Bethesda Hospital

OUR BEGINNINGS

Holding on to our past, stepping confidently into our future
Come to me all of you who are weary & heavy laden and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

Original Bethesda Hospital Nursing staff

**Our History** defines us and guides our future. It assists us to understand our reason for being. It connects us with the rich and spiritual essence of our past and our Christian ethic. It is the very foundation for the way we care and support those in need.

**Our Mission** is to deliver the highest quality healthcare experience for patients. We do this by embracing Christian-based values and working together to express God’s love through a caring expression of kindness, tolerance and tenderness.

**Our Vision** is to be the preferred choice for doctors, staff and patients and be recognised for the provision of high quality, medium acuity surgical services and palliative care.
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This booklet has been produced to tell the story of how Bethesda Hospital began, including its original connection to the Churches of Christ, namely the Subiaco Church of Christ. It focuses on the beginning years 1942 - 1945 and presents as a wonderfully rich story of faith and dedication. The story acknowledges the efforts of Matron Beryl Hill in achieving her vision to establish a Christian hospital in Perth, Western Australia where patients 'received spiritual healing as part of their treatment'.

The story of the Hospital’s beginnings confirm that the aspirations we have at Bethesda to operate today as a modern private hospital in Australia can be achieved if there is an understanding of our heritage, one that is built upon strong values that reflect our Christian ethos.

We hope you enjoy the story of Bethesda’s beginnings.
There is enormous pride in being able to share the Bethesda story. It is important to understand our historical roots and the reason for our being, so that all we do is true to that raison d’etre.

The beginning of Bethesda involved individuals from the Churches of Christ, namely the Subiaco Church of Christ, a church that was founded in 1898. Bethesda’s founder Matron Beryl Hill worshipped at the Subiaco Church of Christ, and was able to work with other worshippers to establish Bethesda Hospital.

The family of churches known as Christian Churches, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Churches of Christ grew out of an early 19th Century Restoration Movement with origins in both the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Today the Churches of Christ family can be found in more than 178 countries.

A very distinctive contribution from Churches of Christ to the Christian world has been the strong belief that “everyone is a minister and in ministry”. The result is that there is an open permission for men and women in Churches of Christ churches to be considered to lead communion, preach, pray, baptise, lead worship, serve as leaders (Elders and Deacons), pastorally visit and counsel.

Evident from the beginnings through the Churches of Christ and Matron Beryl Hill’s faith, there was a strong sense of ministry with like-minded Christians coming together to meet other less fortunate individual’s needs with love and humility on God’s behalf. Obvious from the story of the beginnings of Bethesda, these like-minded Christian individuals understood that ministry to others should be impartial, unconditional and always seeking to help others.
Over the years, there has often been reference to the healing pool of Bethesda, a pool in Jerusalem reputed to have healing powers as noted in the Gospel of Saint John Chapter 5. This was where God healed a crippled man beside the pool, being one of nine healing miracles involving water. Bethesda means ‘house of mercy’. Locals believed that the pool could restore health to the sick and infirm. The pool had five porches like covered verandahs, open on one side but protected from the sun and rain overhead. The community kindly provided these porches to protect invalids whilst they waited for someone to help them to the pool.

**It was around the pool of Bethesda that the sick and the lame gathered so they might experience God’s healing power in the water.**

Today, those who visit Bethesda often recount their experience of ‘healing’ that comes through the kindness and compassion of the Hospital staff. There is a healing of bodies at Bethesda however, when there is no cure for the disease, patients are cared for in a way that deeply expresses the Hospital’s core values and mission.
As can be seen from the pages following, Bethesda actually started out in the suburb of Subiaco and under another name - St Andrew’s Hospital. Following the establishment of a Board of Management in 1943 to oversee the Hospital, it was agreed to change the name from St Andrew’s. Bethesda was the name finally chosen, meaning ‘house of mercy’. The name maintains its relevance today and the healing/soothing power of water is observed each and every day with the Hospital’s beautiful location on Freshwater Bay. Being sited on the Swan River reinforces the connection to water and in particular, the love of God expressed in the gift of His son, Jesus, who was called ‘The Living Water’.

