



The
Church of
Bethesda-by-the-Sea
Love and Serve

Annual REPORT

*Bethesda's Mission is to experience
the clear and strong presence of God
and to understand and spread Christ's
teachings through collective worship,
learning, and service.*

2020

JANUARY 31, 2021

From the Rector

2020 was truly a year like no other. Between the Coronavirus pandemic, renewed awareness of systemic racial inequity, and political turmoil, I've never experienced a year of ministry so shaped by influences outside the parish and local community. Indeed, we basically had to relearn how to do everything. The Bishop closed all churches to in-person worship and programs in March. We quickly moved education, fellowship, children and youth, meetings, and everything we did online. People quickly learned how to best gather on Zoom. We shifted from livestreaming to recording our Sunday service as well as weekday services. We offered a special Palm Sunday service shared with the Royal Poinciana Chapel. We found that many people got onboard with our digital life, while others chose to just wait until things would go "back to normal."

As spring became summer with no end in sight, we could sense morale and our inherent spirit of hope being stretched. Nonetheless, participation in worship and fellowship continued to be strong, and we offered more adult education opportunities than we would have in the past. In the fall, as the rain abated and temperatures cooled a bit, we began in-person worship. While we tried a service in the nave, we found that our outdoor spaces worked quite well and provided a significantly safer venue for worship. As 2020 came to a close, we were offering an 8:00 a.m. service in the Garden Chapel, a 10:00 a.m. service in the Garth, an 11:00 a.m. service online followed by an online time of fellowship, and then a time from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. during which the nave was open for private prayer and communion was available. While a vaccine started to become available, we expect this rhythm of worship to continue for some months.

Also in the midst of this pandemic we said farewell to Mr. Hal Pysher, our Associate for Music and Liturgy, as he retired from full-time ministry. As we gave God thanks for his ministry, we struggled with not being able to gather in-person for such a momentous occasion. Our new Associate for Music and Liturgy, Dr. Stuart Forster has already settled into this ministry smoothly and begun to put his own creative touch on our online and in-person pandemic services. We look forward to sharing with him in all this as we move back into full in-person worship in the nave that we expect to happen sometime in 2021.

In addition, Mother Margaret has accepted a new, more significant role in our leadership as Associate for Stewardship and Digital Ministry. Her technological savvy and theological acuity have been a godsend as we have navigated this unprecedented time. She will help us better coordinate and integrate our online ministry that we have developed this year and that will become increasingly important in the future.

Of course, Fred Staley and Father Burl have been bulwarks of care, diligence, and faithfulness through this year, keeping our finances stable, ensuring our buildings are safe, offering creative and uplifting education programs and loving pastoral care. We could not have been so effective and capable without them.

You will read in this report more detail about 2020 with its ups and downs like no other year. What comes through it all is that God is loving us and calling us to great things regardless of the circumstances that surround us. Bethesda continues to be a vibrant community of faith in which we experience the clear and strong presence of God, even when we cannot physically be together. And for God's constant, healing, strengthening presence, we give thanks.

God bless,



The. Rev. James R. Harlan, *Rector*



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From the Senior Warden

Leadership and Governance Sub-Committee, Chair

Dear People of the Parish:

By now you are undoubtedly tired of hearing that 2020 was “horrible” and “unprecedented,” so I will fast forward past that part of this message. Instead of dwelling on the challenges of the past year, I would like, for the most part, to celebrate and give thanks for how well our Church coped with the COVID-19 pandemic.

First and foremost, in a time of isolation, Bethesda discovered new ways of staying connected and caring for our community. We instituted video-streaming of our Sunday worship services. With experience, the videos have improved, and they have become quite professional. We developed procedures for preventing the spread of infection that made us comfortable opening the Church for private prayer. Later, we began outdoor Sunday worship, first on a limited scale in the Garden, and in December in the Garth. Of course, we were all disappointed not to be able to conduct Christmas worship in the grand manner that we have in the past, but the Christmas Pilgrimage was an inventive and inspiring substitute. Beyond worship, our Clergy have continued to provide pastoral care as best it can be done in socially distanced ways; the desire for personal contact being at the heart of the call to be a priest, our Clergy find the limitations of telecommunicating as uncomfortable as any us. And, although we all feel the limitations of ZOOM meetings, our ZOOM coffee hours and ZOOM educational offerings have proven to be very popular. In short, our Clergy and Associates met the challenges of 2020 with energy and ingenuity. Some of their innovations will endure long after the threat of Covid 19 is behind us. I hope you will join me in telling them how much we appreciate their efforts.

Those of us who do other work for the Church, volunteers as well as employees, have carried on via ZOOM, email and telephone (and, with suitable health protections, in person) to complete some major projects. Most importantly, we had to recruit someone to fill the shoes of Hal Pysher, who retired last summer. Hal was much more to Bethesda than an organist, and we trembled before the task of filling the void he left. We winnowed a large field of candidates down to three, whom we interviewed and auditioned here at the Church, and (if I may brag) we succeeded in bringing to Bethesda the extraordinary talent, both musical and organizational, of our new Associate for Music and Liturgy, Stuart Forster. Also, pre-COVID-19, a team had been assembled to conduct the RenewalWorks program, which helps a church better to understand the needs of its congregation by documenting (by surveys) how its parishioners are spread along a “depth-of-belief” scale ranging from “exploring” to “life centered on God.” Based on survey responses from about 250 parishioners, Bethesda, comfortingly, is already doing most of the things it should to help its parishioners grow spiritually; the results did advise that we encourage more reading of scripture and more prayer outside of worship services.

