“Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.”

Psalm 112:4
We live in a community that focuses a great deal on membership and entitlements that go with it. And so, quite often, people approach their relationship with Bethesda in that same vein: that being a member is primarily about benefits to which one is entitled. Except, that is not the primary nature of the Church. The Church’s reason for existence is to draw us deeper into a relationship with God and to organize us as the family of God to serve and share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world.

Nowhere is this curious expectation more prevalent than in conversations about those important family events: being “hatched, matched, and dispatched” as the saying goes. So often inquiries about these ministries begin with people explaining their membership with the implicit expectation that somehow this sets the platform for negotiations about what the person is entitled to.

But weddings, baptisms, and funerals are not primarily personal events built around an individual’s particular tastes or preferences. They are primarily sacramental moments in the life of the Christian community whose purpose is first and foremost to worship the living God. The single most important person present at any wedding is not the bride nor the groom, nor is it the baby at a baptism. Rather, the center of all these events is God’s loving presence among and within us, and these liturgies are designed to draw all those present more deeply into that love.

So, because these events are truly “family” events, they take on the character of our parish family at Bethesda. We order these to enable our parish to offer our very best ministry to every person who comes. We also order them in a way that minimizes the potential to communicate that one person is more important than another. We try very hard to say yes to requests for all baptisms, weddings, and funerals. But I don’t believe anyone who cares about our common life would want us simply to say yes to whatever requests come our way. Moreover, most of us would want Bethesda’s ministers—both staff and volunteers—to be able to offer our very best to everyone seeking the ministry of the church.

That is why there are some important boundaries about these events. First, Sunday morning is the most important time of the week. We do not plan any events that will prevent us from being at our very best each Sunday. So we don’t schedule these other events from 4:00 p.m. on Saturday through Tuesday morning (except baptisms, which take place at a Sunday service). Other standards and guidelines have been thoughtfully developed over years and worked through by many clergy, staff, and vestry. While I am sure not everyone will agree with every guideline, I am confident that all those who love this parish will appreciate that we work very hard to carry out the ministry of this parish to high standards of care for those involved along with a commitment to offering to God the very best in our worship and doing so in a consistent, faithful, caring way.

And with all that, I will regularly have people tell me that we refused to do a friend’s funeral or that their neighbor got “turned down” for a wedding. I can tell you that we do not refuse to do funerals, and we do not turn down weddings. Sometimes people want something that does not fit within our well-established guidelines or is simply not possible logistically, but that is not the parish saying no. Those are actually instances of someone not wanting the ministry we have to offer.

So I invite all of us to think a bit about what it really means to be part of a parish family. I hope that we can all grow deeper in service of God together, always seeking those ways to help support and grow in mission and in care for one another. And when it comes time for a wedding, baptism, or funeral, rest assured that our guidelines and policies enable Bethesda to offer our very best worship to God and our very best ministry to all who come to those services.

The Rev. James R. Harlan, Rector

*Being a member of an Episcopal church is really very simple, according to the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church:

All persons who have received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, whether in this Church or in another Christian Church, and whose Baptisms have been duly recorded in this Church, are members thereof.
However, other, more important categories of members matter a great deal. For example, Communicants are those members who have actually been to church and received communion at least three times in the past year. Most important are Communicants in good standing:

All communicants of this Church who for the previous year have been
• faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented,
  (this means participating in worship regularly—not just when having some other reason to be there, such as being scheduled to serve in a worship ministry)
• and have been faithful in
  – working, (this means being involved in our mission and ministry beyond just attending services)
  – praying, (this means making our common life a focus of daily, personal prayer for God’s guidance and strength and for our personal capacity to serve God and the parish with charity, love, courage, and vision)
  – and giving (this means financial giving toward a written pledge or a regular, consistent pattern of giving, not just giving on the occasions when in church)

for the spread of the Kingdom of God, are to be considered communicants in good standing.

Communicants in good standing are those to whom we look for leadership, guidance, and input when clarifying and implementing God’s mission at Bethesda.

Transitions
DEATHS
Susan Trowbridge Pickering—6/4/14
Frances Heard Sewell—6/20/14
John A. Syverson—8/4/14

RECEIVED BY LETTER OF TRANSFER
Michael E. Tyler
From Church of the Redeemer in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania
Clarence W. and Patricia Koch, Jr.
From Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Little Rock, Arkansas
Ernesto and Carolina Fernandez & Family
(Nicolas, Ensign, Cristina, Victor)
Jesse Lee Memorial United Methodist Church in Ridgefield, Connecticut

Retail
We have been enthusiastically preparing the Church Mouse for our re-opening on Monday, September 29, at 10:00 a.m. Our hours will be Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. We are grateful for the many donations that have kept us so busy this summer. Please encourage your family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors to donate to the Mouse. Donations are an essential component of our success every season. We accept gently-used and new upscale clothing, furniture, and household goods. We will take whole estates, move-outs, overstock, and close-outs. Our donation door is open during business hours or you may schedule a pick-up by contacting us.

