



The
Church of
Bethesda-by-the-Sea

Love and Serve

PARISH PROFILE 2022

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.

Bethesda Welcomes You!

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Rector Search Prayer

Most loving God, you know us better than we know ourselves. You know the needs of our congregation at Bethesda-by-the-Sea. May the Holy Spirit come upon us. May the Holy Spirit lead a rector to Bethesda-by-the-Sea who can meet us in the narthex and lead us forward to a deeper relationship with Jesus, the Son, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Introduction

The Episcopal Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea is located on the barrier island of Palm Beach, on the southeast coast of Florida. Founded in 1889, the church and its grounds provide a landmark centerpiece to the town of Palm Beach. Bethesda, with its awe-inspiring gothic architecture and glorious gardens and grounds, is more than just a beautiful place appreciated by townspeople and visitors. It is a beacon of hope for the community, with its many and far-reaching ministries that proclaim God's love in word and action.

After 11 years, Bethesda-by-the-Sea is embarking on a search for a new rector. We are fortunate to have the Rev. Dr. Bob Dannals as interim rector during this time of transition and discernment. His wise leadership, guidance, spirituality, and compassion have been invaluable blessings in energizing and unifying our parish community.

The Rector Search Committee, formed in August 2021, has worked diligently to discern the needs and desires of the parish as we seek a new rector. Individuals wishing to be considered as candidates should visit the Rector Search section of our webpage (www.bbts.org) as well as read this Parish Profile and OTM.





Who are We?

For 133 years, Bethesda-by-the-Sea has stood as a place of healing and connection to the love and comfort of Jesus Christ. Our church provides a thin place, set apart from the rest of the world; a safe haven where we can express joy and gratitude while serving the wider community with love.

- Bethesda is a large, well-established parish with annual expenditures approaching \$4 million prior to the recent impact of COVID-19. Although Palm Beach is known as a seasonal resort town, our parish is comprised of many year-round members. We have approximately 1,400 parishioners in more than 1,000 households.
- Historically, our congregation has been mostly composed of residents of the island of Palm Beach. However, half of the congregation now resides outside of the town of Palm Beach.
- We are a welcoming and hospitable community, enriched by those from many different walks of life. A friendly atmosphere prevails, and we show care and assistance to people who are new, different, or in need.
- Our congregation highly values Bethesda's classical Anglican approach to the liturgy as well as its outstanding music program. We find the beautiful historic buildings and glorious grounds meaningful and inspiring.
- Our lay leadership is strong and highly committed to the church. With numerous vestry committees and parish service organizations, there are countless ways in which the laity serves. Because we recognize the importance of our various ministries and the greater community as vital to our identity, we hope to be more fully engaged in outreach ministries.
- Our congregation has experienced some disagreements in the recent past. Yet it is important to note that openly expressing differences of opinion is a sign of strength across the parish. Our congregation is self-aware and honest about our strengths and shortcomings and is poised to improve and move forward as we recover a sense of common mission and calling.
- A large portion of our congregation is age 65 or older. Many are retired. However, we are motivated to reach new people, to attract families with children and youth and to incorporate them into the life of Bethesda.
- We tend to be highly educated; the vast majority holds a college degree and many have post graduate degrees as well. Our members understand that Christian education is a life-long process that enriches their spiritual lives and prepares them for service in the world.





Who are We Seeking?

- We are seeking an experienced rector of great personal faith in Jesus Christ and a deep spirituality. We would like an approachable and sincere leader, who is loving, warm and compassionate.
- The candidate should be an excellent communicator with a willingness to listen to the opinions of others without pushing an agenda, and who can meet parishioners where they are in their relationship with God.
- We need a rector with strong pastoral skills and a healing touch who can speak one-on-one to those in need.
- The rector must be comfortable assuming the critical role of leadership in a parish that has been identified as clergy-focused. Despite our clergy-focused leanings, we need a rector who can lead but also listen, unify, and create community engagement and participation.
- We desire a rector who is able to preside over worship that is exceptional in quality and spiritual content and who can engage people through inspirational and thought-provoking preaching and teaching that is applicable to our everyday lives.
- Theologically, we are a diverse parish, with both theologically progressive and conservative views coexisting in a safe and welcoming environment. A rector who can connect theologically with our entire congregation is important to us.





Who are We Seeking?