Social distancing in our worship and other ministries has had an unexpected but wonderful effect: Many people say that their connection to Bethesda and their faith have been deepened by the experience. The Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways. Some winter-season Floridians who normally lost touch with Bethesda during the summer were able this past summer to join

in our Sunday services by video. Also, as the saying goes, “You don’t know what you’ve got ’til it’s gone,” and being “distanced” has caused people to consider anew what they really need from Bethesda. The changes at Bethesda have somehow been effective in pulling our community together, and many people have grown stronger bonds and deeper faith than they had before the pandemic.

I don’t want to preempt the Treasurer’s report, but I am pleased to say that, in financial terms, Bethesda remains healthy as of the end of 2020. Annual Giving has not been very badly affected by the pandemic or financial-market volatility, and our various endowments have recovered well from the market declines early in the year. Also, Bethesda was eligible for funds under the stimulus law enacted last spring, and costs in some areas have been reduced by changes we have made in response to the pandemic. Of course, Bethesda’s prospects in 2021 remain very uncertain. While we pray for better times, we should prepare ourselves for a trying year in financial terms.

Regarding Outreach and the Church Mouse: It has been our policy generally that the amount we spend on Outreach each year is the amount earned by the Church Mouse in the previous year; 2019 was a great year for the Church Mouse, and our grants and other Outreach activities have reflected that strength in this past year. Unfortunately, the restrictions imposed on retail businesses have severely limited Church Mouse sales in 2020, and that will be reflected in much reduced funding for Outreach in 2021. Fortunately, Church Mouse profits have slightly exceeded Outreach spending in past years, and some of this accumulated surplus may be used to close the gap between needs and funding in 2021.

At the beginning of 2020, we planned to start a capital campaign to grow Bethesda’s endowment funds. In light of the financial uncertainties caused by the pandemic, we suspended that effort. As those uncertainties continue in 2021, that effort is still on hold, but it is very much in our strategic vision that Bethesda should increase its endowment funds.

The bottom line on Bethesda’s financial situation is that, while we have thus far weathered the storm of 2020, the year 2021 could be a very difficult one. We can only pray that events of 2020 have reminded us all of the place Bethesda holds in our hearts and that each of us will continue to give to Bethesda in accordance with his or her means.



May God bless us, every one,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zachary Shipley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Zachary Shipley, *Senior Warden*

From the Junior Warden

Buildings and Grounds Sub-Committee, Chair

2020 has been a year filled with numerous safety concerns and the much-needed courage produced to handle the health issues related to exposure to the raging coronavirus in our area. The Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea was notified by our Bishop early this Spring that closing buildings and suspending activities and regular services must go into effect immediately to guard against potential exposure to the deadly virus threat. To comply we expanded the use of our garth and gardens for outside service activities. A Christmas Pilgrimage event, filming of clergy services with small choir activities, organ concerts, and Zoom programs followed. All have required creativity in program design, special safety adjustments, filmed productions and broadcasting by Zoom.

Our clergy, administrative staff, sextons and volunteers have been so very helpful. Our new organist and Liturgy Associate, Stuart Forster, created many of our new programs. Our talented Hal Pysher retired mid-summer after 33 years of remarkable service. As always restoration and preservation maintenance work has continued as my major focus. The church interiors have been sanitized during their closings. Many parishioners have expressed sadness over our restrictions but remain supportive.

Lighting suppression equipment installation and termite treatments are scheduled for late January. AC repairs and replacements are ongoing and interior church lighting and sound system upgrades are being completed. Organ and broadcasting improvements have been reviewed and installed.

Keith has refreshed the Garden Chapel area and supervised major tree pruning. Outside areas are now being set up for our weekly services.

It has been my pleasure and honor to care for Bethesda, God's House, during my fifth term as your Junior Warden. I have enjoyed the many challenges and working with all those who have supported our program dedicated to the care of these remarkable church buildings and properties. They will be ready to serve us when restrictions are removed. It is my hope returning to normal in 2021 will encourage support and faith in Bethesda's mission and programs in our lives and those of the larger community.

May God Bless us all.

Respectfully submitted,



Constance N. Purcell, *Junior Warden*



Rector, Wardens, Officers, and Vestry

The Rev. James R. Harlan, *Rector* *

Wardens, Officers, and Vestry

Zachary (Zach) Shipley, *Senior Warden* * (2022)

Constance Purcell, *Junior Warden* * (2021)

Charles (Chuck) Hagy, Jr., *Clerk* * (2021)

Robert (Bob) Diffenderfer, *Chancellor* *#

Matt Lorentzen, *Treasurer* *#

Raphael Clemente (2021)

Tanner Rose * (2021)

Richard Crone (2022)

Becky Myers * (2022)

Maury Wolfe (2022)

John Brim (2023)

Sara Griffen (2023)

John Sory (2023)

Katie Wandoff (2023)

* *Member of the Executive Committee*

Not on Vestry

Vestry term expires at the Annual Meeting of the year indicated.

Vestry Nominations

Nominating Task Force—Sara Griffen, *Chair*

Vestry Nominees

Serving the Vestry Term 2021—2024

The Vestry presents all four nominees for Parish consideration to fill the four expiring Vestry positions.