The Shoppe at Bethesda remained open throughout the summer and is also excited to resume our regular hours. On Monday, September 29, we will be open Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Sundays following the 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. service.

We wish to thank our volunteers for their hard work and dedication to both The Church Mouse and The Shoppe, and our clientele for their patronage. We hope to see you soon!

For More Information
Coy Riestra, Manager of The Church Mouse and The Shoppe | (561) 659-2154 | coy@bbts.org
Pat Reichenbacher, Chair | churchmouse@bbts.org
The summer has been busy with sandwich making and the bi-monthly serving at St. George’s Center. The center had a great fundraiser at Bethesda this spring with a fabulous dinner in the Garth graciously prepared by Lloyd Terry, our Worship Committee Chair, and JB Edwards. Kudos to both of them for doing another outstanding, herculean effort appreciated by all. The summer showers cut the evening short but not before the center raised much needed funds—thanks to everyone who participated!

Outreach’s Grants Committee worked tirelessly throughout last season culminating in June as they mined their way through dozens of grant applications from area charities. Just like The Town of Palm Beach United Way and other Palm Beach houses of worship, Bethesda funds programs to care for those in need as called for by our faith. With the Vestry’s approval, the committee recommended over $325,000 worth of grants. The surplus generated at our Church Mouse resale shop and The Shoppe at Bethesda fund the church’s Outreach programs in our community and abroad. Whenever you think of donating, please make the Church Mouse your first stop and support your church’s effort to bring positive change in our community.

Here are some pictures submitted to us by some of the agencies we’ve supported—thanks to everyone who supports The Church Mouse. It’s where we SHOP, DONATE, VOLUNTEER, and EMPOWER CHANGE in our community!

For More Information
Fred Staley, Associate for Administration | (561) 655-4555 x102 | staley@bbts.org
Pat Reichenbacher, Chair | outreach@bbts.org
Communication media is constantly evolving. Bethesda is seeing greatly increased activity on our Facebook page, more interaction with our weekly E-mail Newsletters, and very positive response to our new website. One of the primary goals of the new website is to provide more timely and dynamic content and to build the habit of going there for in-depth information.

As we have been working on these media, we have also been looking with fresh eyes at The Bethesda Bulletin. This print publication provides an important link to our community. We want people to enjoy receiving it and to be motivated to find out more, to further connect through our other media as well. So, this season beginning with this issue we will present six issues each year of The Bethesda Bulletin. All six issues will include color covers, and we will have the flexibility to add more pages for content, even while saving money overall.

The Bulletin will now focus on Bethesda’s ministry areas—Retail, Outreach, Evangelism & Communications, Education, Worship, Stewardship, Fellowship & Hospitality, and Bethesda Cares. The content will focus on connecting and relating, and less on informing and promoting. Informing and promoting are better accomplished through the website, E-mail Newsletter, verbal announcements, etc. The Bulletin, on the other hand, is the perfect medium to tell the stories about what God is doing through our ministries. This is the place to inspire and encourage, the place to remind our parish family how God is so powerfully present and helping us to grow.

Our Bulletins are posted on our website, available around the church, and links are provided in our weekly E-mail Newsletter. If you would like to “Opt Out” of receiving a printed copy of The Bethesda Bulletin in the mail, we encourage you to e-mail boger@bbts.org with your full name. If you would like to receive our weekly E-mail Newsletter, please e-mail boger@bbts.org.

For More Information
Renee Boger-Cheifet, Communications Coordinator | (561) 655-4555 x111 | boger@bbts.org
Sandra Stern, Chair | communications@bbts.org
The Education Committee is sad to say farewell to our friend and Chair, Lindy Carlisle. Lindy and her husband, Rudy Martin, are moving to San Francisco. Below is an update from Lindy on behalf of the Education Committee. We thank Lindy for her ministry as Chair of our Education Committee and wish the Carlisles well in their journeys ahead.

As Chairperson of the Education Committee for the past year, it has been truly enlightening and insightful to observe Greg Knight create curriculum. That God’s light shines in Greg is clear by his dedication and creativity with Bethesda’s Children & Youth Ministries. The Education Committee hopes to attract new families as parishioners help spread the word about the stellar programs for the children and youth.

We had a successful Vacation Bible School during the summer. The children became Visioneers as they explored how the ordinary becomes extraordinary with God and experienced the love of Jesus. The children participated in a variety of activities: made their own art projects at the Crafts Lab, sung new music at the Song Studio, explored science activities at the Science Station, participated in recreational activities at the Game Garage, and enjoyed tasty snacks at the Snack Stop. Check out all the fun pictures on the back cover.

