

Bethesda Episcopal Church  
Saratoga Springs, NY

Minutes: Annual Meeting  
January 26, 2016  
Clerk: Geneva Henderson

*Call to order:* The annual meeting of Bethesda Episcopal Church was called to order at 7:13 on January 26, 2016. Dean Vang opened the meeting with prayer. He reminded the attendants of meeting etiquette, that hands should be raised for questions and that questions should be held until the end of each presentation. For the purpose of these minutes, answers to relevant questions have been incorporated into the recorded reports rather than being listed separately.

*Nominations for Vestry Election:* Darren Miller presented the nominees, Catherine Berheide for Junior Warden, and Mark Claverie, Geoffrey Delbridge and Genna Henderson for vestry members. Dean Vang explained that those attending the meeting would have an hour to consider or to write-in other candidates.

*Interim Rector's report – Attendance:* Dean Vang presented attendance numbers for 2015. There was a total Sunday attendance of 8,158 people and a total weekday attendance of 2,917. Bethesda held 103 Sunday and 183 weekday Eucharists, as well as 228 ministrations of communion (in hospital, nursing homes or people's homes). There were 8 baptisms, 8 confirmations, 3 adults received into the church, 4 weddings, and 5 funerals. Last winter's terrible weather really affected Sunday attendance, which fell by about 34 each week. However, attendance has gone back up since All Saint's Day, as have weekly collections.

**Landon Seminary:** Landon Moore has received the bishop's blessing to go to seminary in the fall. There are very few people seeking ordination in the Diocese of Albany and far fewer than that in their early twenties.

**Thanks:** Dean Vang acknowledged the staff members and thanked members of the vestry for all of the time they volunteer.

**Anglican Communion:** Last week a meeting of primates (regional heads of Anglican branches, ours is Michael Curry) voted to displace the Episcopal church from theological or ecumenical relationship decision-making for three years, primarily due to differing stances on same-sex marriage. The American Episcopal church has not been excommunicated (and, in fact, the Anglican Communion does not have that power), we've just been asked to give them time to figure things out. The Anglican Communion's decision doesn't really affect Bethesda at all.

**Conclusion:** Dean Vang concluded his remarks by saying that "Bethesda has always been an open door church. We welcome everyone. Everyone is worthy in the mind and heart of Jesus Christ. That's what we practice and we preach and we will continue to do that."

*Deacon's report:* Deacon Sweeney has been here 16 months now. He has focused primarily on youth ministries, ministering to the elderly and worship. The youth group took a mission trip to Harrisburg PA, completed a 27 week confirmation class and hosted the annual spaghetti dinner (which sponsored two

families from the race track chaplaincy) as well as two blood drives. Deacon Sweeney has been visiting Mary Eddy at Wesley and has met others through her. He said it “has been a great blessing to know them and share God’s love with them”. The Youth Group is looking for other service opportunities.

Senior Warden’s Report: Mark Claverie explained that the Vestry serves as an intermediary between the congregation and administrative stuff, so anyone in the congregation who may have questions or concerns should approach a vestry member, who will then be able to bring these concerns to the table. The landlords of the parish house are preparing to do asbestos remediation in the basement, which will be entirely sealed off. The landlords are also going to take over the kitchen and half of the hall starting in early March. Mr. Claverie expressed his thanks to Tom Remington for snow removal and innumerable other tasks, Mark Anspach for all the plumbing work, Bruce Solenski for taking care of things in the church, and all of the other people who show up to help, as well as long-suffering parish staff.

Treasurer’s Report: Anne Van Acker presented the 2016 budget. She will provide a copy of the budget to anyone who asks. She pointed out that budgets are always fluid and subject to change, but this one is a fairly good outline of what we expect in the coming year.

**2015 Financials** - Pledge and plate was behind budget: \$218,461 actual vs. 219,800 budgeted. Total income was also behind, with actual income of \$336,576 vs. expected \$388,934 (the difference between actual and expected income came from the drop in pledge and plate and that, in 2014, we got a special \$25,000 gift which was not repeated in 2015) Expenses were also down: \$347,530 actual vs. \$373,378 budgeted. This drop in expenses was largely because we did not hire an office administrator until later in the year than we expected to.

