

The VOICE



Spring 2018

NEW PARISH HOUSE UPDATE *by Darren Miller, Senior Warden*

In early April, Bethesda Episcopal Church formally asked Shelters of Saratoga, Saratoga County, and the City of Saratoga Springs to explore the feasibility of meeting the need for a permanent location for Code Blue and other needed services within Bethesda's proposed New Parish House and Community Center. There had been informal conversations with representatives of Shelters of Saratoga (SOS) and local officials going back to the fall of 2017. With growing support within the community to further discuss the concept of Bethesda partnering with SOS on a new Code Blue space, the Vestry decided to publicly announce a proposal to foster the dialog with SOS, local officials, and the community.

Code Blue was started in December 2013, as a collaborative effort between the City of Saratoga Springs, faith-based groups, individuals and non-profit partners committed to assisting individuals who are homeless. It was founded in response to the tragic death of Nancy Pitts, a homeless woman who died of exposure in Saratoga Springs, and was known to us as she attended services at Bethesda. Code Blue provides shelter to the homeless on nights when temperatures are life threateningly cold.

The Bible is replete with passages directing us to serve the poor. "Whoever is kind to the needy honors God" (Proverbs 14:31) is but one of hundreds of such verses. We believe our proposal and our location can address the need for a permanent home for Code Blue in a way that can unite the community and serve God. As stated in James 2:15-17, "Suppose a brother or

a sister is without clothes and daily food, and if one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." Whether Code Blue or another worthy service agency joins us in our New Parish House and Community Center, we must have faith and take action to fulfill God's will for us on Earth.

To better understand, why Bethesda is pursuing a community service such as Code Blue for the New Parish House, briefly reviewing how we arrived at this point will be helpful.

In 2012, the Vestry examined the church's finances through what is now an annual audit. The auditor reported that Bethesda had been losing about \$80,000 per year for likely over a decade. A change was necessary. The Vestry embarked upon an ambitious path to lead Bethesda toward its third century and for years beyond. Numerous steps were taken to improve the church's finances, enact budgets, and implement fiscal protocols. As a result, Bethesda's finances have stabilized. Moreover, with the support of the congregation established through parish discernment meetings in 2013 and followed by a parish survey, the Vestry decided to sell three properties and made plans to erect a building on the lot adjacent to the church.

The old parish house and rectory required expensive maintenance and sorely needed costly renovations. The church also had received the Ensley

bequest of a tract of land near Saratoga Lake. These three properties were sold in 2014-15, and the proceeds set aside to fund renovations to the church building, the purchase of a new Rectory, and the construction of a new parish house.

This building is planned to be nearly 20,000 square feet, including a full catering kitchen, dining hall, parish offices, church-school classrooms and rentable space for organizations compatible with Bethesda's mission. The purpose of the building is twofold: to meet the needs of the parish and to serve the community. Through outreach to the community, the plan is to increase Bethesda's congregation. Rental income is necessary to make the project financially viable. However, in keeping with Bethesda's Christian mission, the space for a mission related rental would be offered below market rate, thereby benefiting the tenant organization and helping the community. In this way Bethesda's new building can serve people seven days a week, not just on Sundays.

The size of the building was determined by two factors. First, the city's zoning code requires at least three stories at our location. Second, the additional space would provide rentable areas, generating revenue to offset operating and debt service costs. A smaller building would not have rentable space, yet would still require a mortgage, but without the income to support it. The additional floors are also less expensive to build because

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the major costs associated with excavation, foundation, roofing and so forth must be met whether we build one story or four.

In 2016, Bethesda undertook its first capital campaign in over 50 years. The first phase of the campaign sought to raise approximately \$430,000, an amount established by a fundraising consultant from the Episcopal Church Foundation. Pledges and donations have far exceeded that goal. Nonetheless, \$1.5 to \$2 million more is needed to construct the new building. The challenge has been identifying and partnering with a service organization whose mission meets a priority need of the community, and for which major financial support would be forthcoming from donors who are not necessarily members of Bethesda's congregation. Early in our development work, several childcare organizations expressed interest in Bethesda's new building, but so far no agreements have been reached.

Our faith remained: as one door seemingly closed, another appeared to open. In the late summer and fall of 2017, the media reported on the on-going controversy over SOS's proposal to locate Code Blue in a new building on Walworth Street. Neighbors had joined forces against locating it near their homes and Division Street Elementary School. The Vestry saw division in our community, while an important need to care for the homeless on frigid nights remained. In the Judeo-Christian spirit, we have sought to unite the Saratoga Springs community on behalf of those most in need. Therefore, we initiated informal, preliminary discussions with SOS to explore the prospect of Bethesda's new building to provide a permanent location for the Code Blue program. Three meetings were then held with representatives of SOS and local officials.