Beginning this season, one of our biggest changes affected some of our smallest members. After several years of being dropped off downstairs in the nursery, infants and toddlers from birth to age 3 will now relocate upstairs to our Sunday School Hall. The move means that they will be in a larger space with their own appropriately-sized bathroom. We’re excited that this is a growing community for our parish and we want to accommodate all of the new arrivals to the Bethesda community.

We have several new programs beginning in September, and have highlighted some of them on the following page. You can visit www.bbts.org/learn for a complete list of all our programs. We have also developed an Education Guide brochure available in the tract rack in the Narthex or in our front office.

As a committee, it’s our mission to provide educational opportunities to every member of Bethesda, to strengthen our relationship with God and our Community.

For More Information

Greg Knight, Director of Children and Youth Ministries | (561) 655-4555 x114 | knight@bbts.org
Deborah Hale-Hagy, Co-Chair | education@bbts.org
Outreach with Pre-K through 2nd Grade Sunday School
75 years ago Bethesda helped found Opportunity, Inc., a group committed to the goal of breaking the cycle of poverty in our community. That work continues at Opportunity Early Learning Center where approximately 100 children are offered the chance to receive a quality early education. This year our younger Sunday School classes will be establishing a pen pal program with the students at Opportunity, Inc. to bring our two worlds a little closer with the hope of having a Saturday picnic together in the Spring.

Stewardship with 3rd and 4th Grade Sunday School
In addition to starting a new curriculum focused on the Sunday lectionary and liturgical calendar, our 3rd and 4th graders will be starting a stewardship program called Share/Save/Spend. Each child will receive their own savings bank broken into three sections with a percentage of money dedicated to what they keep, what they put away for later, and what they want to contribute to the group. Periodically during the year, we will gather all of our “shared” funds to contribute to one of our exceptional “inreach” ministries at Bethesda, like Pastoral Care projects and other ministries that support our parish, providing our children the opportunity to support our community through their resources while learning more about all of the programs Bethesda has to offer.

Pilgrimage and Mission Groups
Opportunities for high school-aged youth are a priority for Bethesda this year and we are excited to offer many new opportunities. Beginning this year, we will start a Pilgrimage program for 9th and 10th graders where the goal will be for the group to decide on a destination for a spiritual trip, and work together to make it happen over the course of a year. Likewise, our 11th and 12th graders will be doing the same thing working as a Mission group with the goal to decide on a mission destination. We will alternate pilgrimage and mission experiences each summer beginning with a pilgrimage in 2015 followed by a mission in 2016.

Bethesda Family Forums
Tuesdays beginning October 21 | 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. | Parish Hall
Bethesda Family Forums is a new intergenerational program where members of the Bethesda community learn from each other about a variety of topics covering the spiritual life. Each “class” will run for four-week cycles and subjects include a Communion Class, Mind/Soul/Body Wellness, and Mission/Stewardship forums. Each evening will begin with a simple dinner followed by an hour long program. This is a great opportunity for many generations of Bethesda members to share their learning and traditions with new generations who are growing in the faith.
The Worship Committee’s mission is to provide loving, supportive, and uplifting worship for members and visitors where all can understand and experience the word of God taught through liturgy, instruction, music, and prayer. One of the ways we accomplish our mission is through the Verger Guild. Vergers at Bethesda are the behind-the-scenes glue that hold the liturgy together. Serving as masters of ceremony/backstage directors/gophers, Vergers make sure services run smoothly so that parishioners may enjoy a full worship experience. Each Sunday, you will notice two Vergers on duty who sit on the back rows of the choir stalls. Dividing the tasks among the two, Vergers prepare Acolytes for the service, communicate with clergy and Eucharistic Ministers of issues or requests, make sure readings are in place, assist the Altar Guild, move the opening procession, and assist clergy and Acolytes as needed before, during, and after services. Vergers also respond to emergencies and unforeseen circumstances that might occur.

Ben Williams, as Head Verger, leads the Bethesda Verger Guild of Denny Lanier, Gail Knisely, Gary Sullivan, Jodie Payne, Kate Winseck, Lloyd Terry, and Michael Smyser. The commitments of time and talent among this dedicated group shows how much each Verger cares for the Bethesda family. Vergers serve every parishioner and visitor at Bethesda in striving toward a worship experience that is truly meaningful and filled with the Holy Spirit. We are thankful for such an amazing team of hard working individuals.