At their December meeting in 2015, the Vestry approved a resolution presented by their Leadership and Governance Subcommittee to amend the By-Laws. This amendment, passed unanimously by all members present (17 of 19) will reduce the size of the Vestry to 13 members (12 elected members plus the Rector). This reduction will happen by nominating and electing only four new members to the vestry each year from now on, so that, in 2016, the Vestry will be 17 members, in 2017, 15 members, in 2018 and thereafter, 13 members.

This decision came primarily out of some continuing work with a consultant to help the Vestry to work more effectively through its regular meetings, through the Executive Committee, and through its four subcommittees.



EDYTHE GORDON moved to Florida from Kansas at the end of 2002. She is a graduate of the University of Kansas and received her law degree in 1993. She primarily focused in family law and child welfare advocacy. Upon moving to Florida, she continued her work in child welfare and mental health advocacy. She is currently a licensed insurance agent and retirement specialist. Edythe is a life-long Episcopalian and has been a member of our parish since 2008. She has participated in Bethesda by the Sea as an Ambassador, Lay Reader, and a St George's volunteer. When her daughter was a youth, she was also active with the Youth Group and Boar's Head. Edythe has one adult daughter who resides in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.



SEBASTIAN KENT was born in Washington, DC, Sebastian grew up living abroad as a "Foreign Service Brat", moving every four to five years and attending a variety of schools in the USA, France and Ethiopia. He graduated with a BA in Economics from Yale University, then did his medical training and residency at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore. Moving to Palm Beach County in 1980, he joined an OBGYN practice, doing high risk obstetrics for the next 40 years. He met his wife Laura here, and they have raised three children, and now have a grandchild as well. His hobbies include martial arts (Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do) and the study of languages. Sebastian joined Bethesda in 2007 and has been an active participant in various ministries, including Lector, Eucharistic Minister, and Verger. The Church has been a continuing source of inspiration and fulfillment.



LAURA SCHLETT has been a member of Bethesda since moving to Lake Worth Beach in 2017. Born and raised a Jersey Girl, she graduated from Gettysburg College with a BS in Biology and from George Washington University with an MFS. Over the last 20 years, Laura has homeschooled her four children - Rebecca, Emma, Nathanael, and Evan - and worked as a writer, photographer, and librarian. She currently works as a freelance writer and editor, an ESL teacher to students in China, and co-hosts the podcast “Being Truly.” She has volunteered at Friends of the Library, as a homeschool mentor, and as head of transcription for the documentary “*The Girl Who Wore Freedom*”. At Bethesda, Laura is the chair of the Outreach Committee and has served in the following ministries: Grants Committee, Lector, Boar’s Head, Empty Bowls, Middle Way, and Adult Forum and has offered a Lenten homily.



CHUCK ZETTLER retired in April 2020 as Dean of Enrollment Management for Palm Beach State College. With over 34 years experience in higher education administration, he was responsible for strategic enrollment management for the college including recruitment, admissions, registration and financial aid. In addition to a Masters of Business Administration, Chuck has a Bachelors Degree in Church Music and has served several churches as organist and choirmaster. He has also served on several church governing and foundation boards. Chuck and his late husband Robert Hebble joined Bethesda-by-the-Sea in 2011. He was confirmed by Bishop Frade in December 2012. Chuck has served as a Shepherd in the Bethesda Cares ministry, Lay Reader, Eucharist Minister and serves as mentor for Bethesda’s participants in the four year Education for Ministry (EfM) lay ministry development program of the School of Theology at the University of the South.

** Vestry Nominees were selected by the Nominating Committee after an exhaustive review process that at times included the consideration of more than thirty-five church members. The slate of four is presented to the members at the Annual Meeting for consideration to fill the open positions. Vestry members are elected by members in good standing. Persons eligible to vote must be sixteen years of age or older, regular in attendance, and contributors of record. One-third of the vestry is elected each year for a period of no more than three years. A person is eligible for re-election after one year has elapsed. A vestry member appointed to fill an unexpired term may be elected at the end of that term to serve a full term.*

Diocesan Convention Delegates

Randall (Rand) Gluss Lisa Hastey Michael Smyser Jacquie Bernard (Alternate)

From the Associate for Administration

Evangelism Committee—Beth Cole, *Chair*

Fellowship & Hospitality Committee

Personnel Working Group

Retail Operations Working Group—Pat Reichenbacher, *Chair*

As you read each of the articles in this Annual Report, I am sure you will find a recurring theme that 2020 was a unique year. No one can argue that. The pandemic affected everything we did in 2020. Halting many things and altering others. However, 2020 was not without its accomplishments. We made several strides early in 2020 before the pandemic was a factor. We hired a new Rector's assistant and Office Coordinator, Tierra Harper. Tierra started the week we shut down the office and started working from home. She has done a wonderful job making that transition. The fact that she never really got settled into the office routine means she will have a lot still to learn when we are able to transition back to the office. The Evangelism Committee was able to do a Spiritual Life Inventory survey as part of the Renewal works program in January. A team was assembled to analyze those results and make recommendations to the Vestry. Although that work was on going when things shut down, that working group was able to finish that initial task using Zoom and present recommendations to the Vestry. They also continued to work to build our 'Welcome, Invite, Connect' ministry for newcomers. We saw 34 new members join before we shut down services in March. Fellowship and Hospitality had a couple of great events before those type of in person gatherings were deemed unsafe. The Church Mouse was having a great start to the year. Sales in January and February were up 10% over 2019. Then everything changed.