The Bethesda Hospital logo consists of two figures holding lamps and reaching out to others beneath the cross of Christ representing the healing ministry of the church. The wave pattern beneath the Hospital’s name reflects the tranquillity of the Bethesda environment and its link to the Swan River.
Bethesda began in the year 1943 with five shillings and a lifetime of prayer. Bethesda was established because of the faith and dedication of many people however, we particularly owe our foundation to Matron Beryl Hill. She was led to dedicate her life completely to serve God through a rich spiritual experience she received during a house party or ‘bible camp’ at Lucknow Hospital, now known as Bethesda. To prepare herself for the journey of faith, she became a student at the Perth Bible Institute, exercising her mind in study and prayer and seeking God’s guidance about her future field of service.

It was while she was studying at Perth Bible Institute that she met executives of the Landour Community Hospital, located in the lower ranges of the Himalayas of northern India, and felt led to offer her services to their hospital, which she did for five years.

During her time in India, Beryl explored and deepened her faith and truly began her committed, spiritual journey. In 1941 Beryl was en route to Calcutta to board a ship bound for Fremantle when it was announced that Japan had entered World War II. Subsequently all shipping between India and Australia was cancelled. “After praying I felt led by the Lord to continue my journey to Colombo where a month after arriving, the way opened miraculously for me to return to Australia aboard the hospital ship *Wanganella*” Beryl said.

* During World War II, Wanganella was converted to serve as an Australian Hospital Ship (AHS). Between 19 May 1941 and 1946, AHS Wanganella carried wounded and sick evacuees from the Middle East, New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Borneo and the South Pacific, travelling over 251,011 nautical miles (464,872 km) and transporting 13,385 wounded.

It was during this month of waiting in Ceylon that the thought of establishing a Christian hospital in Perth came to mind. God had shown me that, through the faith of believing people, God had raised up the Landour Community Hospital in India and surely if I had faith, He would do the same in Perth.

Matron Beryl Hill
“It was January 1942 and I was in Columbo waiting for a passage home. I had completed a five year term at the mission-based hospital, Landour Community Hospital, and was about to return to Australia for health reasons. While praying for God’s guidance for my future the thought of such a Christian hospital came to me. God had shown me that through prayers of faith offered by His believing people, He was able to raise up the Landour Community Hospital. I believed He could do the same here” she said.

In February 1942 Beryl Hill arrived in Perth and with anticipation of establishing a Christian hospital, opened a hospital trust fund with five shillings which later turned into 50 pounds by the end of that same year. Just nine months later, Beryl Hill started work as a nurse at St Andrew’s Hospital in Subiaco. She soon heard that the Hospital was for sale and discovered that the owner was willing to sell for 550 pounds. She fervently prayed, seeking direction from God. She believed if it was His will she would find a way to purchase the Hospital. Within a week she had received unsolicited offers of loans of 500 pounds at 5% interest.

That same year a Board of Management was formed and the Hospital’s name changed to Bethesda Hospital. An approach was then made to Mr Ray Raymond, the Pastor of the Subiaco Church of Christ (of which Beryl Hill was a member) to see if he would be interested in an interdenominational committee of management.

Mr Raymond thought Beryl Hill would be well advised to have a committee of one and not several denominations of communions, to which Beryl Hill finally agreed. He then approached Mr C Burdeu who was, at the time, the Deputy Commissioner of Social Services in Western Australia, Mr W S Brown, the Assistant Under Secretary for Law and thirdly Mr E Nelson, a retired gentlemen renowned for his ‘abounding enthusiasm in respect of anything in which he became interested’ - all whom were members of the Churches of Christ. Each having expressed his interest in the project, an informal meeting of these three gentlemen along with, Mr Raymond, Beryl Hill and Matron Murray was held at St Andrews about July 1943.

It was in this meeting that they agreed to alter the name of the Hospital from ‘St Andrews’ to ‘Bethesda’ meaning ‘house of mercy.’ Mr Brown undertook to draft rules necessary for the control of and for the proper functioning of the proposed Board. Bethesda Hospital was incorporated on 21 January 1944 with the constitution confirming that Bethesda Hospital was to operate under the auspices of the Churches of Christ in Western Australia (Inc).
Bethesda literally means ‘house of mercy’. Bethesda began in 1943, nearly 70 years ago with 5 shillings and a lifetime of prayer.
That same year a former “C” class hospital, Lucknow in Queenslea Drive, Claremont – ironically where Matron Hill started her spiritual journey – came onto the real estate market. The Board felt that this was an ‘admirable opportunity’ to obtain a property which would provide the necessary scope for expansion but of course, the big obstacle was lack of funds for such a project. However, it was felt that as the evidence of God’s guidance in the past had been so pronounced, the Board should pursue this further challenge of faith.