**2016 Budget** – The Capital campaign and building project are being kept separate from operating expenses and church funds, so there will be no comingling of funds. This will allow for appropriate tracking of gifts. Pledge and plate and the building fund party make up 70% of our total annual income. Pledging helps the church make a realistic budget for the coming year, so it’s important to pledge. Building upkeep expenses will change as soon as we have the new parish hall and need to keep up two buildings. The Diocese has assessed us at \$56,000, which we feel is unfair because it takes into account the large one-time gift we received in 2014. We’re going to try to get them to lower it to \$44,100 (last year was about \$36,000). We cannot currently afford a new full-time rector, which would add \$50-60,000 more to the expense side of the budget. However, it’s worth considering that, to meet this expense, pledge and plate would only need to increase by about \$250 per person per year (\$4.80 per person per week). The 2015 audit is currently under way and should be completed late February. We’ve implemented a huge number of financial protocols since we started doing annual audits and we’re improving every year. We have formed an endowment committee to oversee endowment funds. Consistent weekly giving is incredibly important to make it possible to pay bills on time. Over the last five years, we’ve gone from an 80,000 annual deficit to hopefully a balanced budget.

Building committee/Capital campaign: Gordon Boyd mentioned that most Building Committee minutes are posted on the parish website. The Building Committee will not be meeting in February because they are turning their attention towards working on the Capital Campaign. We have a building design that has

been approved and have interviewed 4 potential general contractors, though we can't request bids until funding is in place. The Capital campaign kickoff event will be on Feb 28<sup>th</sup> in the afternoon. Sarah Manny is coordinating the askers, Mary Withington is the co-chair, and Carolyn Hatch is the chaplain.

Vestry Election: An hour having elapsed and being that there had been no new nominations, Ann Bullock moved to accept the proposed ballot, John Vanderveer seconded the motion, and all candidates were approved unanimously.

Christian Education: Corinna Stampalia reported that enrollement has dropped significantly. We now have about 10 kids in pre K-5<sup>th</sup> Grade. The Sunday School put on a play about Mary for All Saints Day and the children enjoyed bringing up parts of the crèche during advent. Ms. Stampalia thanked Diane Robinson for putting on a great pageant and requested that parishioners encourage families to attend Bethesda. We are hoping that the NPH will encourage more school-age children to attend. Dean Vang pointed out that about 11 children have been attending the 8:00 service, but most of them are doing extracurricular activities on Sundays during the late morning or early afternoon.

Home of the Good Shepherd: Mary Withington reported that the Homes of the Good Shepherd are solvent. Because of the litigation in Malta, Wilton and Moreau, the Homes need to find a balance in keeping the doors open without being too profitable. We need to prove that we're charitable in our endeavors. Construction is coming along well for the new building in the Saratoga facility (the new building will hold current and new residents, while the old building will be transformed into a memory care facility).

Prayer Shawl: Sherryl Moore reported (through Dean Vang) that they continue to meet on 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month to make shawls for sick and shut-ins and baby shawls for baptisms.

Service League: Kathleen Anspach reported that the Service League is currently working on cleaning out kitchen, sorting what's to be kept and what's to be gotten rid of. It's a messy job, but they're making good progress and will be done soon.

Ensley Property: Ann (Casey) Bullock reported that we're ready to go and the application to sell church property is in front of the judge, but he was on vacation for all of January. This is the same judge who approved the sale of the parish house and the rectory, so it'll probably be fine when he's in on Monday (it's on the top of the pile according to his assistant). We should have his decision by the end of next week and can maybe close by the middle of February.

Closing: In closing, Dean Vang reminded the congregation: "Please be stalwart in our approach to the future. A great deal is required of each and every one of us to make the future of Bethesda not just secure but to be at a point where it can thrive." He said that he has received comments from other clergy who read our website and newsletter. "Word has gotten out". He adjourned the meeting with a blessing.