In March, the Church Mouse had to close. Sales went to zero for the remainder of the spring season. We were able to open again in October but limiting the traffic allowed in the store significantly. In November we were able to establish enough sales to cover expenses and in December to make a little profit. As we tweak the new procedures and explore an online presence, we will continue to raise sales, looking forward to soon being able to return to more traditional sales volumes. Fellowship and Hospitality has not been able to do any in person gatherings, but some groups continue to meet using online platforms. We are also planning some online gatherings targeted for the whole congregation as we move into 2021. Evangelism continued to work through out the year, planning the implementation of the recommendations from Renewal Works and continuing to do what could be done with newcomers. We still had gatherings for new people and conducted an orientation using Zoom. In fact, we have had 23 new people join our parish since the March shut down. That is a total of 57 new members in a year where we could not gather in person for much of the year! Now that we are having in person services outdoors, the committee is discussing what we can do while still maintaining the proper safety precautions. We did have some staff changes post pandemic. We had a few staff leave us. Most notably, the retirement of Hal Pysher. We were not able to give him the grand send off he deserved, and we miss that he did not get one final glorious Easter season of in person services. It would be impossible in any year to fully express our appreciation for the gift of Hal and his ministry, but we expressed our love and gratitude for him and his decades of service

to Bethesda as best as we could. We were able to complete, post pandemic, the search for a new Associate for Music and Liturgy. We welcomed Stuart Forster in September. He has been a great addition to our staff and to our worship. We are constantly amazed at what he has accomplished with the current limitations and look forward to what he can do in more normal times. Finally, we also saw Mother Margaret McGhee transition from Curate to the permanent position of Associate for Stewardship and Digital Ministries. She proved herself in her time here to be not only worthy of greater responsibility but indispensable to the parish.



We move now into 2021, holding on to the things we missed because of the pandemic, celebrating the new things we discovered, and anticipating a future that is all the best things from both.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fred E. Staley, Jr." followed by a small flourish.

Fred E. Staley, Jr., *Associate for Administration*

From the Associate for Music and Liturgy

The streamed 11:00 a.m. Eucharist was running in a prayerful and consistent pattern when I arrived in September. I very much appreciated overlapping one week with Hal Pysher, who had earned retirement after 33 years of stellar service at Bethesda; it is an honor to continue the incredible work of Hal's legacy.

Since then, Fr. James and I have worked together to plan more seasonal variation in our liturgy, utilizing several liturgical and musical resources now available. As COVID-19 infection numbers improved in the fall, we began carefully-planned rehearsal and recording sessions with members of the Bethesda Choir, designed to keep everyone safe while enhancing our streamed offerings each week. Small choral ensembles, soloists, and guests rotated in musical offerings. We opened the church every Sunday afternoon for people to come in and pray for a few minutes and then receive communion on the way out; with help from our vergers, safety protocols have run very smoothly. We then began an 8:00 a.m. in-person Eucharist, with organ music, discontinuing this service when health and diocesan guidelines indicated that indoor gatherings were no longer safe. Once the weather became cooler and dryer, we began 8:00 a.m. services in the Garden Chapel, with piano music, and 10:00 a.m. services in the Garth, with organ, piano, and choir. All of these services have attracted near-capacity congregations every week. Weeks of recording sessions were required for our Christmas Eve/Day and Lessons & Carols offerings, with stunning arrangements from the Flower Guild, led by Maury Wolfe, and tireless preparation directed by Holly Breeden, on behalf of the Altar Guild. All of this was shared with the world, thanks to Bill Metzger in the Audio/Video Room and Jim Goodner managing sound equipment. With Bill's detailed editing notes, video recorded services were assembled efficiently by Doug Kwoka. Lay readers have video recorded their lessons from home for streamed services; ushers and lay readers have also made their offerings at our many in-person services. The largest in-person service was undoubtedly the new Christmas Pilgrimage, masterminded by Greg Knight. This service on the three evenings leading up to Christmas attracted some 700 people and included the full Bethesda Choir, clergy, and many volunteers offering vignettes and a complete liturgy to celebrate the Nativity. All of this is possible thanks to the enthusiastic and indefatigable support of our extraordinary staff team.

With the new lightning suppression system at the ready, the time has come to address damage to the Austin organ from past lightning strikes as well as two decades of wear and tear caused by regular, hard work. A proposal to replace the control system in both the Gallery console and the Chancel console, and to reinvigorate the Chancel console, was developed in anticipation of a grant in 2021. Thanks to a generous donor, major upgrades to the audio/video system will enhance our streaming capabilities as we share the remarkable resources of Bethesda with the world.

The new year brings many opportunities for traditional and creative offerings, and I look forward to building on the energy and family that is Bethesda-by-the-Sea.

Respectfully Submitted,



Dr. Stuart Forster, *Associate for Music & Liturgy*



From the Associate for Christian Education, Pastoral Care, and Outreach

Bethesda Cares Committee—Michael Smyser and Suzanne Crawford, *Co-Chairs*
Education Committee—Lois Clemente, *Chair*
Outreach Committee

Pastoral care during 2020 focused on keeping the parish connected. This past year, the Bethesda Shepherds spent a great deal of time contacting parishioners, checking in on parishioners, and caring for parishioners. From making phone calls to sending emails and ultimately to providing meals for parishioners coming back from hospital—or who were alone for Thanksgiving—the pastoral care team realized that one of the greatest difficulties in this pandemic was the inherent isolation brought on by staying apart. Hospital and long-term care facility visits took place before mid-March and continued, with restriction, after facilities allowed clergy visits again in the fall. Suzanne Crawford and Michael Smyser are co-chairs of Bethesda Cares.

