

Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund

Minutes of 11th Annual General Meeting held on 13 April 2018
at Clifton Chapel, Broad Street, Clifton, Beds. SG17 5RJ

1.0) Chairman's Introductory Remarks:

- 1.1) Subscribers and friends, we welcome you to the eleventh Annual General Meeting of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund and present the seventy-third Annual Report and Accounts. There is much to be thankful for as we review last year. The net assets of the Fund have increased by £37,521 as once again the operating deficit for the year has been more than covered by the contribution of the legacies received which amounted to £266,101. Due to higher occupancy, the fees received during the year were £138,477 higher than in 2016, but costs were also £56,266 higher. Donations and legacies were £91,484 more than in 2016, but other income was £8,248 less. The result of this was that whereas the deficit in 2016 was £127,926, there was a surplus in 2017 of £37,521. The financial position of the Fund remains satisfactory, despite the continuing deficiency of income to cover operating expenses, largely due to the legacies received.
- 1.2) The General Manager will refer in his report to the current position on various issues that concern Bethesda and I will confine my remarks to the issues of the consultation process that was begun last year. The response of subscribers and others interested in Bethesda is much appreciated, and the main issues that arose in the replies received were summarised and circulated recently. Many helpful comments were made, but no particular points were raised which had not already been discussed by the trustees. Some remarks were made which were critical of the way in which Bethesda is run, and these concerns and criticisms are noted and a response will be made. It is appreciated that our supporters expect the Committee to reply positively to questions that have been asked.
- 1.3) There is no obvious or easy answer to the continuing annual operating deficit, although some respondents thought that one Home in a suitable location would be best. Other respondents said that the three Homes should be continued and that the fees for residential care should be substantially increased to meet the costs of the three Homes. The thought has also been expressed that each Home should be the responsibility of those in the local area.
- 1.4) The Committee understands the impatience expressed in some quarters for answers to outstanding questions, but any decisions made affect the lives and well-being of the residents for whom care is provided. It weighs heavily with the Committee that residents should not be moved from the area and surroundings with which they are familiar and that they should be able to attend a Strict Baptist chapel where there is a living ministry. The responses to the consultation endorsed this view.
- 1.5) Bethesda came into being to provide residential care, and consideration has to be given as to whether any additional type of care is required to provide the service that elderly friends need. This could be the provision of home care within our limitations. Bethesda must be a place where elderly friends wish to come and feel comfortable in their new surroundings. With this in view, the facilities offered must be continually updated by the provision of, for instance, a residents' kitchen with suitable appliances to give some independence if this is required. The Committee will continue to ensure that the Homes provide suitable accommodation and, with this in mind, a feasibility study has been commissioned to consider whether the Harpenden site could be redeveloped as one of the three Bethesda Homes. We have just received the first report on this, and it will be assessed at the next Committee meeting. One of the unknown issues is what the demand will be for Bethesda in the years to come from our adherents.
- 1.6) The operation of Bethesda is a commercial undertaking, and the Committee seeks to make sound business decisions to fulfil this responsibility. However, there is a denominational aspect to this, because the charity is one of our Societies and Funds. This connection and our determination to adhere to the provisions of our trust deed obviously has a considerable

impact on our mode of operation.

- 1.7) We hope that our friends will realise that we are proactive, but at all times seek to know the Lord's will before taking the decisions that have to be made. The invaluable support of the Homes given by volunteers and by those who take the morning reading is gratefully acknowledged, and much appreciated by the residents. We ask you to remember the trustees in your prayers, that our way will be directed by the Lord. There are major decisions to be made and much wisdom is needed. At the Committee meeting which is due to be held next Friday, the way forward for Bethesda will be prayerfully considered, taking into account the representations that have been received.

2.0) Resolution to accept Minutes of the last AGM:

- 2.1) A resolution was then put to the Meeting that the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on April 7th, 2017, be approved. The resolution was proposed by Mr. B.E. Izzard (Pastor, Fenstanton), seconded by Mr. J.H. Cottington (Blackboys) and carried *nem con*.

