
THE VOICE

Bethesda Episcopal Church: Volume 3, Issue 1

February 2017



BETHESDA NEWS and Annual Meeting Update

Genna Henderson

In case you missed the annual meeting at the end of January, I feel honor-bound to update you. A lot of important things are going on, so rather than include this in my usual Abridged Vestry Minutes, I'm going to put it on the front page and be a little more loquacious about it. Will this take the place of my usual editorial? I don't know. I haven't gotten that far yet. Suspense!

Firstly, we have FOUR new vestrypeople, which is a relief since, as I'm sure you're at least somewhat aware, the vestry had difficulty filling a vacancy during 2016 and had been proceeding without a full slate. A change to the vestry bylaws (which I'll get to later) considers the clerk (me), and the treasurer to be "additional vestry members", which means we don't count against the usual nine. This, frankly, made me nervous, what with that one seat sitting empty all year, but luckily, with the leadership of Catherine Berheide on the nominating committee, we were able to fill the slate. I'm pleased to announce that, at the Annual Meeting, the parish elected John Van der Veer to serve as treasurer, as well as Field Horne, Pam Houde and Mayume Kato to serve as vestry-folk. The vestry bids a fond farewell to Anne Van Acker, who has been a dedicated treasurer through a time of upheaval and is responsible for a large portion of our current era of financial accountability (hooray for QuickBooks!). Also cycling off the vestry is Mary Withington, who has served over and above what should be expected of any normal human being. MW was possibly a *little* overly-gleeful about not having to go to the Parish Leadership Conference this year, but after all her time on the vestry, we can't really begrudge her that... much.

Secondly, Darren Miller presented the budget for 2017. I won't go into it in depth here, but it's up on the website (or

Fifty Years in the Choir Stalls: Part 2

A new era; new organ; new rector

Stuart Armstrong

In the Spring of 1967, it was announced that Bethesda would be getting a new pipe organ. The then-current organ, designed by Ernest. M. Skinner and installed in 1920 as a memorial to the parents of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Clark, was in a state of decline and needed to be repaired or replaced. Several options were considered by the Organ Committee :

- 1) Repair and restoration of the Skinner;
- 2) Purchase of a new pipe organ;
- 3) Purchase of a used pipe organ;
- 4) Purchase an electronic organ (Fortunately, this last option was never seriously considered.)

The committee researched several organ building companies before eventually settling on the Canadian company Casavant Freres. Stylistically, the Casavant would be very different from the Skinner. Whereas the Skinner had a warm, orchestral sound, the Casavant has a decidedly Baroque sound, with strong reeds and mixtures which our organist and choirmaster, Dr. Roger Hannahs, greatly favored.

Around this time, our rector, The Rev. W. Benjamin Holmes, announced that he would be leaving us to accept a position at a parish near Philadelphia. So, the search for the next rector of Bethesda was on.

In late spring, the dismantling of the Skinner organ began. Pipes began to disappear from the organ chambers on the altar, and Echo/Antiphonal division of the organ on the balcony. Also removed was the great decorative oak Gothic organ case, which was part of the 1899 organ given by Spencer and Katrina Trask, and brought up from a church in Brooklyn. (Parts of this case are still at

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will be soon). It balances. This is important.

Thirdly, and possibly most-interestingly, the vestry has signed a contract to purchase 19 Saw Mill Court in Wilton for a rectory. The expenses for Dean Vang's housing were getting out of control (and, as a renter in Saratoga Springs, I can confirm that rents, in general, in Saratoga, are out of control) and it was determined that, with the upswing in the housing market, it would be imprudent not to purchase a rectory. This house would be suitable for a young family, but also should have good resale value if, when we call a permanent rector, she would prefer something else. The house should be ready sometime in June. (You will remember that \$450,000 was set aside from the sale of the old rectory specifically for the purchase of a new one, and this new rectory falls nicely in this price-range, so it should not represent any additional financial burden on the parish.)

Fourthly, the plans for the new parish house continue apace, though not as quickly as we might've preferred. We'd been hoping that some major donors would come through with significant gifts and, while the parish capital campaign did far better than its goal, we're still about seven figures short of where we'd hoped to be financially. The capital campaign committee is preparing for a community campaign and the building committee is taking another look at their plans for financing, but so far everybody still sounds hopeful. (As an added bonus, from my point of view, we discovered that renting space ONLY to non-profits (instead of some to for-profits) is actually BETTER, since it saves us from property taxes and can get us a better rate on the mortgage. It's also better in terms of fulfilling our mission, so a win all around).

