday!'"

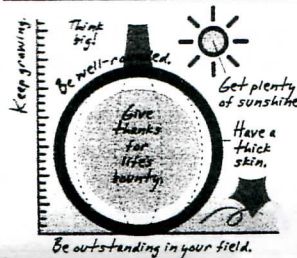
His remark led our class into a conversation about having joy in our hearts on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and every day of the week.

Another boy said, "Yeah, 24/7!" What a lesson I learned that day. We all have the joy of the Lord in our hearts, every day of the week and every hour of the day!

—Maxine Hark,
Canton Christian Church,
Canton, Missouri



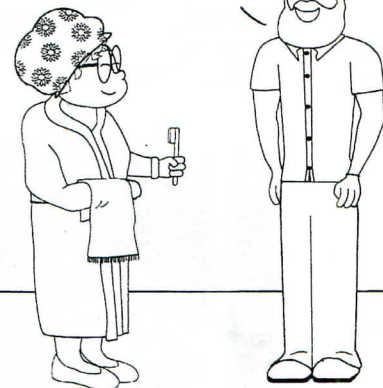
Advice from a pumpkin



Be well-rounded.
Get plenty of sunshine.
Give thanks for life's bounty.
Have a thick skin.
Keep growing.
Be outstanding in your field.
Think big!

—Ilan Shamir

"We really appreciate all the time you spend volunteering here at the church, but I think we should talk."



Crin

The whole world paused this morning. Do you know why? Because an 8 year old's tank was empty.

The boys had already started their school day at their desks and I was preparing to leave for work when I noticed my littlest standing in the bathroom wiping his face. I paused at the door and asked if he was okay. He looked up with tears silently dripping and shook his head. When I questioned if something happened, again he shook his head. So I sat on the side of the tub and pulled him in my lap. I told him sometimes our heart tanks feel empty and need to be refilled.

He cried into my chest and I held tight. I asked if he could feel my love filling him up? A nod, and tears stopped. I waited a minute. "Has it reached your toes yet?" He shook his head no..."Okay man. We will take as long as you need. Work doesn't matter right now. School isn't important either. This right here, is the most important thing today, okay? Filling you back to the top. Is that good?" (nods)

One more minute..."Is your heart full of mama's s love now? "Yeah..." (looks in his eyes) I see it shining in there, you're full to the top and you're smiling!"

Y'all, you may not be 8, you may be 28, 38, 48 or whatever - but ALL of us run on empty just like he did. His weekend was so busy and so full and his little soul was just dry!!

We all have to pause and take a moment to refill with the good things. Scripture, prayer, sunshine, worship, song, laughter, friends, hugs. Refill your empty, or you'll find those emotions (tears, anger, snappy words) overflowing with no reason why.

Take a moment. Refill. It's the most important part of your day!

King of kings, Word of words

When Jesus Christ utters a word, he opens his mouth so wide that it embraces all heaven and earth, even though that word be but in a whisper. The word of the emperor is powerful, but that of Jesus Christ governs the whole universe.

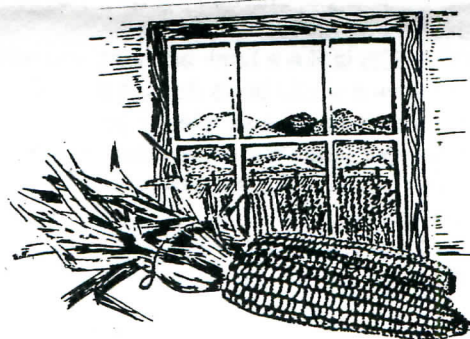
—Martin Luther, *Table Talk*

WWW
KING OF
KINGS
WORD OF
WORDS

A prayer for neighborliness

O God, we pray for a broader vision of the needs of humanity, and a deeper compassion to fill those needs; for a planting of the seeds of concern for all humanity in our hearts; for a tapping of the wells of generosity. May we live together as people who have been forgiven a great debt. May we be gentle, walking softly with one another. May we be understanding, lest we shall add to the world's sorrow or cause to flow needless tears. May we be as anxious for the rights of others as we are for our own. May we be as eager to forgive as we are to seek forgiveness. May ... our love ... be like Yours — a love that sees all people as Your children and our kin. May we be ministers of humanity.