3.0) Introduction to the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2017:

- 3.1) The Chairman then asked the General Manager to introduce the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2017.
- 3.2) General Manager: It is not my intention to repeat what has been said in the Bethesda Annual Report and Financial Statements, although I will be making reference to them from time to time. Further copies of the report are available in the entrance lobby.
- 3.3) There have been a number of changes in occupancy since the beginning of the year. Occupancy in the Harpenden Home started the year at twenty-one residents and is now seventeen; the Studley Home started the year at ten residents and is now twelve; and the Brighton Home started the year at seventeen residents and is now sixteen. Sadly, since the beginning of the year we have lost Mrs. Irene Guest, Mrs. Ruth Hickman and Mr. Norman Hills from the Brighton Home, and Mr. David Relf, Mrs. Pep Warboys, Miss Mary Guest and Mrs. Daphne Barker from the Harpenden Home, and our dear friends will all be greatly missed.
- 3.4) As reported in the Annual Report, there was a successful CQC inspection at the Brighton Home in August, with our overall rating of "Good" being maintained. In January 2018, the Studley Bethesda Home received its CQC inspection. This also went well, and we are pleased to report we have maintained our overall "Good" rating for four of the five key questions, demonstrating that the Home remains safe and caring, and continues to provide effective and responsive care to residents. We were rated "Requires Improvement" under the "Well-led" heading. This was due to, at the time of the inspection, there being no registered manager in place, which meant that there was an automatic cap on the rating that could be achieved, and this is no reflection on the management of the Home which remains strong, which can be demonstrated from the CQC written commentary in the report. We are expecting an inspection of the Harpenden Home imminently, with the last one being over two-and-half years ago.
- 3.5) We are thankful that we continue to maintain a high standard of care and support for our residents, as is evidenced by the very positive comments that we continue to receive. These come from residents, friends, relatives and visiting professionals such as doctors, nurses and mental health specialists.
- 3.6) We have continued to work on developing our dementia care service specialisation, primarily in the Brighton Home. Work has been undertaken to develop both the service itself and improving the interior decorations to enhance the environment of the Home for those living with dementia. (This has also been of benefit to all the other residents). We are now commencing the same process at the Harpenden Home.
- 3.7) After eleven years, Mr. Wells has now retired from the Bethesda Fund Committee, and we

wish to take this opportunity to thank him for all he has done over the years.

- 3.8) As was reported in the Annual Report, Rachel Honeysett retired at the end of last year as the Studley Home Manager, and we would reiterate our thanks to Rachel for her service and dedication to both the residents and the Home. Since the beginning of the year, the Home has been managed, on an interim basis, by Mrs. Trudy Taylor whilst we looked for Rachel's successor. We are pleased to report that the Deputy Home Manager, Samantha O'Dwyer has now been appointed as the Home Manager and will commence her new duties from May 1st. We would acknowledge the hand of the Lord in appearing for us in this appointment and wish to thank Trudy for her help during this past year.
- 3.9) As you will be aware, we recently conducted an exercise to raise awareness of the issues facing Bethesda and to seek the views of Bethesda's subscribers and friends on a range of matters relating to the future of the Homes. There is a great deal for us to think about over the next few months, and we are grateful that so many of you felt able to provide your views, and these will help inform our decision making. We appreciate that there is, in addition to the interim feedback provided, a desire for more detailed information and discussion. The Trustees hope to meet on Friday, April 20th, at their quarterly meeting, to consider how this is best achieved, and will subsequently communicate the plans to share the feedback with subscribers and interested parties.
- 3.10) In analysing the responses received to the consultation exercise, there appeared to be a lack of awareness of the services that we already offer, so we would take this opportunity to restate what these are. In addition to the permanent residential care, respite care and managed accommodation (flatlets) services, with which people are already familiar, we also offer a day care service. This has been in place for around two years. This is a service for people who wish for some care and support, but do not need to stay overnight. It is very flexible and can be tailored to individual requirements subject to prior discussion. It is often a helpful way to supplement care received at home, provide social contact with people of a like mind, or for assisting transition to a longer, or even permanent stay in a Bethesda Home.
- 3.11) We would, however, reiterate that, we are unable to provide in-house nurses for those that need regular nursing care. For this service, we rely on the community care teams, including district nurses, with whom we have a very good working relationship in all three Homes. Whilst it has been possible to support residents with nursing care needs, this is often when someone has already been a resident in the Home for a period of time, and their health has changed over this period. By working with the local community teams, it has been possible to provide a care package for them. Sadly, we are unable to do this for those who come with pre-existing nursing care needs. Consequently, we would encourage individuals to make contact with Bethesda before circumstances prevent us being of help.
- 3.12) We now come to the matter of fees for 2018. After much careful consideration, the decision has been made to increase fees to help cover more fully the cost of providing our services. In recent years, there have been increasing costs arising from upgrading our services, as well as external pressures such as the introduction by the government of the national living wage, together with the future impact of this. We are also very conscious of the need to manage costs and ensure value for money in the services offered. Consequently, it has been decided that the changes to the fees coming into effect from April 1st, 2018 will be: For the Ordinary Rate – an increase of 7.5%, from £599.90 to £644 per week; for the Intermediate Rate – an increase of 10%, from £679 to £749 per week; and for the Higher Rate – an increase of 15%, from £773.50 to £889 per week. These increases will help to ensure that Bethesda can continue to offer high-quality care to our elderly friends. Even after these increases, our research indicates that our fees will continue to compare favourably with those of other care homes in our areas. We are not unmindful, however, of the impact of the increases on residents, and are thankful that we are still able, from the Underfunded Residents' Fund, to provide financial support to people unable to meet the full cost of fees, and we would thank those individuals and congregations who have made donations to this Fund in supporting