The Worship committee is also thankful to the volunteers who participated in our Summer Choir. During the summer when our regular choir members are taking a break, these folks helped us “make a joyful noise” on Sundays. Please remember that our Sunday Worship Schedule will resume on September 21 and thus begins the Bethesda Youth Choir season! This hardworking band of merry music-makers rehearses each Wednesday beginning September 10, from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and sings at the 9:00 a.m. service each Sunday. Contact Jessica Reed at reed@bbts.org or (561) 655-4555 x131 with any questions.

For More Information
Daniel Beckwith, Acting Organist & Choirmaster | (561) 655-4555 x103 | beckwith@bbts.org
Lloyd Terry, Chair | worship@bbts.org
Stewardship: Who We Are

Bethesda’s mission is to experience the clear and strong presence of God and to understand and spread Christ’s teachings through collective worship, learning, and service.

Central to our identity as a community of faith is our collective sacramental worship.

We live out our mission by

Loving God & Loving our Neighbor
Photo from Our Little Mission Trip to Honduras

Nurturing Family & Serving Community
Photo from Vacation Bible School

Practicing Fellowship & Practicing Stewardship
Photo from the ECW’s Birthday Party and Meeting

Thinking Critically & Supporting Personal Ministry
Photo from Feeding the Hungry Children event

For More Information
Fred Staley, Associate for Administration | (561) 655-4555 x102 | staley@bbts.org
John Archer, Chair | give@bbts.org
The Fellowship & Hospitality Committee was busy over the summer and is pleased to announce the following updates. The committee is excited to confirm the formation of the Fellowship Hour Ministry (FHM). This new ministry will provide refreshments after our services during coffee hour on a purely volunteer basis. The FHM Ministry will be led by Richard Day. Richard has a culinary background and has devoted his talents to many mealtime events over the years at Bethesda. Richard is building a committee of volunteers who will ensure that each service is followed by a selection of delicious treats.

The FHM is seeking committee members who will participate in any of the following:

- Preparation—Bake homemade cakes, muffins, pies, breads, bring fresh fruits, cheese selections, or other savory items.

- Purchase—If you are not a cook, chef, or baker, you may purchase items for the fellowship hour. A guideline is available at the FHM sign-up board in the Parish Hall with suggested menu items and quantities.

- Provision—Do not cook, no time to shop—not to worry! A cash donation of $25 or $50 will underwrite the cost of a full or half event, and our committee will gladly purchase goodies and prepare them for you! Just indicate the date and amount of donation.

Please stop by our sign-up board located in the Parish Hall on Sundays for more information on the program and to select a day to volunteer. With our many talented “foodies” at Bethesda, this will no doubt become a dynamic new Ministry and a wonderful way to become involved. Bon Appetite!

Whether it is a travel theme, a festive game show setting, or the bright colors that represent each of our various ministries, Bethesda loves to throw a fun-filled Ministry Fair every September and we have planned another exciting theme. So, we ask you to please join us on Sunday, September 14, following each service to take a walk down the Ministry Fair Midway. This year’s carnival theme will feature music, carnival food, and most importantly, representatives from each of our many ministries to share with you the varied opportunities to connect and serve at Bethesda. Visit the Ministry tables to learn where your talents may lead you to serve, meet new friends, and explore your next calling. By doing so you will “earn” tickets that may be redeemed for yummy treats and goodies. We look forward to seeing you on the Midway!

For More Information
April Lawrence, Stewardship and Membership Coordinator | (561) 655-4555 x112 | april@bbts.org
Carol Stewart, Chair | fellowship@bbts.org
Of the many ministries that Bethesda Cares envelops, the Eucharistic Visitor assemblage has had tenure at Bethesda-by-the-Sea long before the inception of the multi-tiered BC shepherding program of today. And though this layperson ministry has gone through multiple name changes as per request of the diocese, the job description and character requirements remain the same. So firstly let us focus on this sacred ministry, and then with each new edition of The Bethesda Bulletin highlight another of the ten active ministries of Bethesda Cares. The primary purpose of the Eucharistic Visitor is a sacramental one; a bearer of the bread and wine on behalf of the parish community. A Eucharistic Visitor is also a pastoral minister. The two will balance when an “EV” comes to call. A Eucharistic Visitor is clear in understanding that he/she is laity and not a substitute for the clergy. There is a special bond as layperson to layperson that ensues during a visitation. There are also many layers to the spiritual requirements of a Eucharistic Visitor such as the ability to be “present,” partaking in the healing in receiving Communion, bringing hope, and being bound to confidentiality when necessary. In consideration of becoming a Eucharistic Visitor as a possible calling for you, one must discern earnestly on “faithfulness” and “intent” in your own relationship with God. All in all an “EV” recognizes his/her calling as a privilege, a reward, an honor to share in the healing power of Christ not as a caretaker, for the most pleasant surprise is the discovery that “who you come to minister are also ministering to you.”

For More Information

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Bobbie Leek, Chair | care@bbts.org