—Peter Marshall

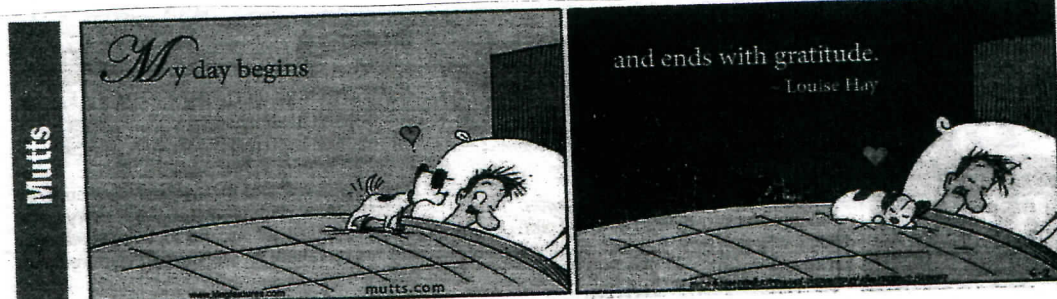


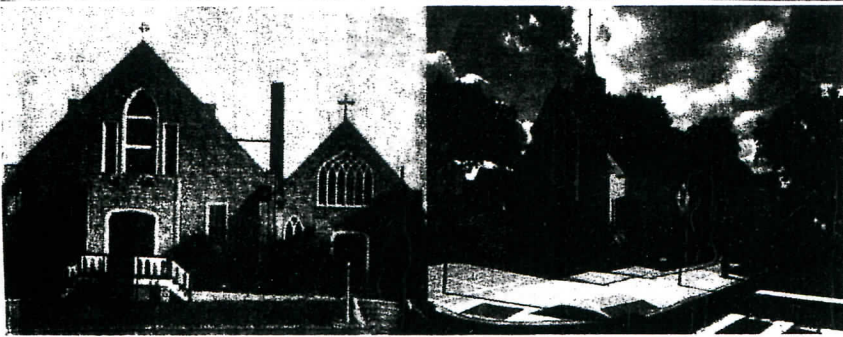
Just show up!

In *A Million Little Ways* (Revell), Emily Freeman says in order for Christians to "show up as you are with what you've been given," we must confront these statements:

- I'm not cut out for this.
- Someone else can do it better.
- People might not like it.
- I have nothing to offer.
- I hate my calling.
- It's a waste of time.
- It's too much work.
- Who do you think you are?

"A million loud voices ... keep us from the million little ways [Jesus] wants to show up through us to the world," Freeman writes.





The Church of the Master in 1923 (left) and 2023 (right). The church, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary, was originally built on Bruckner Boulevard before moving to its current location on Lafayette Avenue.

Photos courtesy Ed Bungert

Our Church's 100th Anniversary

On Sunday, September 24th, 2023, Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden, the Consistory, members and former members, friends, former Pastors and Pulpit Supply Pastors of the Church of the Master as well as other Clergy gathered in the sanctuary to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of our church.

Rev. Hayden welcomed all the visitors as we prepared for worship. We were treated to special solos from Elder Don Fecher and Tia Blake and our former supervisor, Rev. Dr. Patricia A. Singletary delivered the message.

Following the service, everyone was invited to join us in Hahn Hall for a wonderful celebratory banquet and fellowship, which included a wonderful slide show of the history of our church.

The Consistory would like to thank everyone who braved the wicked weather to join us and those who couldn't join us but sent good wishes and much appreciated donations.

- If no one ever took risks, Michelangelo would have painted the Sistine floor, instead of the ceiling.

Ultimate comfort

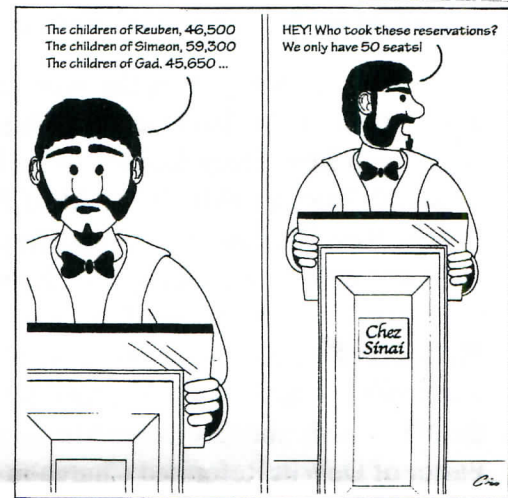
"For each of us, the time is surely coming when we shall have nothing but God. Health and wealth and friends and hiding places will all be swept away. ... To the man of pseudo faith, that is a terrifying thought, but to real faith, it is one of the most comforting thoughts the heart can entertain."