Strong programming for Christian formation in early 2020 continued, albeit virtually, throughout the year. Adult formation went online in March and continued to adapt a schedule that worked through the spring and resumed that schedule in the fall. The Middle Way continued online on Wednesday evenings and a distributed offerings schedule allowed us to meet classes virtually throughout the week, also offering us the ability to stay connected no matter our geographies. Lois Clemente chairs the Education Committee.

Outreach continued in 2020 stronger than ever. Feeding in February was a rousing success, raising nearly \$82K to benefit the Palm Beach County Food Bank and gathering nearly 400 bags of non-perishables during Share-What-You-Can. Our relationship with St. George's Center continued, and parishioners continued to volunteer there as long as the Center allowed. We strengthened our relationship in the fall with Palanca Food Pantry, a ministry of Holy Redeemer Episcopal Church in Lake Worth, which asked for volunteers to assist in packing boxes for food distribution, and a number of Bethesdans answered the call for help. As a precaution, we suspended the grant application process in March and supplied emergency funding requests throughout the summer. The Grants Committee resumed the process in the fall and ultimately granted nearly \$300,000 in outreach funds to ministries in Southeast Florida in the areas of education, food, and shelter. The Bethesda mentors maintained their relationships with mentees throughout the pandemic, some of whom remained at school and some of whom came home. We have been blessed at Bethesda with a bounty of resources, both tangible and intangible, and I am honored to coordinate such incredible ministries within this community. Laura Schlett chairs the Outreach Committee.

I am so blessed to build the Kingdom of God in this place and ask your prayers as we continue to our ministries together.

Respectfully,



The Rev. Burl Salmon, *Associate for Christian Education, Pastoral Care, and Outreach*



From the Associate for Stewardship and Digital Ministry

We began 2020 with a commitment to speak openly about stewardship, and with a focus on stewardship's theological roots in God's own generosity. We continued that focus with a gratitude offering in the fall. As a part of that offering, many parishioners sent me reflections on all the things they were and are grateful for. The struggles of this year have reminded many of us to be grateful for the simple things—family, faith, health, and life itself.

I've been humbled by our congregation's continued generosity in this very strange and unexpected year. We ended 2020 with contributions on par with 2019, and we head into a new year with the ability to respond nimbly to whatever this year may bring.

Our focus internally has been on refining processes and procedures—making sure our giving data is accurate, and putting procedures in place to better acknowledge gifts. That work will continue in the new year, along with a renewed focus on planned giving.

As everyone knows, a new emphasis on digital ministry has been one of the unintended side effects of the pandemic. We moved much of our worship and fellowship online, and undertook a crash course in video editing, social media, YouTube, Zoom, and a whole host of other new technologies. "You're on mute" became the catch phrase of the year. While online worship, fellowship, and education have their challenges, one of the great gifts of this time has been the ability to stay in touch with parishioners who leave town for part of the year, and to connect with others who live at a distance. The skills we have learned this year will help us for years to come as we live out our call to build God's kingdom in our community and throughout the world.

I'm very grateful to be here in this place and at this time, and I'm excited about all we can accomplish together.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret E. McGhee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small cross-like mark at the end.

The Rev. Margaret McGhee, *Associate for Stewardship and Digital Ministry*

From the Director of Children and Youth Ministries

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

-J. R. R. Tolkien

This has been a year unlike any other in my eight years as the Director of Children and Youth Ministries at Bethesda. Still, the central work of our mission to educate and form young Christians in the Episcopal faith continued through 2020, albeit in a different way than usual.

Ever since Sunday, March 15, 2020 we have offered an online Sunday School class for all children ages 5-10 years old every Sunday morning without any breaks including through the summer and Christmas breaks that we would typically take pre-COVID. It has been a faithful commitment to the young people that participate each week and their parents that I'm particularly proud of. For most of 2020, this program was overseen by my wonderful partner in ministry, Jessica Hitchcock. When she received a call to return to school teaching last Fall, Johanna Reyers stepped in to help me moving forward. We will continue this class until everything is back to normal.

In addition to our ministry for children on Sunday mornings, we have a plethora of classes for our Bethesda youth. Our 8th Grade Confirmation Class has met this year via Zoom on Sunday evenings. We have over a dozen young men and women learning about the history and theology of the Episcopal faith. Beth Cole has returned to assist me with this offering as we engage our young people in conversations and questions about belief.

The 9th-12th Grade youth were, unfortunately, not able to participate in their planned mission trip this past summer due to COVID travel restrictions. However, they have been working tirelessly this year on a pilgrimage journey to Spain to walk the Camino Ingles route to Santiago de Compostela in late June. We are praying that the progress made on vaccinations in late 2020 will ramp up in early 2021 allowing our group the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of generations of disciples who came before them. I am extremely grateful for my co-teachers Madie Anderson and Cody and Ashley Fogwell all of whom are living in other states yet are able to be together with the rest of us online each week.

Finally, with the pandemic affecting our ability to gather, all of our usual traditions with children and youth ministries including our annual Easter Egg Hunt and Spring Carnival, Confirmation Sunday, and Christmas Pageant were all canceled. However, as the year went along, we were blessed with creative thinking and hopeful spirits that allowed us to look at ways to do the work of ministry in new ways. I was so happy to see many of our parents and children participate in our Christmas Pilgrimage event leading up to Christmas day.

It's easy to think that we've lost something by living through these challenging times but, in many ways, we have gained important lessons and experiences as well. I have seen more ingenuity, more optimism, and more care for our young people over this last year. I pray that the lessons of this past year will carry us into a new way of seeing the potential for ministry moving forward.