- Not only is our congregation theologically diverse, but we also have a range of views on social justice issues and how these issues should be incorporated into preaching. We need a rector who can preach the Gospel and address social justice issues from a biblical perspective, in a way that opens hearts rather than hardening them, encourages respectful dialogue which is necessary for reconciliation, and spurs us as Christians to positive action.
- We need a rector who can help us articulate a clear vision for our church, keep it before the congregation in a compelling way and help us accomplish our mission by bringing out the best in everyone.
- As our congregation moves toward a strong sense of common mission and calling, a candidate with excellent conflict management, entrepreneurial and strategic planning skills is required. It is also essential that our rector be involved in the community to help us grow our church and increase our outreach.
- Our rector should have demonstrated success in fundraising and be comfortable asking people to increase their financial commitment to Bethesda. He or she must be experienced and at ease interacting with people from various social backgrounds, including those with significant means.
- We seek a rector who is driven to increase engagement of the congregation in all aspects of our church life. Our desire is to reach more people to grow the church, to establish programs and groups that expand our sense of community and relationships with one another, to engage our members in programs on church grounds and in the community, and to establish an environment which encourages the attendance of families.





Worship

Worship is the heart of Bethesda. Worship is first and foremost about God, and our worship is always focused on God's praise and glory. We want our services to welcome the larger community, to encourage us through prayers and preaching, to provide us with a respite from the cares and burdens of daily life, and to inspire and enlighten us to know the presence of Christ in the world during the coming week.

Our worship is meticulously planned, and we consider our style to be "broad church" (neither "high" nor "low"). We include ushers, acolytes, crucifer, vergers, lay readers, Eucharistic Ministers, Altar Guild, Flower Guild, Ambassadors, sextons, the Bethesda Choir, and clergy in leading services, in the church and behind the scenes, as the inviting face of the parish. Before the pandemic, we regularly used Rite I for the 8:00 a.m. Sunday Eucharist. The 9:00 a.m. Eucharist drew on multiple liturgical resources, and the 11:00 a.m. Eucharist utilized the full spectrum of options in Rite II and Enriching Our Worship.



From September through May, Bethesda celebrates three Eucharists on Sundays. On the third Sunday of every month, at the 9:00 and 11:00 services, healing prayers with laying on of hands are offered. Special festal services are held at Christmas and Easter.

8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Sermon

9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Homily

11:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Sermon

4:00 p.m. first Sunday of the month Choral Evensong, All Saints' Sunday Requiem, Advent Lessons & Carols

During the summer months, there are two services on Sundays:

8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Homily

10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Sermon

The mid-week schedule:

8:00 a.m. Tuesday Holy Eucharist

12:05 p.m. Wednesday Holy Eucharist

7:45 p.m. Wednesday night Compline

All baptized Christians are invited to receive Holy Communion when visiting Bethesda. It is not necessary to be a member of the Episcopal Church in order to receive Holy Communion. Persons who have not been baptized are welcome to come to the altar rail and kneel to receive a blessing.



Worshipping in a Pandemic

The recent past has been full of change for our parish family, as well as our local, state, national, and global communities. Of course, in Bethesda-by-the-Sea's 133-year history this is not our first crisis. We have weathered challenges before and know that with God's grace, courage, and love, we can adapt and endure through difficult times. This is a great source of comfort for our parish family.

In March 2020, as our town was closing down, it became clear that the Bethesda community would need to stay home. We realized that we would have to think very differently in order to sustain our church life, to find new ways to build community, create opportunities for fellowship, and to promote positive thinking. We pivoted to provide a livestream Sunday service, followed by a well-attended Zoom Coffee Hour. In addition, Bethesda offered five weekly classes on Zoom, largely taught by the Associates, including subjects such as American Sacred Architecture, New Testament, music and liturgy, book groups and movie discussions to name just a few.

Feedback from the congregation regarding our livestream service and Zoom Coffee Hour has been both comforting and impactful, one of many surprising benefits of adapting to a new way of worship and connection during the pandemic. Additionally, we seized the opportunity provided by vacant buildings to make some much-needed improvements to our facilities and technology infrastructure. Along with major upgrades to our organ and sound system, we upgraded our wireless and livestream capabilities to enable a hybrid in-person and online worship experience.



Worshipping in a Pandemic



Bethesda's creative approach to bringing community together was never more evident than during the Christmas and Easter seasons. With the continued safety of our parishioners a priority, the church developed an innovative, outdoor, multi-location Christmas Pilgrimage. This event included the telling of the Nativity story through vignettes, moments of prayer with clergy, communion, and hymns and carols sung by the choir spread out through the church grounds. Easter was joyfully celebrated outside at three locations on the Bethesda grounds; the Garden Chapel, the Garth, and the South Lawn. Parishioners will long remember the faith, love, and hard work that brought them together to create these special events.