—A. W. Tozer

Making contact

Prayer is ... a personal contact between embryonic, incomplete persons (ourselves) and the utterly concrete Person. Prayer in the sense of petition, asking for things, is a small part of it, confession and penitence are its threshold, adoration its sanctuary, the presence and vision and enjoyment of God its bread and wine. In it God shows himself to us.

—C.S. Lewis



Every once in a while, a ewe will give birth to a lamb and reject it. If the lamb is returned to the ewe, the mother may even kick the poor animal away. Once a ewe rejects one of her lambs, she will never change her mind.

These little lambs will hang their heads so low that it looks like something is wrong with its neck. Their spirit is broken. These lambs are called "bummer lambs."

Unless the shepherd intervenes, that lamb will die, rejected and alone. So, do you know what the shepherd does? He takes that rejected little one into his home, hand-feeds it and keep it warm by the fire. He will wrap it up with blankets and hold it to his chest so the bummer can hear his heartbeat.

Once the lamb is strong enough, the shepherd will place it back in the field with the rest of the flock. But that sheep never forgets how the shepherd cared for him when his mother rejected him.

When the shepherd calls for the flock, guess who runs to him first? That is right, the bummer sheep. He knows his voice intimately. It is not that the bummer lamb is loved more, it just knows intimately the one who loves it.

So many of us are bummer lambs, rejected and broken. But He is the good Shepherd. He cares for our every need and holds us close to His heart so we can hear His heart beat. We may be broken but we are deeply loved by the Shepherd.

From one bummer sheep to another... I love you! ❤️

“We Come This Far By Faith, Leaning on the Lord!”

As I reflect on Church of the Master's 100th Church Anniversary held on Sunday, September 24, 2023, I marveled at how far the Lord has brought our Church and congregation by faith from its humble beginnings and very first worship service on September 30, 1923, under then Stated Pastor, Rev. W. Daily (September 30, 1923- May 31, 1924), at the old Church building located on Eastern Boulevard (now Bruckner Boulevard) in the Throggs Neck Community in the Bronx!

The Church later moved to its present location in 1959 on the corner of Lafayette and Swinton Avenues. The congregation worked diligently to break ground and build the new Church edifice and Sanctuary under the leadership of then Pastor Rev. Charles Ausherman, B.D. (June 16, 1957 – November 20, 1960). The entry into the new Church building was celebrated by the congregation and other celebrants with a procession that wound its way around the corner of Lafayette and Swinton Avenues! There was such a great cloud of witnesses to join the congregation in worship and celebration of thanksgiving for this great achievement!

Upon further reflection I marveled at the number of guests who came through heavy rainfall and windy weather to celebrate and give thanks with our congregation because the Lord has brought us thus far along the way. Our warm welcoming, praying, and loving congregation at Church of the Master is still standing on the promises of God our Savior!

We rejoiced during the Worship Service where the Rev. Ronald Cadmus was in attendance (1997 – 2011) along with several of our Pulpit Supply Ministers (Rev. Dr. Linda Spears and Rev. Tracy Jordan), guest Pastors (Dr. Sealey (Mott Haven RC, Bronx, NY), Rev. Elizabeth Brantum (Mt. Tabor AME Zion- Catskills, NY) and Ministers, and friends and family, and the Rev. Dr. Patricia A. Singletary, the former Classis Supervisor (from 2007 – 2019) who helped to guide our congregation during the years we did not have a permanent Pastor, preached a powerful sermon “What Mercy Looks Like!” (Mark 10:46-52)! Special Music from our own Elder Don Fecher, Musician (“Lead Me to Calvary”) and Tia Blake (“The Goodness of God”) warmed our hearts and set the tone for worship. The Rev. Dr. Michael Edwards, Stated Clerk of the NY Classis and Executive Minister and Director of the New York Regional Synod, and Pastor of DeWitt Reformed Church in Manhattan, presented the Consistory with a Certificate commemorating the Church's 100th Anniversary! We're thankful for our greeters and ushers (Deacon Kevin and Sis. Denise, Alana, Sis. Fefa and Jared). We're thankful for Bro. Ed getting our long-time member Bro. Allen Ford (our former Boy Scouts Leader) out to the Worship Service and Banquet and back to the nursing home where he is convalescing. We give thanks for Bro. Allen and Sis. Alice Rivera (“Miss Alice”) who worked diligently in the Church's kitchen ministry and serving our coffee hour after Church, our Shrove Tuesday Pancake suppers at the start of Lent, and the luncheons to seniors in our community over the years along with Sis. Carole Mahon (“Miss Carole”), and many others who have gone home to be with the Lord. We thank God for Sis. Kathryn who assists to compile our financial records, and Sis. Barbara Kooii (in the past), Elder Don and Deacon Janet. We thank God for Elder Ron faithfully teaching our Zoom Bible Study that has grown greatly over the years with new members eager to learn more about the Bible and God's Word!