Bethesda's proposal includes not only sufficient space for Code Blue, but also for a satellite office of the Saratoga County Department of Social Services (DSS). The County does not have a DSS office in Saratoga Springs, having left space on Woodlawn Avenue several years ago. The need for social services in Saratoga Springs has grown despite the booming Saratoga economy. Officials have expressed support for relocating DSS to downtown Saratoga Springs.

SOS's proposed building for Code Blue on Walworth Street received a favorable vote from the City's Zoning Board of Appeals

(ZBA), but neighbors brought a lawsuit in State Supreme Court to overturn the ZBA. SOS's proposal also must be approved by the Planning Board, which is holding another meeting late in April. Bethesda's plans have received all necessary regulatory approvals from the City and would be allowed under the Federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act. To allow temporary, occasional overnight accommodations, Bethesda may require an amendment to the Special Use Permit approved by the Planning Board in 2015.

On March 29, 2018, we sent a letter to the Shelters of Saratoga Board requesting an opportunity to discuss whether Bethesda's location and new facility would meet the Code Blue and other needs. The letter was also sent to Mayor Meg Kelly, members of the City Council, Saratoga County supervisors, as well as community leaders. The letter highlighted several points, including the following:

A Welcoming, Dignified Environment

Our parish is a welcoming, inclusive and caring community. We are confident that members of the parish would become volunteers and financial supporters of the program. In addition to SOS's own space, their program would have scheduled access to the catering kitchen and dining hall. The new building's design offers dignity and grace for all who enter, as it complements the church's neo-Gothic style and historic aspect.

Permanency

Bethesda has been at our present location since 1842, and our planning horizon extends indefinitely. Therefore, we can offer a "permanent" home for Code Blue.

A Destination Serving the Community

Bethesda's complex would provide individuals in need with a place off the street, yet close to Broadway. Our community has been challenged in recent years to meet the legitimate desires of merchants, visitors and property owners, balanced with the rights of individuals to be in public right of way. Bethesda is not near an elementary school or single-family residences.

Safety and Security

Bethesda's facility is designed to afford all concerned an operating environment that

emphasizes safety and security. Participants in programs at our facility will be able to arrive at our building and courtyard without queueing on the sidewalk and enter a facility that will have both human and technical means of providing security and privacy. These elements will be expressly provided in any lease or operating agreement.

Space Available

More space is available at Bethesda than SOS has proposed on Walworth Street for Code Blue. In addition, the space would be available year-round for supportive programs and services, not just during extreme cold weather.

Added Programs

In addition to the possibility that Saratoga County might make Bethesda the location for a DSS satellite office, the church has a 75-year relationship with Alcoholics Anonymous. AA's peer-focused approach would be of value to many of the individuals served by SOS and Code Blue. There is also interest in establishing a job readiness program at Bethesda.

For these reasons, among others, we believe Bethesda's New Parish House and Community Center can help Shelters of Saratoga realize a permanent home for Code Blue. The path has been long and filled with unexpected turns. More twists will likely be forthcoming before the building is finished. Our faith in Jesus Christ will see us through. Regardless of which organizations will join us in our New Parish House and Community Center, it will help Bethesda serve its congregation and the greater Saratoga Springs community for decades to come, as it was intended.

In conclusion, scripture from Matthew (25:34-36) is instructive: "Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.'"

ABOUT THE ENCLOSED PARISH SURVEY

By Kate Berheide, Junior Warden

Bethesda Episcopal Church is beginning the process of searching for a new rector. To best serve the needs our church community, the vestry has created this survey to gather input about the parish and its parishioners to inform the search.

The survey is available to you online or as a hard copy enclosed with this newsletter. The search committee prefers that as many parishioners as possible answer the survey online at the following link https://skidmore.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5mySvqqG6U6PLnf because online answers are automatically input into the database. If you don't want to type that long complicated web address in your browser, you can contact Barbara Latzko, Bethesda's administrative assistant, and ask to be sent the survey link via email. You can email her at barbara@bethesdachurch.org or call the church office (518) 584-5980

For those who prefer not to use a computer, we have enclosed a printed copy of the survey. All you need to do is answer the questions by marking the circle or square that reflects your response. Once you have completed the survey, fold it in half, tape it, bring it to church and give it to the ushers. Or you may fold it in half, tape it on all sides, put a stamp on it, and mail it to the church office. We have printed the address on the back page for your convenience.