many of the residents in their continued stay at Bethesda.

- 3.13) Once again, our sincere thanks go to all our staff for the hard work, dedication and care that they give to our friends living in the Homes, and we would also like sincerely to thank the Home Support Groups and other volunteers who give so much to support the people living in the Homes in many different ways. The value of their contribution to the physical and spiritual welfare of the residents cannot be overstated. We are thankful for the assistance given by all those that take the morning readings in the Homes, and if there are any male members of the churches who feel able to assist in this way, we would appreciate further assistance at the Brighton Home, where there are a number of gaps in the reading rota.
- 3.14) Finally, we are also thankful for the support given to us by our subscribers. We have been pleased to welcome a small number of new subscribers since the last AGM. However, the overall number has continued to decline, and we would encourage more people to consider supporting us in this way.

4.0) Questions arising from the Annual Report:

- 4.1) The Chairman thanked the General Manager for his report and for all that he does for Bethesda. He asked if there were any questions, and a question was asked by Mr. G. Cottingham (Heathfield).
- 4.2) Mr. Cottingham thanked the General Manager for his report and supported the increase in fees from April 2018. He asked how the Committee proposed to increase the occupancy of the Homes, otherwise the decline would negate the agreed increase. Would the eligibility for Bethesda be widened to admit others than members and regular attendees at our chapels because the present level is not sustainable?
- 4.3) The Chairman said that the key issue of the level of occupancy is under constant review by the Committee, but as mentioned in his opening remarks, the Committee will adhere to the terms of the trust deed and will seek to promote Bethesda by updating the facilities offered to residents and to maintain the high standard of the service provided.

5.0) Resolution to accept the Annual Report and Accounts:

- 5.1) There were no other questions, and it was proposed by Mr. D.J. Broome (Trowbridge) and seconded by Mr. R.W. Woodhams (Pastor, Haywards Heath), that the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund for 2017 be approved and adopted. This was carried *nem con*.

6.0) Results of ballot for re-election of Trustees:

- 6.1) The Chairman then asked the General Manager to declare the results of the secret ballot to re-elect the Committee members retiring by rotation. The General Manager announced that 211 ballot papers were issued to subscribers, of which 155 were returned, and as a result all of those standing for re-election had received in excess of 77% of the votes, and therefore Messrs. M.G. Bailey, T.H.W. Scott and M.O. Wiltshire had been re-elected for a further three years.

7.0) Chairman's closing remarks:

- 7.1) Thank you. These are very difficult times and we appreciate the confidence and prayerful support which you give. The Committee seeks that wisdom and direction may be given faithfully to discharge the responsibilities they carry and that the Lord will continue to bless the provision of the Homes for the benefit of His dear aged people. The Committee seeks a continuing interest in your prayers and continuance of the practical support given so generously to the Homes.
- 7.2) There is no other business, and that concludes the Annual General Meeting. Thank you very much for your attendance.