



Office for
Transition
Ministry

Ministry Portfolio

Full Portfolio (last updated Jul 24, 2018)

Bethesda Episcopal Church, Saratoga Springs, Albany

43 Washington Street, Saratoga Springs, NY, United States

Contact:

Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge | Receiving Names until 11/15/18.

estrickland@albanydiocese.org

Weekly Average Sunday Attendance (ASA)	Number of Weekend Worship Services	Number of Weekday Worship Services	Number of Other per Month Worship Services
161	3	2	6
Current Annual Compensation	Cash Stipend	Housing / Rectory Detail	Utilities
\$79991	\$33846	\$29100	\$4726
SECA reimbursement	Compensation Available for New Position	Housing Available for	Pension Plan
	\$88000	5	We're in compliance with CPF requirements.
Healthcare Options	Dental	Housing Equity Allowance in budget	Annual Equity Amount
Full family	Yes	No	
Vacation Weeks	Vacation Weeks Details	Continuing Education Weeks	Continuing Education Weeks Details
4		2 (standard)	
Continuing Education Funding in budget	Sabbatical Provision	Travel/Auto Account	Other Professional Account
up to/including \$500/year	Yes	Yes	No

SECA currently not paid (retired priest) but will for new rector. Utilities includes homeowners fee.

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Describe a moment in your worshipping community's recent ministry which you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.

After 43 years, the age-mandated retirement of our previous rector left the laity ill-prepared to assume responsibility for running the parish. The normal loss of members in such a situation was exacerbated by problems with membership records. Members worked many hours to resolve errors in the records. Equally threatening were annual deficits of as much as \$80,000. We have successfully tackled problems, including erasing our annual fiscal deficits, addressing our fire code violations, restoring our Tiffany stained glass windows as well as relocating our coffee hour and receptions to the narthex and suppers to a neighboring church after the sale of our old parish house. We have accepted the changes the interim rector has brought, including Lay Eucharistic Ministers and Visitors as well as the 1982 Hymnal. These and similar accomplishments all required the successful development of lay leadership. We have found fulfillment in continuing to care for one another through this moment of transition even though not everyone has been happy with the changes.

How are you preparing yourselves for the Church of the future?

To provide a space for educational and social activities, Bethesda is planning to build a new Parish House and Community Center. The new building will become a focal point in downtown Saratoga Springs that will attract new members with young families and provide space that can be used to meet the documented needs of the disadvantaged in our community. We plan to rent, at lower than the market rate, over half the building to agencies and organizations that serve community members, such as the disadvantaged and seasonal workers. We are also open to expanding our service times or changing the time of church school to accommodate the schedules of families as well as exploring services for non-English speakers.

Please provide words describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leaders of your worshipping community.

effective preaching, pastoral care, empowering lay leadership, Attracting Members

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Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship services provided by your community.

Bethesda's liturgical orientation is firmly Anglo-Catholic. The previous rector delayed introducing the 1979 Book of Common Prayer until 1988 and both Sunday Eucharists remain Rite I with the priest facing an altar not separated from the East wall. The services are celebrated with a marked formality and dignity. The early service is benefited by the presence of the parish organist but, with few exceptions, no hymns are sung. At the later service, the choir sings components of the mass, as well as anthems, while the congregation sings three or more hymns. Sung Solemn High Eucharists with incense occur on appropriate days in the church calendar. The parish has an endowed fund dedicated to supporting the music program, paying the professional members of the choir, and a second special offering that supports the use of strings and brass on Christmas and Easter as well as the purchase of new music. The Wednesday noon service is a healing mass. The early Tuesday evening mass and those at the Homes of the Good Shepherd are streamlined services. The recent survey revealed that the parish is open to using Rite II at some services and to celebrating the Eucharist facing the congregation.

How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?