Based on evolving CDC guidance, we transitioned to in-person outdoor services in the Garden Chapel and the Garth, in addition to our livestream and Zoom Coffee Hour. As COVID-19 transmission rates have continued to decrease in our area, we have resumed indoor services with singing of hymns and approaching the altar to receive communion. For those who prefer to be even more cautious, we will continue to livestream our worship services and to open our Nave for those who want to enter and pray and meditate during the week.





Music

One of the glories of Anglican worship is the near-perfect wedding of liturgy and music. Unlike many denominations where music may be considered “the icing on the cake,” in the Episcopal Church, music is an integral part of the cake. Those involved in planning liturgy work hard on making words, music, scripture, and preaching all come together in what we hope is a unifying and uplifting worship experience.

At Bethesda-by-the-Sea, we have a glorious, awe-inspiring church building. In our music, we strive to match the splendor of our building, making an effort to ensure that it, too, is of the highest quality. Our Austin organ, installed in 1999 and currently undergoing renovation, is renowned among professionals as one of the most exceptional instruments in the Southeast. The Bethesda Choir, an ensemble of approximately twenty-four singers, includes many professional musicians and teachers, and is considered by many to be the finest in the area.

We provide a modest stipend to our professional choir for their efforts in what is a rigorous schedule of services and concerts. Many who start as choir members end up joining the church out of their love for Bethesda, and others who move elsewhere occasionally sing with us when they visit the area. During the summer months, we welcome anyone who can read musical notation to join the Summer Choir in providing music for our Sunday services.

In addition to the music at our regular worship, we offer a number of concerts and services that take place beyond the scope of Sunday mornings and consider them to be a very real form of outreach to the community. Our first-Sunday Evensongs, with recitals preceding, draw many more people from the greater Palm Beach community than from the parish. Some of our offerings, such as our Christmas Concert and Community Carol Sing, as well as the Boar’s Head and Yule Log Festival, include orchestral players and fill the church year after year. Many who were first drawn to Bethesda-by-the-Sea by its music have become active, integral parishioners.

Our style of music is considered classical, drawing on the vast legacy of Anglican heritage from Renaissance polyphony to the best of current-day composers. Our goal is to invite all of God’s people to experience transcendence through God’s gift of music.





Parish Life & Ministries

Romans 12:11 teaches that the “mercies of God call us to diligent, fervent service for the Lord.”

At Bethesda-by-the-Sea, parish life and ministries are concerned with those matters that build an enduring family spirit and improve Christian life in a community of faith. All parishioners are called to be a part of our spiritual home by serving in one or more of our ministries. Bethesda is a welcoming and vibrant parish with a variety of ministries that draw together parishioners of all ages in mutual advocacy, celebration, and growth. Fellowship and friendship help implement the overall mission of Bethesda by providing an atmosphere of belonging, support, and encouragement. A variety of events are held for parishioners throughout the year to promote camaraderie and spiritual growth, increasing understanding of our faith and traditions, and service to others. All ministries require active love and compassion from both the rector and volunteers, for with these virtues, we are able to serve others and our Lord. Bethesda also serves as a community resource, hosting many events such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Empty Bowls, the advocacy program to care for and feed the hungry in our community.

Due to COVID-19, church ministries have adapted to the new realities presented by the pandemic. Bethesda continues to demonstrate a commitment to maintaining a healthy sense of fellowship and service to others. Emerging from the pandemic, Bethesda will need to build on what has been learned through this perseverance and innovation to bolster existing ministries and to add new ministries that reflect the qualities and needs of our parish and the surrounding community.





Parish Life & Ministries

Descriptions of Bethesda's ministries are as follows:

- **Altar Guild:** The Altar Guild, under the direction of the rector, is responsible for the preparation of the altars for worship at all services, memorials and special celebrations.
- **Ambassadors:** Each Sunday, our Ambassadors welcome parishioners as they enter church. Following the service, Ambassadors engage with newcomers, give them a welcome gift, and invite them to meet people at the coffee hour.
- **Bookshop:** The Bethesda Bookshop gives a warm welcome as well as information to visitors. It offers a variety of spiritual books, reading materials, cards and gifts for many occasions.
- **Daughters of the King:** Daughters of the King are called to pray, serve and evangelize.
- **EFM:** Episcopal Formation Ministry is a four-year program involving reading and studying scripture while developing a deeper spiritual relation with Christ.
- **Eucharistic Ministers:** Eucharistic Ministers are laity trained to give the Eucharist in church services as well as to those unable to attend a worship service in the church.
- **Evangelism:** Partnering with clergy, staff and other groups such as Ambassadors in our welcoming ministry, The Evangelism Committee works on developing and refining processes to attract, welcome and connect new members into Bethesda. They have also arranged evangelism activities such as The Way of Love gathering led by the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers in 2018 as well as the Renewal Works initiative in 2019/2020.
- **Feeding Programs:** Hundreds of parishioners and community members have an opportunity to come together to alleviate hunger and support many of our food relief agencies. Every week throughout the year, volunteers prepare meals at St. George's Center in Riviera Beach. Every Friday, backpacks for food insecure children are filled to ensure families are fed for the week-end. Bethesda's Feeding in February initiative consists of two events for one cause: Empty Bowls, a community-wide effort to provide donations of soup from local restaurants, and Share What You Can, engaging parishioners in bringing their canned and packaged foods for distribution throughout Palm Beach County.
- **Flower Guild:** The Flower Guild is a ministry carried out by over one hundred parishioners to enhance the worship experience of our parish through the beauty of flowers. Guild members arrange all the flowers for Sunday worship, weddings, funerals, Christmas, Palm Sunday and Easter.
- **Men of Bethesda (M.O.B.):** The men of the parish share a monthly morning fellowship, Eucharist and prayer gathering. This group extends the hand of friendship with care and compassion to all men of Bethesda.