For your answers to have the greatest effect on writing the job description and parish profile, *please submit your online or paper survey by May 15*. If you cannot complete it by that time, please submit it whenever you can.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions at cberheid@skidmore.edu

Specific Instructions for the Online Survey

- Click the link or enter the URL into your browser
- Select the answers by clicking the circle or square associated with your answer choice
- Scroll down to find the subsequent question
- Continue with survey until all questions are completed
- You may go back and change answers as you please
- Click the red arrow at the end of the survey to submit

FROM THE INTERIM RECTOR'S STUDY INTRODUCING NEW VESTRY MEMBERS

Dear People and Friends of Bethesda:

During Easter Week a parishioner asked me two questions which merit our attention as we celebrate the Great Fifty Days. "Why does the first reading at the Eucharist now come from The Acts of the Apostles?" And, "Is this something new to our liturgy, an experiment perhaps?" The use of assigned lections from the Fifth Book of the New Testament finds its origin with Saint August of Hippo [354-430], who, in turn, followed an earlier pattern created by Saint Cyril of Jerusalem [315-386]. Their intention was deliberate: to focus the evolution of the Christian Church on the Resurrection of Jesus. The Book of Acts, an extension of Saint Luke's Gospel, reveals the apostolic energy and determination with which faith communities grew. Continuing in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers were their devotion. [Acts 2:42] There was no gazing into a rear-view mirror. Most essentially, there was no fear. The battle had been won. Under ridicule, threat and persecution, The Church looked ahead, often encountering individuals and circumstances both daunting and beyond established parameters.

Welcome this sacred time when the Acts of the Apostles is shared at Sunday and Weekday Masses. See if there is a pattern or quality that speaks not only to a situation in your own life but also to that of Bethesda. And, as Luke would encourage, Act on it.

Most faithfully yours,
The Very Rev'd Marshall J. Vang
Interim Rector

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The Altar Guild is in need of new members. If you can donate an hour or two a month to prepare the church for services, please call Pam Houde at (518) 587-0884. Your time is greatly appreciated by all.

PARISH FINANCES

Weekly averages:

Jan. plate and pledge	\$3,623
Feb. plate and pledge	\$3,853
Mar. plate and pledge	\$5,574
Three month average	\$4,350
To meet budget in 2018	\$4,500

The vestry is the body that represents you in church business. In January the following four members were elected.

John S. Huppuch, Jr. is a native Saratogian whose family has resided here for over 100 years and has been a member of Bethesda for over 65 years. After graduating from the University of Vermont he went to Los Angeles to pursue a career in the martial art/healing art of HwaRangDo. In

2000 John returned to Saratoga to care for his ailing mother. He is now semi-retired but works to benefit various non-profit organizations in the area, and is usually accompanied by his loyal canine, Bailey.

As a Lifelong Episcopalian, **Marcia MacDonald** joined Bethesda after she and Jerry were married there in 1988. Marcia has been a 25 year member of the Flower and Fruit Mission which supports Womens' Health at Saratoga Hospital, and also volunteers for Hospice, Skidmore, and the Senior Center. She is the proud mother of three and grandmother of seven.

Jami Piraino grew up in rural Rensselaer County. In 1997, she and her husband, Anthony, settled down to raise their two boys (Anthony, now 23, and Christian, 22) in Quaker Springs. She has worked in various capacities within the mortgage industry; since 2010, for SEFCU Mortgage Services as a Licensed Mortgage Loan Originator and a sales and marketing assistant. She has a deep love for the Word of God and its impact on people's lives, and is working towards completion of a certificate program in Theology/ Biblical Studies with Wilmington School of the Bible.

Ann (Casey) Bullock grew up in Schenectady. She was graduated from Wellesley College with a degree in German, and from Albany Law School, and now practices law with her father in the law firm of Casey and Casey in Clifton Park. Although raised in the Reformed Church, Ann and her husband, Robert (Bob) Bullock, came to Bethesda largely because of the music program. Their daughters, Kate and Emma, both sang with the Treble Choir. Ann sings in the choir and Bob serves on the altar as verger.

BETHESDA EPISCOPAL CHURCH
43 Washington Street
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

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WEEKLY PARISH SCHEDULE

Regular services

Sunday

7:30 a.m. Morning Prayer
8 a.m. Holy Eucharist
10 a.m. Sung Eucharist
11 a.m. Church School

Tuesday

6:30 p.m. Holy Eucharist

Wednesday

12:10 p.m. Holy Eucharist with healing
2 p.m. (1st and 3rd weeks)
Holy Eucharist: Home of The Good Shepherd Wilton.

PARISH WINTER CALENDAR

Events are in the church nave unless otherwise noted.

Saturday, April 28, 6 pm

Parish potluck supper
Location: First Baptist Church
See weekly bulletin for details

Thursday, May 10

Ascension Day
9:30 am Holy Eucharist (Home of the Good Shepherd, Saratoga Springs)
7:00 pm Holy Eucharist (High Altar)

Sunday, May 20

The Day of Pentecost, Whitsunday
8:00 am & 10:00 am Holy Eucharist
(Solemn)

Sunday, May 27

Trinity Sunday
8:00 am and 10:00 am Holy Eucharist
(Solemn)

Sunday, June 3

The Solemnity of Corpus Christi
8:00 am & 10:00 am Holy Eucharist
(Solemn)

3:00 pm Choral Evensong

Friday, June 22, 6 pm

Parish potluck supper
Location: First Baptist Church
See weekly bulletin for details