Fifthly, some of you may be aware that the vestry bylaws, which disappeared inexplicably for years (at least, nobody had seen them when my father was on the vestry back in the late nineties/early oughts) were recently discovered and found to be woefully inadequate. Since we need to attach the bylaws to some of the grant applications, Gordon Boyd whipped up some new ones, which are MUCH better. If they're not up on the website yet, they will be soon.

Sixthly, for those asking when we're going to start the new rector search: we're going to start the new rector search. We can't actually *afford* a new rector right now, but we expect to be able to once the new parish house is up and running, so it makes sense to at least get started on the search process in 2017. If you remember the discernment meetings we had when we were beginning to talk about the new parish house, that's what we're planning on for the first step of the rector search. You can look forward to lots of small meetings with everyone in the Bethesda parish. Start keeping a mental New Rector Wishlist now so that we can start having conversations about it. (A clue to one of the features on MY mental wishlist is hidden somewhere in this article. See if you can find it.)

And that's what happened at the parish meeting. ❖

Bethesda. Some of it was used to build the table used at the side altar. And some pieces are hidden away in the basement.) An upright piano was placed below the pulpit for service accompaniment. (And, what a disappointing sound that was!) I can still remember the shocking sight of the organ chamber completely devoid of pipes, with huge sheets of plastic hung in the arches to keep the dust from spreading. Eventually, during the summer, the process reversed itself and pipes started coming in instead of going out. By September, the new Casavant was fully in place. Fortunately, it was decided to reverse the position of the organ console. Whereas before the organist had his back to the choir, the new console faced them. (But it wasn't until Dr. Van Wye's era that the mirrors would be added so that the one side of the choir could actually see the organist.)

A crowd packed the church for the dedicatory recital and service. An extant recording reveals hearty singing from both the choir and congregation on hymn 599 ('Ye Watchers And Ye Holy Ones'). Dr. Hannahs played a recital designed to highlight the various parts of the new organ, especially the new Positiv division. (The only part of the Skinner organ that was preserved was the Celeste stop.) Featured were pieces by Gabrieli, Telemann, Haydn, Karg-Elert, and Pinkham. But the highlight was a work written by Dr. Hannahs himself. His 'Carillon' was written as an homage to French organist/composer Louis Vierne.

While the new Casavant was being installed, the search was on for a new rector. Fr. Holmes had been rector for fifteen years, and was extremely popular. He was very much involved in the community, especially in working with local youth.

Many candidates were considered, but it was Fr. Thomas Parke who was eventually chosen. Handsome, charming, and dynamic, he impressed the search committee greatly. He had strong local ties: his father had been rector at St. Paul's in Albany, and he himself was an assistant at St. George's in Schenectady under the legendary Rev. Darwin Kirby.

Fr. Parke's installation as rector was set for the first Sunday after Epiphany. It was quite a splendid service. Taking part in it were Allen Brown, Bishop of Albany; The Rev. Darwin Kirby; and assisting priests, The Rev. Swasey Crocker and The Rev. James Wolfkiel. The church was packed, and the choir sang lustily "This Day Is Salvation Come," composed by Dr. Hannahs.

That day, we were not only introduced to Fr. Parke, but his lovely wife Barbara, and their two year old son Jonathan. (Daughter Emily was on the way, and would make her appearance in a few months.) Fr. Parke and Barbara were a striking couple. As a child of the TV generation, I could not help but think of them as our own version of Rob and Laura Petrie.

And thus began a new era at Bethesda. ❖



Parishioner Spotlight: Sarah Manny

Jane Agee

Sara Manny grew up in suburban New Jersey. She attended St. Lawrence University in New York, where she majored in French and Education. An important event in this phase of her life was being able to spend her junior year studying abroad in France. She was subsequently accepted into a Master's program for French at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Her international horizons kept expanding. She was able to study abroad in France for another year and then lived in Spain for a summer to learn Spanish after earning her master's degree.

Her early career reflected those wonderful travel experiences. She moved to Boston and worked at an educational travel company for almost two years before moving back to New Jersey. She was hired there to teach French at Benedictine Academy, a Catholic girls' high school. She worked there for three years.

Sara and her husband Lucas moved to the Saratoga area eight years ago. Here they "were lucky enough to find Bethesda on our first outing to become members of a local church." In reminiscing about her years growing up in New Jersey, she recalled her church there:

"I still have fond memories of my childhood church and its parishioners. My family attended Trinity Episcopal Church in Cranford, New Jersey, for three generations. My grandmother was on the Vestry and became Senior Warden. My grandfather helped run Coffee hour. My mother was in the choir when she was in high school and both of my parents were Sunday school teachers. I remember enjoying Sunday school very much and participating in fun activities with our youth group."