- **Mission and Outreach:** The Mission and Outreach Committee of Bethesda is composed of parishioners with experience within the social service sector who are aware of pressing needs in the area. Their job is to determine how to distribute outreach funds, primarily generated by our resale store, the Church Mouse, which in years preceding the pandemic provided amounts ranging between \$500,000-\$600,000. Historically, 25% of such funds supported the Feeding Programs noted above, 25% was allocated to grants to local shelters for the homeless, and the remainder supported educational grants and Bethesda's mentoring/tutoring program for high school students. The TRUE Fund, which offers short-term aid in small amounts, was also funded from Church Mouse proceeds. As a result of the pandemic, the current budget for outreach has been substantially pared of grants to ensure funding of existing obligations. It is hoped that a robust retail season will allow us to return to our historical distribution, allocation and amounts.
- **Pastoral Care:** Pastoral care is shared among priests, deacons and lay Eucharistic visitors to meet the needs of the homebound, those who are hospitalized and those living in nursing homes.
- **Port Ministry:** A deacon and group of dedicated volunteers provide worship services, hospitality and pastoral care to mariners who are confined to their ships in our local ports.
- **Mission Trips:** Mission trips to Our Little Roses, a home for girls in San Pedro Sula, Honduras; creating housing for orphans, widows and clergy in Burundi, Africa.
- **The Church Mouse:** The Church Mouse resale shop, established in 1970 by parishioners, raises outreach funds for charities in our community and beyond.
- **Shepherds Program:** Our Shepherds act as liaisons between the clergy and members of the parish in need of pastoral care and/or visits.
- **St. Mary's Guild:** The St. Mary's Guild provides a venue for the women of the parish to enjoy fellowship on a monthly basis. The members of the guild support Bethesda's activities and events on an ongoing basis and hold an annual Valentine's Day bridge luncheon to raise funds.
- **Ushers:** The ministry of ushering is a crucial part of worship because it is one of the most visible ministries in the church. Usher duties include making people feel welcome, assisting with seating, collecting the offering, and maintaining a safe environment.
- **Volunteer Docents:** Volunteer Docents provide lecture tours of the church building and grounds.



Children, Youth, and Adult Formation

Headed by Greg Knight, Associate for Christian Formation, Bethesda-by-the-Sea offers a robust education and formation program for children, youth and adults, staffed by our church's volunteer laypeople.

We offer a complete Sunday School program for Pre-K through 8th grade confirmation. We also offer an array of classes and workshops from Sunday School, The Middle Way on Wednesdays and other mid-week classes such as:

- Newcomer Classes for new parishioners
- Education for Ministry
- Inquirers Classes for adult confirmands
- Previewing the Lectionary
- Ladies Bible Study
- Vacation Bible School for 3-10 year olds

Parents of newly baptized children are invited to join the Little Blessings group for welcome into the church fold as well as socializing.

We provide nursery school for all three Sunday services.

We encourage teen-aged youth to grow into their life in Christ through numerous events such as:

- Day at Universal Studios
- Youth Service Day
- Camping on Peanut Island
- Required involvement by confirmands to participate in worship ministries as ushers, acolytes, or lay readers
- Integral participation in the Good Friday *Way of the Cross*
- Staffing fundraisers which include Trivia Night, the Mardi Gras Chili Cook-Off, the Spring Carnival, and the Blessing of the Animals
- Roles in the Christmas Pageant and The Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival





The 9th-12th graders travel on an annual domestic mission trip as well as an international pilgrimage, where they walk in the footsteps of the saints of our faith. Past trips have been to Spain, Northern Virginia, England, Marathon, FL, Italy and Honduras. Throughout the year, they learn about their destination as well as the impact the special journey of faith will have on their lives. The teens are now planning and educating themselves for their upcoming trip to northern Spain to walk the Camino Ingles to Santiago de Compostela.