We also thank God for our faithful and dedicated Ministry Leadership Team in our Consistory, namely: Elder Don Fecher, VP of the Consistory, Deacon Janet Koys, Clerk of the Consistory, Elder Ron Rivera, Member and Chair of our Christian Education Ministry, Deacon Kevin Martz, Member and Coordinator of our Use of Facilities and Maintenance Ministry. We're grateful for our Great Consistory Members: Elder Ellen ("Miss Ellen") McCullough and Elder Dirk Kooi. We also thank God for all our deceased Consistory members, and most recent among them Bro. Broderick T. Singletery. May they rest in peace with the Lord.

We rejoice and give thanks to the Lord for our Anniversary Committee Chair (Sis. Sandra McPherson), Consistory and Committee members who worked diligently to plan and prepare for our 100th Anniversary. They cleaned the Church and addressed water coming into the sanctuary and Hahn Hall and a mold condition, remediating the mold (thanks be to God for Mr. Edward Giannetto), scraping and painting Hahn Hall (Deacon Kevin and other helpers), decorating Hahn Hall (Sis. Sandra, Wintress Stinson, Lynn, Sis. Michele, Jared, Deacon Janet, Sis. Maryann, putting together our historical slideshow (Bro. Ed Bungert, Leader of our Communications Team), setting up our new tv monitor (D. Kevin and Bro. Ed, and also contributed to the purchase of the tv monitor and stand), and hanging our Anniversary banners (Bro. Ed and Sis. Michele), putting together our history (Deacon Janet, Bro. Ed), and coordinating with the caterer that provided the food for the Banquet (S&D Caterers), servers (Sis. Sandra, Lynn, Sis. Michele, and Sis. Kathryn), Elder Don coordinating parking with the 45th Pct.), cleaning up after the Banquet (Everyone, including my neighbor and friend Dr. Cheryl St. John). We give thanks for all our faithful members who contributed their Anniversary pledges and made other contributions although they could not attend in person (Sis. Carole Mahon and Miss Loretta Byrd). We thank God for those who went the extra mile (Sis. Arlene ("Auntie") Mayers, Sis. Regina Harvey, and Wintress). We also thank God for well wishes from Rev. Fritz Kruithof and others who could not attend. We also thank God for Bro. Ricky and Sis. Jolee Brown who were a blessing to the Church as they prepare to relocate to Florida!

Last, but certainly not least, we give thanks for all those who served and loved Church of the Master who've gone on before us over these 100 years! I am the most blessed Pastor to have been called to serve this small (for now) determined, loving, faithful and welcoming congregation at Church of the Master! "We've come this far by faith leaning on the Lord, trusting in his Holy word because Jesus has never failed us yet!" We look to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to keep our Church of the Master, to raise up future generations to take our places, and to continue serving our Lord and our Bronx community well into the future.

Shalom to you now,

Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden

Rev. Dr. Melva J. Hayden
Minister of Word and Sacrament
and President of Consistory

Celebrating community and history, Church of the Master approaches its centennial

By Mayra Kalaora

Posted on September 22, 2023



The Church of the Master in 1923 (left) and 2023 (right). The church, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary, was originally built on Bruckner Boulevard before moving to its current location on Lafayette Avenue.

Photos courtesy Ed Bungert

Church of the Master (COTM) in the Bronx, with its white wooden doors and triangular façade pointing up at the sky, sits on the corner of Lafayette and Swinton avenues, looming over passersby. Next to the building is a billboard, which gets updated every week.