Sara's early experiences informed her service ethic at Bethesda, and she and Lucas are setting a similar example with their two children, Calvin and Colette. Sara has been a member of the Vestry for two years, a lector, a Coffee Hour director, and is also involved in religious education in the church.

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Allison Parke

I have been asked to write something about our Prayer Shawl Ministry and am more than happy to do so. In 2005, I met Kathleen Empie who had helped begin St. Clements Prayer Shawl Ministry. She was key to helping me begin one at Bethesda. The first meetings were a combined effort with St Clements; they came to our meetings and we went to theirs. We concentrated on shawls and lap robes and in no time had so many that not only were our parishioners receiving them but area nursing homes as well.

After a few years we added the baby blankets to be given at baptisms. Each blanket has a tag sewn into it saying "baptized into Christ at Bethesda Episcopal Church". The shawls and lap robes are blessed before being given away and are accompanied with a beautiful card.

The start of 2011, when Father Parke was beginning his radiation treatments, I was so grateful that Sherryl Moore and Suzanne Bishop together agreed to chair the group and continue to do so today!

The meetings are held the 2nd Thursday of the month at 1 p.m. at The Home of the Good Shepherd on Church St. with a lunch in December and June.

We welcome anyone (from all faiths) who can knit or crochet or would like to learn. Instructions, yarn, needles will be provided if you need to get started.

Please contact Sherryl Moore 583-1215 or Suzanne Bishop 587-3822 with any questions

* we welcome at-home knitters who are unable to attend the meetings and gratefully accept donations of yarn.

Why Do We Pledge?

Each of us has a unique relationship with faith and the church. Giving back to God is one way to express this. The decision to share one's blessings comes from the combined senses of gratitude, obligation and generosity.

Bethesda Church is an organization of many facets. All ministries, all staff, all infrastructure and upkeep need to be supported. The Vestry is working very hard to lead Bethesda into the future. We all look forward to the exciting prospects of opening a new Parish House and to calling a new rector who will lead us into that future.

Throughout this newsletter are statements from your fellow parishioners about why they pledge to Bethesda. What are your reasons?

A Journey of Faith

Mary K. Sutphen

What has been a special time in my journey of faith? There have been so many through the years, and looking back, I can see the hand of God at each juncture- a fact that may not have been inherently visible as I weathered each storm or anxious moment.

I am an adoptive mom of three children, plus one unofficially adopted son. Andrew is from Chile. Connor and Ana are both from Guatemala, and they have two sisters that were adopted by my brother. In May of 2015, Andy, Connor, Ana, and I went on a service trip to Guatemala, and that's when we met my new son Joshua through an amazing series of miraculous events! Joshua grew up in an orphanage with his 3 sisters, after having been abandoned by his mother, and was placed into institutional care by his grandmother to escape an abusive father. Joshua left the orphanage 5 years previously, facing many struggles and life challenges on his own, including hunger and homelessness.

I've been volunteering in Guatemala since 2003, when I started traveling and doing medication coordination on medical missions. Over the years, and especially after adoptions from Guatemala were shut down, I had the desire to find a way to help the orphans that have been left behind and are forgotten by the world. In 2013, I started to think about older orphans who are aging out of institutional care, without job skills or a place to go. That's where the desire began: to start an organization to help orphans and other needy children to obtain job skills and career training, as well as life management skills. When God brought Joshua and my family together in 2015, there was no doubt about the direction we were to take. It was time to take a leap of faith, trust God, and be His hands and feet.

Dream Steps International is a non-profit organization that helps older orphans and needy youth to obtain education, and job and career skills, and assists in humanitarian projects where needed.

In the past year, with the help of caring donors, we have been able to:

- hold 2 Christmas dinners in an area of poverty where a recent tragic mudslide occurred,
- supply beds, groceries, and shoes to 11 children being raised by a grandmother after their two mothers died,
- sponsor a young woman to be able to continue her high school education,
- help a woman whose 19 year old son was killed in an accident, to have her son's body released and buried with funeral services,
- participate in a celebration for the Day of the Child by supplying lunch and gifts of food in a remote

Vestry Minutes (abridged)

"The Vestry of an Episcopal Church has three primary responsibilities... to take care of the parish finances and parish buildings [and] to choose individuals to fill various positions of parish leadership"

-Christopher L. Webber

The Vestry Handbook: Revised Edition

DECEMBER

Pledge and plate and fuel donations are all higher than this time last year.