Through our expansive educational offerings, we strive to ready our parishioners to make sense of their world by integrating Christian values into their daily lives.





Leadership and Governance

The rector is the principal pastor and chief executive of the parish and works in partnership with the Vestry. The Vestry consists of the rector, acting as its presiding officer, two wardens and ten other members. The rector is an ex-officio member on all Vestry committees, having the right to vote at all times. The Vestry typically meets monthly for nine months of the year and includes Associates and Clergy at its meetings.

Vestry members are elected by the parish membership at the annual meeting held in January. They serve staggered three-year terms, so each year, four Vestry members roll off and four new Vestry members are elected. A Vestry member who has served a three-year term must wait at least one year before being reelected.

The rector designates the Senior Warden at the first meeting of the Vestry, immediately following the annual meeting. At the same meeting, the Vestry elects the rest of the Executive Committee: Junior Warden, treasurer, chancellor, clerk and a member-at-large. The Executive Committee only meets at times of urgency when it is not possible to assemble the entire Vestry.

The Vestry has four permanent subcommittees, the chairs of which, according to the by-laws, must be current Vestry members: Leadership and Governance (traditionally chaired by the Senior Warden), Buildings and Grounds (traditionally chaired by the Junior Warden), Finance and Audit.





Finance

Bethesda's 2022 budget expenses, including Outreach funded by our Church Mouse resale shop, total \$3,666,378. Non-budgeted items may increase 2022 total expenditures to close to \$4 million. The major components of budgeted Church-Only Revenues and Expenditures for 2022 are:

Revenues

Annual Campaign	\$2,390,000
Other Contributions	149,628
Other Operating Revenue	124,500
Resale Store Transfers	500,000
Endowment Draws/Transfers	502,319
Total Revenues	\$3,666,447

Expenses

Personnel	1,746,632
Diocesan Assessment	340,464
Outreach	500,000
Parish Life	374,100
Facilities & Support	605,182
Capital Projects	100,000
Total Expenses	\$3,666,378

Budgeted Cash Surplus	\$69
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Finance

Our accountants require that we include non-cash expenses (mainly depreciation) in our financial statements. Budgeted Depreciation expenses in 2022 are \$420,000. Bethesda's 2022 operating budget above currently covers only \$100,000 of such non-cash depreciation, in the Capital Projects line item.

Preceding year profits from our resale store are typically transferred to Operations and applied to Outreach. Such amounts are budgeted at \$500,000 each for 2022.

Periodic capital expenditures for repair and maintenance of Bethesda's facilities beyond the operating budget typically are funded from the Capital Reserve Fund or from special donations from parishioners. Bethesda also periodically receives unbudgeted bequests and grants.

Financial Position

Bethesda is fortunate to have substantial financial assets in a number of separate endowment accounts. The total value of Bethesda's assets at 12/31/21 was \$31,866,482, of which Property and Equipment were carried at \$6,776,577. Bethesda owns valuable real estate in Palm Beach in addition to its core church buildings, whose market value is not fully reflected in the above figure.

Bethesda's assets include the present value of several charitable remainder trusts.

Bethesda budgets a conservative draw rate of 4% of the trailing 36-month value of its three main endowment funds, which total approximately 78% of our overall endowment.

Liabilities at 12/31/21 were minimal, totaling \$511,276.



Financial Stewardship

“The whole of creation is infused with generosity. The very act of creation in the book of Genesis reminds us that our existence results from God’s imaginative desire for relationship and that God created humankind in that image of generous relationship.” This is how Bethesda’s Statement of Generosity begins.

We are heirs of generous past parishioners who supported Bethesda well beyond the current needs to ensure that we would be able to worship in this holy place today. Bethesda is blessed with a substantial endowment. A multi-year campaign to grow the endowment was to be launched in 2020, just as COVID-19 appeared but was postponed. Our Annual Campaign for unrestricted contributions, budgeted at \$2,390,000 for 2021 initially faltered due to COVID-19 and a late start, but regained momentum as the year closed and at year-end exceeded budget. In 2022, we hope to place renewed emphasis on Planned Giving, as well as support for our Annual Campaign that has been restored to its traditional January to April period. Bethesda is also fortunate to receive major gifts beyond the Annual Campaign.