We incorporate parishioners in worship services as Lay Eucharistic Ministers, acolytes, lectors, ushers, choir members, and altar guild members. We also have Lay Eucharistic Visitors, coffee hour hosts, bell ringers, and church school teachers. Our members are active at the Homes of the Good Shepherd, some serving on the board of directors and others offering a prayer shawl ministry. We have members who decorate the church, others who do maintenance and repair, and still others who organize and cook for church suppers and receptions after special events, such as Evensong, and some who seem to do all of the above. To involve more members in ministry, we intend to determine professions, hobbies and interests of members and their willingness to use them for the benefit of the parish's ministries. Among the methods being considered are referral of family and friends to both services and special events; actively seeking young families; advertising special events through social and traditional media; initiating a pen-pal program between local children and residents of the Homes of the Good Shepherd; and soliciting community involvement in our new Parish House and Community Center.

As a worshipping community, how do you care for your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being?

Bethesda, located in a historic downtown church building, has met the parish's spiritual and emotional needs by dynamic sermons, outstanding organ and choral music, and the great traditional services of the Episcopal Church and the Book of Common Prayer. We provide youth education and adult religious programs. We have made our church handicap accessible, installed a hearing loop for the hearing impaired, and provide large print service sheets. We have embarked on an ambitious plan to build a new Parish House and Community Center to serve our current and future needs. Having sold our previous one, we currently have no meeting or office space of our own. We have made a commitment that our new Parish House and Community Center will host community organizations and events, making our spiritual mission our foremost priority. An active Lay Eucharistic Visitor program also brings spiritual nourishment to those who cannot come to church. In spite of the challenges posed by lack of space, the parish gathers for quarterly potluck suppers in a neighboring church to foster community cohesion

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How do you engage in pastoral care for those beyond your worshipping community?

The rector offers one weekday service at three of the Homes of the Good Shepherd (rectors at two other Episcopal parishes celebrate the Eucharist at the other two). These services are open to all residents. We provide pastoral care to residents regardless of their church affiliation. Bethesda holds a Blessing of the Animals to which it welcomes the community. We advertise our quarterly choral Evensongs to invite the wider community to worship at Bethesda. We host community events in the church, most often concerts in the church building, ranging from the high school and college musical groups to the Orchestra of St. Luke's. Bethesda is presently meeting with local organizations that provide services to the community to identify the best tenants for the Parish House and Community Center building project. Currently, we are focusing on whether our new building can help address unmet low-cost housing needs in Saratoga Springs.

Describe your worshipping community's involvement in either the wider Church or geographical region.

Bethesda has had three long-standing missions in the community. Since the 1860s, Bethesda has supported the Homes of the Good Shepherd, which provide assisted living for the elderly at lower rates. Over the last two decades, this ministry has expanded from its historic location that served about 25 women to five facilities at four locations serving well over 250 women and men in need of assisted living and memory care. The expansion of our ministry to neighboring towns has enabled senior citizens to live in locations near family. Bethesda also has a more than 75-year relationship with Alcoholics Anonymous. Finally, the congregation donates clothing and personal hygiene items to the Franklin Community Center, a human-service agency which provides basic needs and services to less fortunate individuals and families in Saratoga Springs. Bethesda is currently working towards expanding our community service through building a new Parish House and Community Center, to serve our congregation and to meet community needs.

Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past five years. Who can be contacted about this?

Almost two years ago when our deacon relocated due to his job, the interim rector needed help with pastoral visits to the homebound. Dean Vang prepared volunteers who felt called to be a part of this ministry bringing Holy Communion to nursing home residents. Parishioner David Wilder returned from a visit to the Home of the Good Shepherd greatly moved by his experience as a Lay Eucharistic Visitor and now leads this ministry. There are currently seven Lay Eucharistic Visitors who make weekly visits to residents at local nursing homes, administering 12 to 16 communions each month. This ministry allows these parishioners and other Episcopalians to remain connected to Bethesda even though they can no longer attend church.

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What is your practice of stewardship and how does it shape the life of your worshipping community?

