

Good morning. There are five topics I will update you on this morning. The New Parish House project, however, is not one of them. It will be the sole subject of another update on October 20th. There will also be a question and answer session combined with a pot-luck supper on November 1st at 6:00 p.m. I will say this, we continue to work hard towards making the New Parish House and Community Center a reality in the near the future. Your support and patience are greatly appreciated.

1. Church Restoration Projects:

Mark Griffin, Tom Remington, and other volunteers have been hard at work tidying up the church. For example, the improvements to the back corner where we temporarily hold church school are visible. They've also cleaned up and organized the vesting space in the basement to the delight of all who use that area. Our thanks to them for their good work.

Additionally, a parish workday is scheduled for the morning of October 19. Kudos to Steve Rucker for leading the charge on this workday clean-up project. Your help on October 19th is most welcome.

The West Doors (Main Doors) project is about to launch. The goal is to complete the project in time for Christmas. The exterior wood doors will be refinished and re-hung, swinging outwards with new hinges. The American and Episcopal Church flags will be hung and lighted above the exterior main doors.

On the inside, the center pair of the three double doors will be replaced with plate glass doors. The historic wooden doors will be incorporated in our new building. The new glass doors, along with the remaining two interior wood doors, will be lockable to provide security when necessary.

The results of this door project will enable us to open the outer doors during church services, special events, and business hours, effectively welcoming the community to our beautiful, historic church.

We also have another restoration project underway. This summer's garden party receipts were designated for cleaning and restoring certain brass items which adorn our church. Over \$6,500 was generously donated towards this project. The four brass candlesticks at the High Altar will undergo repair and re-conditioning. The censor will be cleaned and re-plated. The Eagle Lectern, a gift of the Trask family about a century ago, and the lantern will also under cleaning,

repair, and restoration. This project is estimated to cost approximately \$5,000, leaving over \$1,000 for future brass restoration work.

Lastly, in July we submitted a grant application for state funds to assist with cost of replacing the asphalt roof on the church with a new, historically accurate roof.

2. Bishop William Love:

Albany's Bishop, William Love, is the only bishop to defy a mandate from the 2018 General Convention to allow Episcopal same-sex marriages to take place in all dioceses. He now faces formal disciplinary charges that could result in penalties up to and including deposition from ministry.

The National Episcopal Church announced on September 18 that Bishop Love has been referred to a Hearing Panel that will conduct the equivalent of an ecclesiastic trial, to determine whether Bishop Love has failed to "abide by the promises and vows made when ordained" or is guilty of "conduct unbecoming a member of the clergy."

In a letter posted on the diocesan website, Bishop Love wrote, in part: "I greatly appreciate the Reference Panel's decision to expedite the process by referring

this matter directly to the Hearing Panel, where I will have the opportunity to address the concerns raised by the issuance of the November 10, 2018 Pastoral Letter and Directive, which upholds the Church's traditional understanding and teaching on marriage." While we will keep you updated on any further developments, this topic leads me to our next subject.

3. The Rector Search:

The Vestry suspects that priests may be reluctant to join the Albany Diocese while its bishop conflicts with the National Church. Just five priests submitted applications last year to become the next rector of Bethesda Episcopal Church. We are not unique in this experience. There is a lack of interest in rector positions throughout the Albany Diocese.

As for the five applicants, none remain. Shortly after receiving their applications, two priests informed us that they had accepted calls to become the rector of other parishes. One of the priests was too inexperienced. The two remaining applicants were interviewed by the Vestry, and a contingent from the Vestry separately met with each one last spring. This summer one withdrew his application. Then last week as the Vestry was trying to move forward to the next

phase in the search process, the other remaining applicant withdrew. Both priests decided to remain in their current positions for personal reasons.

Therefore, Vestry will meet to discuss and decide the next course of action, which may include one of three options: (a) suspend the search process until the disciplinary charges against Bishop Love are resolved, (b) commence another complete marketing of the Rector opening, or (c) post the opening but not conduct a full marketing campaign. The reality we face, unfortunately, is that because of the current controversy involving Bishop Love, the Albany Diocese is not attracting the number of qualified candidates that would otherwise apply to become Bethesda's next Rector. We must continue to pray for God's guidance.

4. Bethesda's Operating Finances:

Some good news, Bethesda's financial operating picture as of September 30, 2019 is positive. Last year, from January through September, Bethesda's gross operating income was approximately \$176,000. This year it is just over \$244,000, an increase of 27 percent.

Our expenses last year through September were slightly over \$215,000. This year our expenses have decreased to about \$209,000. Whereas last year we

were operating at a sizable deficit through September, this year we are in the black by approximately \$35,000. Nearly all of the additional \$35,000 in income in 2019 is the result of a generous bequest from George Proctor. The funds from Mr. Proctor's bequest have been set aside in a separate account and are not being used for operating expenses of the church.

It must be noted that absent Mr. Proctor's gift, Bethesda would still have a balanced budget through September 2019. In past years, like in 2018, we usually were in the red heading into the Christmas holiday season. This year we are slightly ahead by about \$1,000.

While our current financial picture is positive, we must remain committed to financially supporting our church. We will be commencing the annual stewardship campaign soon. Please start contemplating how you can help Bethesda through an annual pledge of financial support.

5. Bethesda's Mission Committee Work:

November is National Homeless Awareness Month. Through our New Parish House project and our sister organization, Mercy House, we will help those who are homeless in the Saratoga community. On Saturday, November 8, our church will host a community event to address homelessness in Saratoga. More

information on this special gathering of various service groups will be forthcoming in the bulletin.

We also continue to collect toiletries and other personal items in the basket near the entrance doors. Your donated items are provided to the Saratoga County Economic Opportunity Council and distributed to those in need in our county.

Again this year, Bethesda will have a box in back of the church in which you can deposit your donated gift cards, such as pre-paid Visa cards or Target gift cards, which will be provided to local families to help make their Christmas holidays more joyful.

All of Bethesda's mission efforts follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. And, they enable us to practice our Christian faith.

In conclusion, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said: "If you can't fly, then run. If you can't run, then walk. If you can't walk, then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward." Through your efforts and support, and God's help, Bethesda Church is moving forward according to our Lord and Savior's will.

Thank you for your continued support of our church.

Address to Bethesda Church's Congregation by Sr. Warden Darren Miller, October 6, 2019