Buildings and Grounds

Bethesda is privileged to call its home one of the most beautiful gothic churches built within the last century. A true centerpiece for Palm Beach, our church occupies a large property, perfectly located on the island. In addition to the gothic church, the site plan includes a large garth for special events, stone cloisters, numerous offices, parish hall, guild room, choir rehearsal space and a library. The buildings are surrounded by lush gardens and out buildings compatible with classic gothic style. The design of the church, completed in 1926, was inspired by Vestry visits to England in 1920. After touring numerous English churches, they returned to Florida to erect this classic design that we enjoy today.

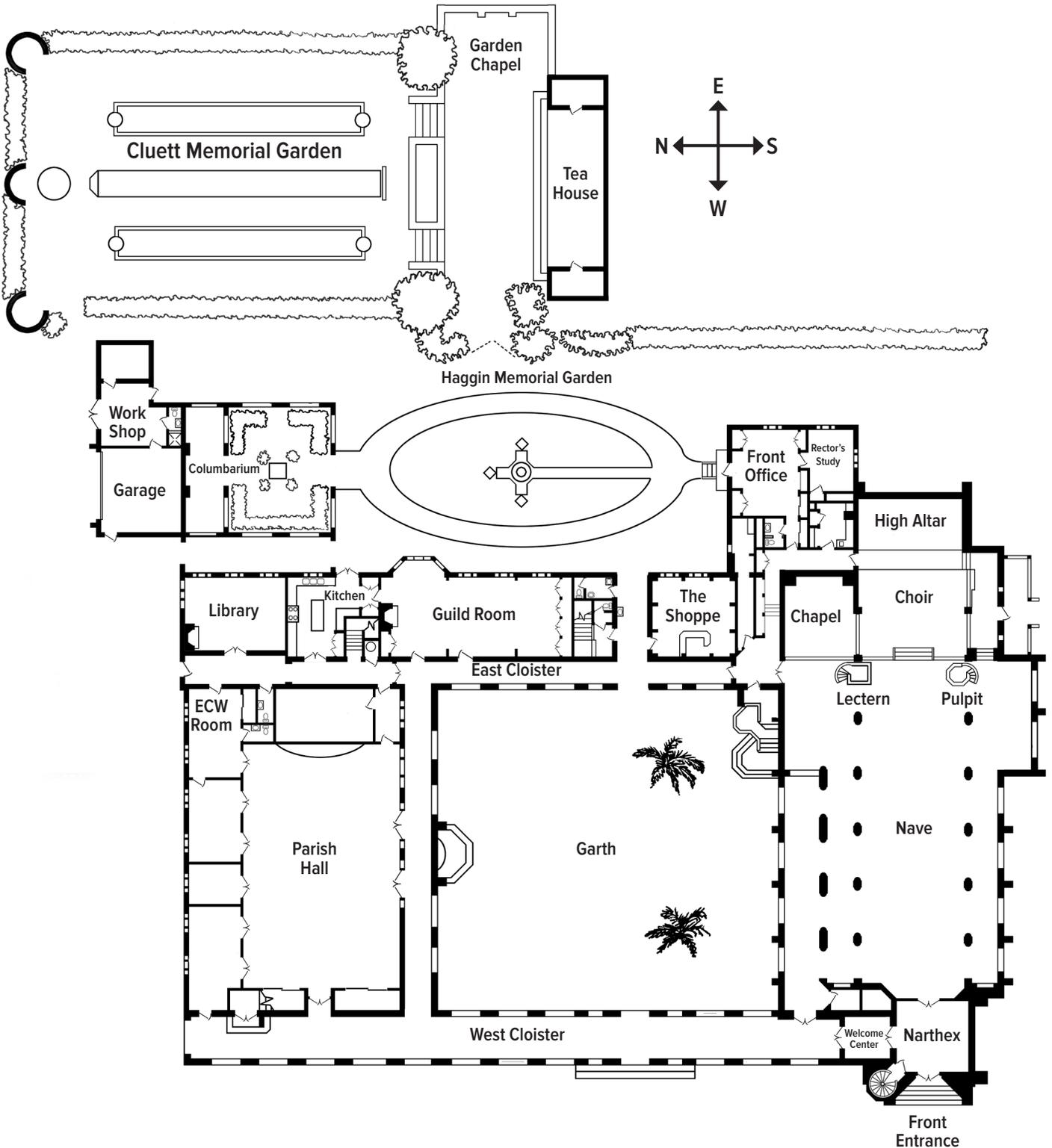
The tropical gardens surrounding the property were developed and have matured over time. Through generous parishioner gifts, Bethesda's property includes a serene Columbarium, a charming tea house, a koi pond and several smaller pavilions for quiet contemplation, reading and relaxation. In recent years, an outdoor chapel was built and is a beautiful background for weddings and other special services as well as our first in-person worship during the pandemic.