Respectfully Submitted,



Greg Knight, *Director of Children and Youth Ministries*



2020 Necrology

Hope Hewlett Parkhurst Annan
Guy Lamonte Ashley II
Edwin Anderson Bowen
Jeanne Reid Browning
John Christian Christlieb
Lucy Reals Day
Renwick De Groat Dimond
Edward Fletcher Eyster
Dawn Marie Hornung Frankel
Robert George Guempel
Ann Elizabeth Hall
Kay Franklin Harlan

Elizabeth Baldwin Hastey
Robert Christian Hebble
Andrew Raymond Innocenzi
Wilfred Benjamin Mills
Paul Coleman Muller
Kenneth Gregory Myers
Frederick Crane Prior
Louis Cowes Pryor
Helen Sullivan Hood Reinhold
Ann Frances Luthy Stachelberg
Bill Ed Stout

2020 Bequests

*We give thanks to God for the generosity of these beloved members of our parish family
who this year provided for Bethesda's future life and ministry with a legacy gift:*

Ed Bowen and Mary Philpit

Services for 2020

Baptisms 8
Confirmations, Receptions 0
Marriages 2
Burials 9

Holy Eucharists 164
Holy Eucharists (Private) 26
Morning Prayers 140
Complines..... 20
Stations of the Cross, Good Friday..... 0
Evensongs 2

Transitions

Baptism 8
Confirmation 0
Transferred In 57
Transferred Out..... 5
Lost by Death..... 23

Finance Report

Finance Sub-Committee: Tanner Rose, *Chair*, and Matt Lorentzen, *Treasurer*

Audit Sub-Committee: Richard Crone, *Chair*

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea - Operating Fund
Period Ending December 31
(\$ thousands)

							DRAFT
REVENUE	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Unrestricted Gifts	\$ 2,063	\$ 2,001	\$ 1,865	\$ 2,070	\$ 2,228	\$ 2,225	\$ 2321
General Endowment Draw	193	231	259	266	269	278	290
Building Endowment Draw	38	76	136	118	127	146	143
Other Revenue	205	571	595	581	687	613	736
TOTAL REVENUE	2,499	2,879	2,855	3,035	3,311	3,262	3490
EXPENSES							
Payroll & Benefits	1,330	1,425	1,381	1,496	1,587	1,591	1728
Diocesan Assessment	284	288	312	315	273	319	347
Other Expenses	779	1,003	1,152	1,156	1,417	1,398	1,585
TOTAL EXPENSES	2,393	2,716	2,845	2,967	3,277	3,308	3660
NET OPERATING SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	106	163	10	68	34	-46	-170
Prior year adjustment							188
Net							18

Balance Sheet

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea - Operating & Non-Operating Funds
Period Ending December 31
(\$ thousands)

		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	DRAFT 2019
ASSETS							
Cash	\$	406	328	374	922	726	792
Other Current Assests		511	439	455	433	448	328
Restricted/Consolidated Fund		1,927	1,593	1,530	1,760	1660	1978
Common Endowment		6,791	6,498	6,659	7,636	6921	8010
Restoration & Preservation		4,380	4,094	4,118	4,168	3838	3944
Other Designated/Restricted Funds		2,922	2,934	2,987	3,688	3682	3999
Pledges Receivable - R&P		1,740	1,640	789	695		
Fixed Assets		5144	6,134	7,368	7,746	7422	6932
TOTAL ASSETS		23,821	23,660	24,280	27,048	24,697	25,983
LIABILITIES							
Payables		441	393	425	393	442	435
TOTAL LIABILITIES		441	393	425	393	442	435
CAPITAL		23,380	23,267	23,855	26,655	24,255	25,548
TOTAL LIABILITIES & CAPITAL		23,821	23,660	24,280	27,048	24,697	25,983

Agenda for 2020 Annual Meeting

Call to Order.....	The Rector
Opening Prayer and Necrology.....	The Rev. Burl Salmon
Acceptance of Minutes.....	The Rector
Election of New Vestry Members.....	The Rector and Sara Griffen, <i>Nominating Committee Chair</i>
Finance and Stewardship Report	Matt Lorentzen, <i>Chair, Finance Sub-Committee</i>
Junior Warden's Report	Constance N. Purcell, <i>Junior Warden</i>
Rector's Address	The Rev. James R. Harlan
Other Business.....	The Rector
Closing Prayer and Blessing.....	The Rev. Margaret McGhee

Tellers

Hillary Strickland
Fritz Van der Grift

Minutes of the 2020 Annual Meeting

Call to Order: Call to Order of the 131st Annual Meeting by Father James at 9:15a.m. noting that there was a quorum present. Mother Margaret led those in attendance in an opening prayer.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Motion: Motion to accept the Minutes of the 2019 Annual Meeting that were included in the packet for the 2020 Annual Meeting by Bob Differnderfer second by Tom O'Brian. The Motion passed unanimously.

VESTRY

Outgoing Vestry: Father James thanked outgoing Vestry members Sandy Burdett, Paul Coombs, Michelle Diffenderfer, and Peggy Johnson. No leadership transitions are taking place this year. Ongoing Vestry members are Raphael Clemente, Charles Hagy, Connie Purcell, Tanner Rose, Richard Crone, Becky Myers, Zach Shipley, and Maury Wolfe. Beth Cole presented the Nominating Committee's recommendations for Vestry. Motion to Elect New Vestry Members John Brim, Sarah Griffen, John Sory, and Katie Wandoff by Wendy Victor and second by Connie Purcell. The Motion was unanimously approved by the meeting attendees. Father James recognized and thanked the delegates to the Diocesan Convention Bill Cini, Jan Shoobridge, Michael Smyser and Sandra Coombs as Alternate.