Probably won't be able to stay in the current parish house beyond May 2017 and are discussing tenancy in the Baptist church for office space.

Home of the Good Shepherd trial is over: waiting for transcripts and then all attorneys will have a chance for a post-trial brief. Probably won't have a decision until next year sometime.

JANUARY

Barbara Cassier discussed the rectory search with the vestry. Homes in Saratoga Springs which do not need significant updating are outside of our budget so we're looking at places in Wilton.

The Vestry voted to hire Cusack and Co. to do the 2016 audit.

Henderson agreed to serve another year as Clerk.

The new bylaws have been approved by Chip Strickland pending insertion of a conflict of interest section.

(Note: these minutes are more abridged than usual because much of the topics of vestry discussion were covered in the Annual Meeting and are laid out more fully in that article. It also did not seem necessary to lay out the back and forth around getting the budget to balance, which is how much of both of these meetings was spent).

If you would like to read the complete un-abridged vestry minutes for any month, please ask Genna Henderson. Minutes will soon be available on the website, so keep an eye out there.

"Our pledge to Bethesda is a demonstration of our commitment to the teachings of Christ, our love and commitment to the community in which we live and our church and those it serves."

Mark Claverie & Diane Robinson

"My wife Sharon and I make an annual pledge to Bethesda in order to reciprocate, in a small way, God's unconditional commitment to us. We can never match what he does for us, but we can do our best. "

Gordon & Sharon Boyd

Adopt a Grandparent

Anne Van Acker

I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to the members of our Parish who donated money and time to the successful first year of my Adopt-a-Grandparent program for residents of the Home of the Good Shepherd. Many who sent donations also sent me very kind words of encouragement, which were greatly appreciated. Special thanks go to Pat and Mary Lynne Oreson, Michael Penfold and his son Mike, who helped me deliver the gifts on December 23rd. We were able to gift just over 100 residents between the Saratoga and Wilton locations – which was incredible, given that I put this program together rather late in the season. I am so appreciative that responses came in so quickly. Additionally, my friend Colleen Sanita, a special education teacher at Spa Catholic, had her students create ornaments for the residents to go along with their gifts; it was a beautiful way for these children to participate in a community outreach program, and they were so proud and happy to show them off to me when I picked them up at their school. It’s my hope that next year, since I’ll be able to get the word out earlier, our project will grow so that we can gift the residents at Moreau and Malta as well. Thank you again to everyone for their participation and I look forward to even greater involvement from the Parish and community in the coming years.

“When I walk into our historic church for a service, the Tiffany lights are glowing, the HVAC is humming, Farrell Goehring is creating gorgeous music on our Casavant, candles are lit, and our priest, servers, acolytes, and choir appear in their robes and vestments; this is truly a miracle in my eyes, one that occurs every week for me and for all of us! Although my monthly pledge supports only a small part of the costs of this miracle, I know that it’s a vital gift that makes Bethesda’s very existence possible.”

Jane Agee

I pledge annually to Bethesda out of gratitude and hope: gratitude for a church that has been my home since I was a child and hope that, through increased annual giving, Bethesda will be able to become a force for positive change in our community.

Genna Henderson

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<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/14-136447>

The above link will take you to the AmazonSmile page which supports Bethesda

- school,
- lead teams to share crafts and do projects with the children in 3 orphanages,
- provide birthday cakes and piñatas and do projects with the children who live with their families in the dump of Guatemala City,
- sponsor the education of 2 children in Nicaragua,
- arrange for a young lady who grew up in an orphanage to begin studying for a career in business,
- and arrange sponsorship for 3 needy young people to resume their high school studies.

I have seen many miracles and have had many “wow” moments since we began to move in faith: things that are without a doubt the hand of God, whether it be a reading or sermon with the right message at the right time, a word from a stranger or a friend that points in the right direction, situations that unexpectedly fall into place, encouragement through various means, or the times when that “still, small voice” comes through. One of the things I have learned is that every day is a chance for growth and an opportunity to serve “the least of these”.

You can follow Dream Steps International at:

Website: www.dreamstepsinternational.org

E-mail: dreamstepsinternational@gmail.com

Facebook: Dream Steps International

Twitter: @dreamstepsintl

Instagram: @dreamstepsintl

Matthew 25:40-“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”



“Christine and I pledge to Bethesda because it is a place where we can worship God in a welcoming and traditional manner. Bethesda offers us hope, faith and life through Jesus Christ.”

Christine & Darren Miller