The adjacent rectory preceded the construction of the church by several years and was designed after a classic Mediterranean villa with a private open entry courtyard, expansive rooms with pecky cypress ceilings and hand painted motifs. This beautiful residence, which enjoys its own private tropical garden, affords the perfect setting for small or large gatherings and formal dinners. A recent and thorough renovation of this residence assures a comfortable and spacious home to meet every need of a large family. A private guest suite directly off the entry courtyard awaits friends or visiting clergy. A total of six bedrooms are contained in the rectory. The home is now fully furnished in an international style to accent the history and dignity of its neighboring Church.

An active Vestry, along with strong support from the Building and Grounds committee, assures continued maintenance and preservation of these historic assets for years to come.



Buildings and Grounds





Buildings and Grounds





The Diocese of Southeast Florida

The Diocese of Southeast Florida is home to 76 congregations and 38,000 Episcopalians. We are ably led by the Right Reverend Peter Eaton, our Bishop since January 2016, who is based in the diocese's Mother Church of Trinity Cathedral in Miami.

Our diocese is large geographically, including portions of six counties ranging from Key West to north of Jensen Beach and as far west as Clewiston. It is also extremely diverse, counting among its members the very poor and the very affluent, illiterate and highly educated, rural and urban. DIOSEF members include a large segment of immigrants and first-generation Americans; many of these speak English as a second language or not at all and worship in Spanish or Creole.

Bethesda is one of the five largest and longest-serving churches and congregations in the diocese, and is the largest single contributor to the annual diocesan budget of \$4 million.





A Brief History of Bethesda-by-the-Sea

Bethesda-by-the-Sea's extraordinary history began in 1889 when the bishop of Florida, the Rt. Rev. E. Gardner Weed, D.D., visited a little community known as Lake Worth along the coast of Southeast Florida. It consisted of a few homes located, for the most part, on the eastern shore of the lake, on land that is now in the town of Palm Beach. The area at the time was part of Dade County, which extended from the St. Lucie River on the north to the Florida Keys, an area of approximately 7,200 square miles (larger than the states of Connecticut and Delaware combined). Its estimated population in 1889 was 600, and the population around Lake Worth was about 250.

The island of Palm Beach was yet to become the popular resort town that it is today. At the time, the area was barely past the stage of being a tropical jungle. There were very few roads on the island, and most people traveled the area by boat. There was no house of worship in all of Dade County, with the exception of a small Roman Catholic chapel in Miami that was not in use.

That winter of 1889, Bishop Weed gathered a small group of worshippers along the lake, on what is now the island of Palm Beach, and held the first Episcopal service in the area. Following his visit to Lake Worth, Bishop Weed wrote to church officials stating the need for a clergyman to establish and lead the mission in Southeast Florida. The Rev. Joseph N. Mulford, the rector of Christ Church, Troy, New York answered the call, volunteering to go to Florida for the winter without any compensation other than his traveling expenses.

When Father Mulford arrived in Palm Beach in 1889, he and four communicants began holding services in a one-room schoolhouse and proceeded with plans to build a church along the lake. The first Episcopal Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea was a simple structure, built of driftwood for approximately \$600. As an artist and wood carver, Father Mulford designed and built much of the original church himself. The chapel seated 100 people and was the only such structure within a 150-mile radius. Most worshippers came by boat, as there was no roadway to the church. Mary Cluett Mulford, wife of the first rector, named it Bethesda-by-the-Sea, which means "The House of Healing-by-the-Sea."

With the expansion of Henry Flagler's railroad, Palm Beach became a destination spot and the church began to grow. With perception and vision, parish leaders saw that a larger church was needed. In 1895, a second Bethesda was built in a Moorish style along the lake on North Lake Trail. It still stands today as a private residence.

A Brief History of Bethesda-by-the-Sea



In 1922, the Rev. Canon James Townsend Russell of Washington Cathedral in Washington, D.C. became Bethesda's fifth rector. He recognized the need for an even larger and more permanent place of worship, envisioning the beauty of a gothic church placed in the midst of palm trees and flowers. The third Bethesda-by-the-Sea, designed in fourteenth century gothic style by Hiss and Weeks of New York, was built between 1925-1927 in the center of town, on the corner of South County Road and Barton Avenue, where it stands today.

What began as a small mission with four members in 1889 has become a powerful force for bringing God's word, love and grace to the Palm Beach community and much of Southeast Florida.