God has summoned us to be the stewards of Bethesda Episcopal Church in Saratoga Springs, contributing our time and our money to help it to flourish. Trusting in God's generosity, we sold our other properties and embarked on a plan to build a new Parish House and Community Center. Our capital campaign exceeded its goal for parishioners and now seek major donors. We have cut expenditures to bring them into line with our income from pledge and plate. As part of the 2017 stewardship program, the vestry members conducted a letter writing campaign to promote increased giving as well as increased pledging with each of us writing letters to members of the parish setting forth our personal reasons for supporting Bethesda. We have been successful in raising money through special collections including, but not limited to, a fund for our seminarian and altar flowers. We hold an annual fundraiser at the start of the summer thoroughbred racing season to raise money for special projects in the church building. Our annual goal is to raise \$10,000. We have used the funds raised from recent building fund parties to install an assisted hearing loop and to restore and protect stained glass windows.

What is your worshipping community's experience of conflict? And how have you addressed it?

Upon the retirement and death a few months later of the former rector, the precarious financial status of the parish became clear. Prior lack of communication to the parish resulted in factions objecting to changes in administrative operation, staffing and property sales—all necessary to correct the financial problems. The seemingly sudden and inexplicable changes were upsetting to some. Since that time, the priest-in-charge and recent vestries have tried to operate transparently and to communicate with the parish constantly on everything from budgets to building needs to the search process. Responsible budgeting, a professional accountant, and annual audits have moved the parish toward a more fiscally sustainable future. The former lack of operational transparency has been replaced with a more open and responsive leadership structure and the divisions have largely, but not entirely, been healed

What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? And what did you learn?

Under the previous rector, Bethesda was slow to adopt liturgical changes, such as the 1979 Book of Common Prayer and the 1982 Hymnal, but had relatively little difficulty in accepting other changes, exemplified by our support for opening the sacrament of marriage to same gender couples. The parish is finding it difficult to bridge the divide between the Diocese of Albany and the National Church on this issue. The parish as a whole does not support the canons of the Albany Diocese on marriage nor on the ordination of LGBT persons and their election, appointment, and licensing. Individual parishioners as well as the vestry have met with the Bishop to openly and honestly express our concerns about the Diocesan position on these matters affecting the relationship of LGBT persons to the church and to actively listen to his response. Only 15 percent of the parishioners who responded to the recent parish survey preferred a rector who agreed with the Diocesan canons restricting marriage. As a result, the vestry is looking for a new rector who can help the parish navigate our differences with the Diocese in a constructive way, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit.



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Prior Incumbents

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
Rev. Marshall J. Vang	Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge	2012-01	

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
Rev. Thomas T. Parke	Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge	1968-01	2012-01

Name	Position Title	Date Begun	Date Ended
Benjamin W. Holmes	Rector / Vicar / Priest-in-Charge	1953-01	1967-01

Church School	Number of Teachers/Leaders for Children School	Number of Students for Children School
	1	12

Number of Teachers/Leaders for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Students for Teen/Young Adults School	Number of Teachers/Leaders for Adults School	Number of Students for Adults School
		1	10

Day School	Number of Students for Day School	Number of Teachers for Day School	Number of Total Staff for Day School

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Contact:
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Media Links:

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https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeSzyh4_De7gXZlcsax38Aw
> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YxB6La8wBRc>

Online References:

> <https://www.facebook.com/bethesdaepiscopalchurch/>
> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-iwwMNMWio>

Languages Significantly Represented:

Provide Worship or Classes in:

Saratoga Springs has a growing Spanish-speaking population. As part of our new Parish House and Community Center project, we have been in ongoing conversations with organizations that work with seasonal backstretch workers to ascertain how we can help minister to their needs.

References

Bishop:	518-692-3350
Rt. Rev. William Love	
Diocesan Transition Minister	518-692-3350 x504 estrickland@albanydiocese.org
Elizabeth Strickland	
Current Warden/Board Chair	518-538-0845 cajm66@yahoo.com
Darren Miller	
Previous Warden/Board Chair	518-588-6086 mark.claverie@gmail.com
Mark Claverie	
Search Chair	518-265-8294 cberheid@yahoo.com
Catherine White Berheide	
Parish/Institution	518-584-0253 mwithington@lasnny.org
Mary Withington	
Local Community Leader	518-587-2198 smveitch@yahoo.com
Matthew Veitch	