ELECTION OF NEW VESTRY MEMBERS

Vestry Nominations: Beth Cole presented the Nominating Committee's recommendations for Vestry. Motion to Elect New Vestry Members John Brim, Sarah Griffen, John Sory, and Katie Wandoff by Wendy Victor and second by Connie Purcell. The Motion was unanimously approved by the meeting attendees.

Father James recognized and thanked the delegates to the Diocesan Convention Bill Cini, Jan Shoobridge, Michael Smyser and Sandra Coombs as Alternate.

Finance and Stewardship Report: Finance Report given by Matt Lorentzen, Treasurer. Revenue totaled \$3.5 million dollars and operating expenses for BBTS were \$3.66 million dollars, resulting in a operating deficit of \$170,000. Church expenses have risen about 6.6% since 2011. Revenues were able to keep up with this increase in expenses until 2018, when we experienced a small deficit and then a larger one (\$170,000) in 2019. Note that in 2008, BBTS ran a deficit of \$1.2 million dollars, and between 2008-2011 the budget was reduced 31% operating expenses and has gradually increased from that point. Regarding operating fund income, annual contributions have grown 3.8% since 2011, endowment draws have grown 16%, retail income (which funds outreach) has grown 18%.

In terms of the 2020 operating expenses and the budget, 20% of the budget is funded directly from retail income (for outreach). Facilities expenses for maintaining and preserving the building and grounds is \$520,000, of which the Preservation Endowment covers \$143,000 with the balance coming out of the operating budget. Capital Expenses for 2019 totaled \$194,000 and, in addition, we had \$66,000 of unbudgeted Operating Expense to repair lightning damage. The largest Capital Expenditure was the rewiring of the rectory for \$143,000. Investments and Endowment grew to \$16.4 million, growing by 12%. We withdraw 3.8% per year for the Operating Budget out of investment funds. No new expenses for 2020. The budget is 2.5% higher than operating expenses in 2019, which is an adjustment for inflation. We are expecting expenses to be at \$3.75 million next year; however, in order to achieve a balanced budget we will need growth of 7% in revenues.

Stewardship Report: Paul stated that out of 1,000 families, we currently have 500 pledges. In addition to the 500 who pledged, we have about 100 people who give money but do not pledge. This still leaves us with 400 households that, as far as we are aware, do not give at all. Also, \$80,000 per year comes via cash

in the collection plates. If these 400 households are all contributing to weekly collections, this would equal a \$200 per household annual contribution for these families.

Contributions went up from 2018-2019 by \$40,000, but expenses went up by more than this number. Paul emphasized that we have to change this by increasing giving. A generosity statement has been developed around priorities involving Buildings and Grounds, Evangelism, Outreach, and Stewardship to develop long-term financial plans to guide us in these areas. The focus of this approach is on Annual Giving, Major Gifts, and Estate Giving. A Gratitude Team has been developed to support these efforts, as well.

Buildings and Grounds Report: Connie Purcell gave an update on the lightning suppression system to be installed for a cost of \$44,000.

Rector's Address: Father James began by discussing his love for BBTS, emphasizing what a gift it is to worship. He praised our Education Ministries, including the Youth Pilgrimage and Adult Education programs, Outreach that is more focused on hands-on service and meaningfully serving others, including the Shepherds and the fellowship we all receive, and Evangelism and how we work to walk on The Way of Love. He stated that BBTS is a more welcoming, inclusive, hospitable community as a result of our collective efforts. Our amazing buildings and grounds truly give us a sense of the presence of God, making Bethesda a "thin place" where we can experience spiritual growth. He thanked Zach Shipley, Senior Warden; Connie Purcell, Junior Warden; the Vestry; the Associates; the Rector's Committee and Working Committee members, as well as his wife and daughter for their support and all they do to help.

An exciting and transformative project, the RenewalWorks Survey, will give the parish anonymous feedback that will be aggregated to determine (1) where BBTS is spiritually, (2) how we can become a more lively and vibrant parish, and (3) how we can shape future ministries. We will learn much from this and discover even more to love about BBTS.

Though God's love is unconditional, our life of faith is a relationship. This relationship asks us to express our love in some concrete action. Members of the Vestry met over the summer to create plans to build our endowment to better enable us to care for this place now and in the future and provide much needed funds to add future ministries. Through this process, the Vestry discovered deep gratitude for what God has given us in this community, resulting in a short statement about the role of generosity in our faith. When we experience God's love, and the loving welcome of our community, we can't help but to respond with joyful generosity. We do not want the significant financial responsibility of maintaining Bethesda by the Sea to hold us back in generations to come.

Fr. James asked Becky Myers, Maury Wolf, Beth Cole, and Paul Coombs to read the statement, Generosity at Bethesda, to the assembly. We must respond to God's generosity with our own generosity. It is our privilege to care what we have now and what is to follow by getting outside ourselves and our own needs and doing something big for the future generations whose life, needs, challenges, and ministry we can't imagine right now. This is the best way to approach our spiritual life, if we really want to know the fullness of God's peace and joy.