The Town of Palm Beach & Surrounding Area

The Town of Palm Beach & Surrounding Area

Palm Beach, a barrier island on the southeast coast of Florida, is a community filled with history and character. Sixteen miles long and located 65 miles north of Miami, it lies between the Atlantic Ocean on the east and the Intracoastal Waterway, or Lake Worth, on the west. Across the lake lie the cities of West Palm Beach and Lake Worth Beach. The year-round population of the town of Palm Beach is under 10,000 and the seasonal population is about double that. Known for its lush tropical gardens, myriad palm trees, pristine beaches and enviable moderate climate, Palm Beach is a fully developed community that is world-renowned for its beauty, quality of life, and small-town character.



Palm Beach is noted among the country's most philanthropic communities. During the period from Christmas to Easter, the Social Calendar, as it is known, is fully booked with charitable events supporting a myriad of causes such as the arts, preservation, the local food bank, police and various clinics and medical facilities, to name just a few.



The city of West Palm Beach is the largest and most populous city (more than 110,000) in Palm Beach County (just under 1.5 million) and a major business center for South Florida. West Palm Beach is currently experiencing the most rapid growth in residential and commercial real estate in its history.

Palm Beach County is accessible through the Palm Beach International Airport, conveniently located ten minutes from Palm Beach and ranked in the top ten airports in the country for ease of access, efficiency and flight schedules. The interstate highway, I-95, runs through the county, connecting it in the south to Miami and north to all points on the eastern coast of the United States. The recently completed intercity Brightline rail service connects West Palm Beach with Miami and Orlando, in addition to the Tri-Rail line to Miami Airport.

There are numerous hospitals and health facilities throughout Palm Beach County. Good Samaritan Hospital is located directly across the Intracoastal Waterway from Palm Beach as are offices of Cleveland Clinic Florida and the Hospital for Special Surgery specializing in orthopedic care. JFK Medical Center, which specializes in cardiac care, is twenty minutes south of West Palm Beach.

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Palm Beach County is home to a well-established and growing research and scientific community located in Jupiter, the county's northernmost town. Innovative and world-renowned institutions include Scripps Research and Max Planck as well as an extensive expansion of Florida Atlantic University to be completed in 2022 dedicated to neuroscience.



Palm Beach County also offers a number of excellent schools and universities. Palm Beach Day Academy, the oldest private school, and Palm Beach Public School, are both located on the island of Palm Beach. Palm Beach Atlantic University, a private Christian college is directly across the Intracoastal Waterway. Other notable Palm Beach County educational institutions include Florida Atlantic University, Keiser University and Palm Beach State College. In addition, the University of Florida has developed plans to establish a graduate campus in downtown West Palm Beach.

Rich in art and culture, the Palm Beach area is home to many fine museums and cultural centers. The Society of the Four Arts offers a cultural program, including art exhibits, notable speakers, concerts, films and educational programming. Less than a mile away from the island, the Kravis Center offers world-class concerts, opera, ballet, theatre and other artistic programs, and the newly expanded Norton Museum of Art has a permanent collection of more than eight thousand works. Other cultural institutions in downtown West Palm Beach include Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens, the South Florida Science Center & Aquarium, the Palm Beach Zoo, and the Armory Art Center.



With 45 miles of spectacular coastline, Palm Beach County is an outdoor lover's paradise. Residents enjoy swimming, fishing, diving and boating on the area's waterways. There are numerous challenging golf courses and tennis facilities. The area is home to the National Croquet Center, the international Winter Equestrian Festival, the Global Dressage Festival as well as the US Open Polo Championship.

One would not have a full picture of our community without noting why one half of Bethesda's outreach funds have historically gone to address the need for sheltering and feeding the poor in Palm Beach County, where approximately 19% of the population lives below the poverty line. A recent count of those in shelters or needing shelter was over 1,500 of whom 12% were seniors. This percentage is increasing rapidly. Further, the Palm Beach County Food Bank reports that over 181,000 individuals in the county are projected this year to be food insecure and one in five children will go to bed hungry.



Application Process

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If you discern that God may be calling you to Bethesda-by-the-Sea,
please submit the following to:

The Reverend Canon Jason Roberson
Canon Missioner for Congregational Vitality & Transitions
Diocese of Southeast Florida
jason@diosef.org

Resume/CV

A copy of your updated OTM profile

A letter of interest that highlights how you feel you meet the needs of
Bethesda-by-the-Sea and why you feel called to serve as our rector.



Rector Search Committee

John Brim, *Chair*

Katie Wandoff, *Vice Chair*

Barbara Callahan

Beth Cole

Suzanne Crawford

Charles Hagy, Jr.

Johanna Reyers

Tanner Rose



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

The Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea
141 S. County Road, Palm Beach, FL 33480 | (561) 655-4554 | bbts.org