On the 7th January 1944 the Board met and it was agreed that they would:

(a) Offer the owner £7,000 for Lucknow with a deposit of £1,000, the balance to be payable at £500 per annum at 5% interest; and

(b) That, if accepted, an option of a three month payment schedule be requested.

Some delay occurred in the negotiations, during which the terms were varied and it was not until the Board meeting of April 1944 when action to acquire the property was confirmed, that a definite forward move was made. The price has increased to £8,000 with an interest rate of 5.5%. The Board decided to organise an appeal in an effort to raise some of the funds to purchase the Claremont property.

The appeal was launched by a dinner to which invitations were sent to brethren who, it was felt, had the interests of the Hospital at heart and who may have been able to assist financially. However, due to considerable delays the Claremont property was not able to be acquired for almost two years. During this time of raising funds to purchase the Claremont property, Bethesda continued to operate as a hospital in Subiaco.
Said to be the first of its kind in the state, Bethesda Hospital in Subiaco combines spiritual with physical healing. Matron Beryl Hill is in charge of the Hospital and had the idea of including spiritual healing as part of the patient’s treatment. Matron Hill had no funds but with the cooperation of Matron Murray of the Mount Margaret Native Mission (as well as interested friends) she took over St Andrews Private Hospital on 1 January 1943. Apart from ordinary members of the public who pay in the usual way, the Hospital offers bed accommodation and treatment to Christian workers and missionaries who cannot afford to pay.

Article from Daily News, 7/1/1944
The Bethesda Board took possession of Bethesda Hospital in Queenslea Drive, Claremont in April 1945, following the departure of American officers who had been given use of the property as a rest home during World War II. Patients were moved from the Subiaco Hospital site and Bethesda was officially opened and dedicated to God on 2 July 1945.

From the inception, regular religious services were conducted by Matron Beryl Hill but it was felt that greater facilities for a more effective service should be provided. It was agreed to install a suitable radio and public address system relayed to each hospital bed to enable patients to tune in to one of three radio stations or the public address system. It was also decided that when religious services were being broadcast for the benefit of patients, no other programs be permitted. The system, including ‘pillow phones’, was installed in January 1948 and proved most effective in carrying the Gospel message to patients. The new system was highly commended by the doctors and their patients.

In 1947 consideration was given by the Board to the formation of a Hospital Women’s Auxiliary. It was felt that such a group would be of material assistance in such matters as visitation, special types of sewing for hospital requirements, the conducting of fetes for the raising of money for the Benevolent Fund or for other specific purposes, and as a valuable liaison between the hospital and the Women’s Auxiliary of Conference. Miss N. Stewart, a member of the Board, was keenly interested in this project and took a major part in organising a combined meeting of the Board and the lady members of the Churches of Christ to discuss and, if possible, to establish such an Auxiliary.

The meeting was held on the 15th July 1947 and after much discussion, the following resolution was carried: - “That this meeting of representative ladies of the Churches endorse the formation of a Bethesda Hospital Women’s Auxiliary and that a meeting be called at the earliest opportunity to elect the officers and formally establish the group.”

“We recognise its smallness, but it is a beginning. We believe the work will grow and larger premises will be necessary as the Lord prospers us.”

Matron Beryl Hill
The meeting was duly held and the Auxiliary inaugurated on the 1st August 1947. Between that date and the time of its disbandment, in February 1955, the Auxiliary provided an excellent service to Bethesda and contributed $10,206 for patient care and amenity.

Matron Beryl Hill retired from Bethesda Hospital in 1969 following 26 years of dedicated and faithful service. Her devotion and commitment to patients in healing their mind, body and spirit was inspirational. She left us with a special legacy - a Hospital that reflects her firm faith in God who cares and provides.

Matron Beryl Hill with the community
Our values shape Bethesda’s culture, one that results in our values at work within the Organisation. Bethesda Hospital embraces six core values that reflect our Christian heritage:

**Teamwork** We create an environment of unity and togetherness

**Respect** We recognise and acknowledge the uniqueness and value of every individual

**Integrity** We demonstrate honesty and trust

**Compassion** We work to express God’s love through a caring expression of kindness, tolerance and tenderness

**Excellence** We excel in all that we do so that we can promote the mission of our Hospital

**Professionalism** We have pride in the high level of care and service we offer

Our Code of Conduct guides our Organisation on how and what we aspire to be and do. It articulates the conduct and behaviours that set us apart from others and ensures our behaviours demonstrate our values.

