

Good morning. First off, on behalf of the Bethesda, congratulations to Landon Moore on graduating from seminary. Our prayers are with you as you begin your ministry; may you be a vessel of Jesus Christ. Next, I have five topics to update you on.

1. Church Restoration Projects:

The reredos is restored, and it looks magnificent. Our thanks to Joan and Stephen Hyman for their generous contributions.

The West Doors (Main Doors) project continues. The initial estimate to restore the wood doors, reverse the hinge swing outward, and install new glass doors was approximately \$75,000. The Vestry and the Property Management Committee believe that it too expensive. Therefore, exploration of alternatives is underway. All donations towards this project remain set aside in a capital-project account.

As may recall, we've made repairs to our leaky old roof. An application for a State grant is being prepared to replace the old asphalt tile roof with a historically accurate, new slate roof. The grant deadline is July 27, and we expect to receive

an estimate for the cost of the new roof in the coming weeks. We are seeking letters of support from community organizations outside the parish. We have several requests out, but any additional support letters from groups in which members of the congregation are active would be helpful.

Save the date of Monday, **July 29**, for Bethesda's annual summer party; the proceeds go to support church restorations projects.

2. Bishop William Love:

As you know, the National Episcopal Church Resolution B012 went into effect in December 2018. Bishop Love has refused to allow same gender marriage ceremonies in the Albany Diocese. In January, Presiding Bishop Michael Curry and the House of Bishops issued a restriction on Bishop Love, forbidding him from participating in the disciplinary process in any matter regarding any member of the clergy that involves the issue of same-sex marriage, and forbidding him from penalizing in any way any member of the clergy or laity or worshipping congregation for their participation in the arrangements for or participation in a same-sex marriage. Formal discipline against Bishop Love has also been

instituted, which he has challenged. Presently, there is no further information to provide you.

3. The Rector Search:

The Vestry had received four applications from priests interesting in becoming Bethesda's next permanent Rector. One has accepted an offer from another parish. The Vestry has interviewed by telephone the remaining three applicants. From the initial interviews, the Vestry eliminated one from consideration due to lack of relevant experience. The two other applicants were interviewed in person by a small team from the Vestry. After a meeting last week, the Vestry agreed to proceed with the next steps in the process: The entire Vestry will have an opportunity to meet with the priests, hear a sermon, and generally get to know the priests better. The applicants will also meet with Bishop Love and undergo an Oxford background check, as part of this standard process. We hope to accomplish this over the next two months, depending upon schedules.

4. New Parish House and Mercy House of Saratoga:

Great news, Mercy House recently received its 501(c)(3) approval from the IRS. We appreciate the help of accountant John Criscone and attorney Jim Cox in helping Mercy House obtain this important tax exemption status.

As for the New Parish House and Community Center building, final design work under way with architects and housing partners to prepare bid documents. Meetings with Wellspring, Veterans and Community Housing Coalition, Transitional Services Association, and BEST have been held to review concept drawings and make refinements.

SOS is no longer considering our space for the Code Blue program. Instead, Gordon Boyd and I have had discussions with Saratoga County Department of Social Services to accommodate some of their clients during the off-season from BEST's occupancy on the fourth floor of our New Parish House. These are clients that would otherwise be housed in remote motels, far from jobs, health care, bus transportation and other needs. Our location will better meet their needs.

All agreements with our current and prospective housing partners clearly stipulate that parish activities take priority in uses of the spaces and rooms on the first floor. When there is no parish activity scheduled, our partners may reserve rooms for meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous or other purposes connected with their missions. Sharing our space in this way will help Bethesda connect with our mission and extend hospitality.

We have received an extremely generous seven-figure pledge from an anonymous donor that may allow us to anticipate groundbreaking on the New Parish House as soon as the funds become available. The donor's pledge will be fulfilled once the donor completes a private financial transaction that is pending. This pledge is a testimony to the importance of Bethesda's mission with Mercy House and our partners to provide a much-needed housing resource in the center of the Saratoga community. Without doubt, God's hand is on this project. We will still seek funds from community sources as well, but this new pledge puts us very much in sight of the finish line.

More information is being posted on Bethesda's website about the New Parish House project. Additionally, Mercy House will soon have its own website, linked

to Bethesda's website. Please contact me or Gordon Boyd should you have any questions or concerns about the plans and operations of the New Parish House.

5. Bethesda's Mission Committee Work:

We look to continue charitable works as a means of practicing our Christian faith. One opportunity is on **July 18**, when BEST celebrates its 30th anniversary with a breakfast at the Saratoga Racetrack from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. BEST is not only one of our partner organizations in the New Parish House project, but BEST provides essential health, recovery, housing and other services to 2,000 backstretch workers year-round. Save the date and spread the word.

November is National Homeless Awareness Month. Every year, hundreds of thousands of American families become homeless, including more than 1.6 million children. Through our New Parish House project and Mission Committee we seek to help those who are homeless in the Saratoga community. Bethesda will also have more announcements for mission-related activities for National Homeless Awareness Month, including hosting a community event in our church.

In the meantime, please continue to donate toiletries and other personal items in the basket near the entrance doors. Your generous donations are delivered to

the Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council, which supplies these items to those in need in our county.

In conclusion, Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." God has prepared good works for each of us to do, and He is leading us to these works. May we in Bethesda continue to follow Him.

Thank you for your time today and continued support of our Bethesda Church.