Father James said we need to have an honest conversation about finances. [At this point, the Vestry joined Father James in front of the assembly, indicating that they are all saying this as a united group.] BBTS is an expensive ministry. It costs millions to maintain, preserve and do what we all love as a parish: the buildings, music, worship, education, and more. What's even more impressive is that BBTS has the financial capacity to do 3x's the ministry we are currently doing. Yet, our community is not providing adequate funding to cover our basic costs, let alone take on new ministries we feel called to implement and plan for the future.

About Annual Giving, Father James described some of the reasons people say they don't give:

- They put money in the collection plate on Sunday. (This money totals \$538, 321, not one quarter of our budget. This is not even enough to open the buildings every day.)
- They only come to Sunday worship and are not worried about other ministries. (This equals about 1,200 per household for this group, and BBTS still has to care for the buildings. This is not viable. Churches such as BBTS do not only have worship. They must provide ministries and care for grounds. We also still need clergy, buildings and grounds staff, and administrative staff.)
- BBTS has large endowments and can cover its costs. (Endowments currently do not support our annual costs, provide only \$433,698, or 12%, to the budget.)
- I don't have to give because some big donor will. BBTS is a very wealthy church. (It takes approximately 40 new pledges to replace the pledge of one of our very generous donors. BBTS cannot rely on so few people for annual giving. Others in the community should show their gratitude to large donors by being generous themselves. Thirty-nine households gave \$10,000 or more last year, or \$920,000, 721 households give zero, and all other households were between these two groups.)

Fr. James showed several graphics to accentuate this point.

What is the solution? Father James asked, "What would happen if we all made a real pledge that was reflective of our means?" How?

- Give up one or two meals out per week. (In rough terms, people giving below 1,000 would increase their pledge to 1,200, those giving between 1000 and 2,500 would increase to 2, 600, and so on. This would give BBTS over 2,534,534 in Annual Giving. As a community, if we could increase our gifts by this much, we would not have a budget problem. And, this is without our major givers increasing their gifts (which they do). Is a dinner out really worth more than a vibrant parish?)

Father James emphasized that this has to change, not only for the sake of the budget but - more importantly - for the sake of our spiritual health and peace. He urged us to begin now by reflecting on our financial means and love of this place. Parishioners were asked to fill out a pledge card or change their current pledge card. If BBTS does not address this issue, we will need to rethink what BBTS is as a ministry and scale back what we do immensely. This would mean that by the end of this year, one of the three full-time clergy will have to go, staff will be scaled back, and we will rethink if we can support hands-on outreach ministries. Also, the Middle Way, the paid choir, some of our youth and children's ministries, and other programs that we all love will have to be examined for viability. There will be less pastoral support people who are sick or are in crisis. This issue will affect worship, education, outreach, fellowship, pastoral care, and evangelism. We are trying to figure out how we are going to live within our means if we do not increase our giving. BBTS has the largest capacity for financial support of any church, yet our parish has a below average median average pledge. To solve this problem, all we do needs to lead to joyful generosity. Either way, however, Fr. James knows we each love this parish and will move on, no matter what happens.

Father James concluded by urging all of us to meaningfully support BBTS in response to this crisis in appreciation of God's never ending love. He also asked that we all talk about what a gift it is to support our parish, stating that everyone should support this place for whatever reason motivates them. This will free us all of the anxiety or discomfort we feel when the topic of giving comes up. Our goals are to have the resources to do great things for God and for each of us to know that God's love for us is unfathomably great and, in return, while His love is freely given, he asks everything of us.

We finished by singing *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*. Fr. James prayed that we will act on these words with courage and grace.

Adjournment: The Rev. Burl Salmon gave the closing prayer and blessing. Meeting was adjourned by Father James at 10.19 a.m.



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF BETHESDA-BY-THE-SEA

PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

Bethesda's Mission is to experience the clear and strong presence of God and to understand and spread Christ's teachings through collective worship, learning, and service.

Clergy and Staff

RECTOR AND ASSOCIATES

The Rev. James R. Harlan, *Rector*

Fred E. Staley, *Associate for Administration*

The Rev. Burl Salmon, *Associate for Christian Education, Pastoral Care, and Outreach*

The Rev. Margaret E. McGhee, *Associate for Stewardship and Digital Ministry*

Dr. Stuart A. Forster, *Associate for Music & Liturgy*

NON-STIPENDIARY ASSISTING CLERGY

The Rev. Canon Elizabeth R. Geitz, *Assisting Priest*

The Rev. W. Frisby Hendricks III, *Assisting Priest*

The Rev. Dr. Cecily J. Titcomb, *Deacon for Spiritual Direction*

The Rev. Clayton B. Waddell, *Deacon for Port Ministry*

STAFF

PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Greg Knight, *Director of Children & Youth Ministries*

COORDINATORS

Douglas Kwoka, *Communications Coordinator*

April Lawrence, *Evangelism, Fellowship & Membership Coordinator*

Ayana Pineiro, *Worship & Pastoral Care Coordinator*

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Tierra Harper, *Office Coordinator & Rector's Assistant*

SEXTONS

Robert Mancuso, *Sexton for Liturgical Support*

Keith Risley, *Sexton for Grounds*

Jonathan Rivera, *Sexton for Hospitality*

William Thompson III, *Sexton for Building Preservation & Lead Sexton*

THE CHURCH MOUSE AND THE SHOPPE STAFF

Daisy Alvarez, *General Manager for Retail Operations*

Evaristo Riestra, *General Manager of the Church Mouse*

Rosie Cartagena, *Seamstress*

Jonathan Goodine, *Receiving Specialist*



The Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea

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