We expect that our Code is observed by our staff, doctors, board directors, contractors, and anyone engaged in our work environment or action on behalf of the Organisation.
Today, Bethesda is an independent acute surgical and specialist palliative care hospital still situated on the stunning shores of Perth’s picturesque Swan River, overlooking tranquil Freshwater Bay. With 88 beds comprising of 68 overnight beds and 20 day procedure beds and state-of-the-art facilities, Bethesda Hospital offers a range of clinical specialties and onsite services that ensures our dedicated team continues our tradition of excellence in patient care for years to come. Bethesda has been serving the Western Australian community since 1943 and is committed to providing the highest standards of personalised care.

Patients are treated in a manner that preserves their dignity, autonomy, self-esteem, civil rights, and involvement in their own care. Compassion and care are part of our commitment to the community we serve. It’s our unwavering commitment that extends to the physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of our patients and visitors alike.

**Bethesda offers a range of surgical services and clinical specialities to meet the needs of the community:**

- Orthopaedics
- Urology
- General Surgery
- Gynaecology
- Palliative Care
- Breast Cancer Surgery
- Fertility Specialists
- Vascular Surgery
- Oral, plastic and reconstructive Surgery
- Ophthalmology
- Pain Management

**Bethesda also offers onsite facilities for the convenience and comfort of patients:**

- Radiology
- Pathology
- Physiotherapy
- Pastoral Care
- Café
- Onsite parking
- Commercial laundry service
- Chapel
Bethesda’s in-patient Palliative Care Unit and the Palliative Ambulatory Service North (PASN) are considered to be two of Perth’s leading services in the area of palliative care. In 2006, Bethesda Hospital joined the Western Australian palliative care community when it opened a 13 bed palliative care unit, which in 2010 expanded to a 24 bed unit, with stunning river views. The unit is a specialised palliative care service which provides inpatient care for both insured and non-insured patients.

Care is provided by an expert team of palliative care clinicians including a palliative care consultant doctor and full time registrar, social worker, occupational therapist, chaplain, and nurses. We are able to offer admission for symptom control, respite care and terminal care. Care is provided by a multi-disciplinary team of health professionals who are competent in assessing the needs of each patient. Maintenance of dignity, quality of life, consultation in decision making and expert symptom control are key components in the care Bethesda provides. The program attracts some of the best staff and doctors because of its highly regarded specialised and coordinated patient care approach that supports people with a progressive life limiting illness.

The Palliative Ambulatory Service North is a mobile specialist palliative care team which serves Perth’s northern suburbs aged care facilities, mental health units, prisons and secondary level public hospitals without a palliative care unit. The program’s focus is to provide consultation as well as education to staff and doctors to assist in building skills and capacity in palliative care.

Caring for those individuals who require palliative care is at the heart of the work Bethesda undertakes. It provides an opportunity to display our ministry in a practical way.
Bethesda acknowledges the importance of employing professionally trained staff and experienced personnel to provide care and support services. Our goal is to be the ‘hospital of choice’ for doctors, staff and volunteers and we continually strive to attain this goal by providing a supportive, enjoyable and professionally fulfilling work environment.

Our strength is in the people who work for us and who demonstrate the values of teamwork, respect, integrity, compassion, excellence and professionalism. We are strongly of the view that each and every one of Bethesda’s staff members and volunteers commences their working day knowing their purpose and completes the day with a sense of pride and an understanding of their accomplishments. Our staff are key to not only our current success but also in our quest to further grow and extend our reach with the Bethesda brand of care.

As a professional organisation in the continual pursuit of quality, Bethesda also greatly values the contribution of all those who so generously give up their own time to volunteer within our community. They are recognised as the ‘life-blood’ of the organisation, individuals who are extremely special and selfless who give their time freely to help make Bethesda the wonderful place it is.
After many years of healing ministry, Bethesda remains as special as it was when it first began. Known as one of Perth’s most appealing hospitals, Bethesda seeks to deliver its mission in a framework of strong, faith-based values with the assistance of dedicated staff, doctors, volunteers and an equally motivated Board of Directors. From humble beginnings and a continued strong sense of purpose, Bethesda Hospital continues to operate and build on its Christian heritage.

Holding on to our past, stepping confidently into our future...

25 Queenslea Drive, Claremont, W.A. 6010