This week, it reads, in wide block letters: “IF GOD IS YOUR CO-PILOT, CHANGE SEATS.”

The brains behind the sign is Deacon Janet Koys. She flips through magazines, researches past billboards of various churches, and goes down an archived list before settling on her inspirational message of the week.

“People stop and take pictures of them, I guess to share, so they may not always come into our church, but at least hopefully the message is reaching them,” Koys said.

Koys has been involved with the church since she was a newborn — perhaps, in a way, even before that.

“My parents were members of the church,” she said. “When they were teenagers, they met here, and they got married here ... I was confirmed here. My husband and I were married here. My children were both baptized here. My daughter was married here. And her children were baptized here.”

On Sunday, Sept. 24, Koys will join many of her fellow churchgoers, including Rev. Melva J. Hayden, in celebrating the Throggs Neck church’s 100th anniversary. The church is part of the Reformed Church in America, a mainline reformed Protestant denomination.



Members of the Church of the Master breaking ground on Bruckner Boulevard, circa 1957.

Photo courtesy Ed Bungert

Hayden is no ordinary pastor. Alongside tending to the church, she serves as a full-time lawyer for Region 2 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. She earned both her bachelor’s and law degree through the City University of New York (CUNY) system, and then went on to receive her Master of Divinity and Doctorate of Ministry at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

Her motto: “She is on a mission to save souls, communities and the environment!”

Ed Bungert, a regular of the church for 12 years and now in charge of its communications, spoke of Hayden as “faithful and patient and loving and kind ... she really is a remarkable leader.”

The first worship service at COTM was held on Sept. 23, 1923, at its original location on Bruckner Boulevard. In 1949, there was a proposal to move the church to its current location on Lafayette Avenue — it was becoming increasingly inconvenient for the church to be directly facing the Bruckner Expressway and the Throggs Neck Bridge, which left it with no other street outlets and restricted parking space.

“It struck me how full the pews were on that notable day! There was standing room only!” Pastor Hayden wrote in the church’s most recent newsletter, describing the first worship service in 1959 after the church was moved to its present location. She went on to name those she recognized from the photos, including Koys herself, sitting in the pews with her grandparents.



The first worship service, with an overflowing congregation, after the Church of the Master moved to its new location on Lafayette Avenue. Deacon Janet Koys is pictured sitting in the third row, her face partially covered by the boy in front of her.

Photo courtesy Ed Bungert

“In the past, we had many, many social events,” Koys recalled, adding the church would be home to Shrove Tuesday pancake suppers, Easter Sunday breakfasts, Mardi Gras celebrations and dances. “They were always the highlights of the year for us.”

“Now, our pews are not full,” Hayden continued in her newsletter. “Many of the members have gone home to be with the Lord or relocated.”

Bungert confirmed that nowadays, the congregation is small, with 14 or 20 people at Sunday service on a good day. “But we are very solid and faithful,” he assured.

For those unable to attend in person, Bungert uploads recordings of the services on the church’s [website](#).

Bungert went on to emphasize the church is one “that lives out its faith in love.” He talked of “people dropping everything to go to the side of a person in need in the congregation,” and of people coming to the church to help with all kinds of errands despite being in the hospital or a nursing home.

“I see people living out their faith, the way I think a Christian should, and that is in love and care for the community,” Bungert added.



The Dedication Day procession for the opening of the relocated Church of the Master in 1959.

Photo courtesy Ed Bungert

He described the congregation as consisting of people with a diverse set of beliefs, with both staunch conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats — but differences of opinion, according to Bungert, do not threaten the congregation’s sense of solidarity.

“We worship together, and we love each other, and those political views never get in the way of our relationship with each other,” he said.

Members of COTM have been eagerly preparing in anticipation of the anniversary event on Sept. 24. Invitations were sent out, the church cleaned and decorations ordered. The worship time will be changed from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. for the celebration and at 3 p.m. there will be a dinner for all invited guests.

Ultimately, Hayden remains hopeful that the church community will again grow.

“I have faith that the pews in our Sanctuary will once again be full with little ones, youth, and adults,” she said.

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Mayra Kalaora

Mayra Kalaora is an editorial intern at the Bronx Times.

