

The Bethlehem Star



The newsletter of Bethlehem Lutheran Church
www.bethlehembayridge.org

February 2018

In this month's Beth Star...

- Message from Pastor Paul
- Calendar, activities, schedule, including Lenten services, Bethlehem Women's Group, Youth Group, and more
- Church Council highlights
- Reports from The Healing Center, The Bay Ridge Center, LES, and the Lutheran Counseling Center



Friday, Feb 9 - 11
Youth Group
retreat at Koinonia



Tuesday, Feb 13
6:30 PM
Shrove Tuesday
Pancake Supper



Wednesday, Feb 14
7:30 PM
Ash Wednesday
service and
imposition of ashes



Wednesdays
throughout Lent
7:00 PM
Lenten Meditation
and Prayer



Join us for all of our services and events



Our Mission

To serve God and God's people. To live our faith daily through worship, and providing education, support, nourishment, compassion, good counsel, love, and service to the larger community welcoming all who join us in this mission.



Our Welcome

Bethlehem Lutheran Church is a **Reconciling in Christ** congregation. People of all sexual orientations and gender identities are welcome within the membership of this congregation and are encouraged to share in the sacramental and general life of this Christian family.

Pastor Paul's Monthly Message for February

From Pastor's 2017 Annual Report presented on January 28, 2018

Dear Members and Friends,

At a recent Board of Directors meeting for Lutheran Services New York Alliance, at the Interchurch Center in Manhattan, I was sitting next to Bishop Rimbo, the bishop of our Metro NY Synod of the ELCA. Bishop Rimbo turned to me and asked how I was doing. I responded, "No complaints, Bishop." He replied good naturedly, "That's good, because complaining doesn't do any good." My response, "Seriously, Bishop, I really have no complaints." I am 100% positive, this is not the answer the bishop usually hears.

2017 was a wonderful year at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Last Sunday I compared two Old Testament prophets, Samuel and Jonah. Samuel truly listened to God's voice and served the Israelites as a righteous judge for many years. He anointed Saul as their 1st king and chose David as his successor. Samuel spent his life listening to God and following God's direction. Jonah, on the other hand, heard the voice of God and ran away. God told him to go to Ninevah to preach to the people there, but Jonah refused and went in the other direction. That didn't turn out so well for Jonah.

Without a shadow of a doubt, I believe Bethlehem Lutheran Church is following in Samuel's footsteps. We are listening to God's voice and we are following God's direction. Our worship services are inspirational and focus on making God's word come alive for our daily life. Our church is made up of people from many different traditions, yet we come together as one family of God, trying our best to be Jesus' loving presence in our community and the world. We were sad to say goodbye to our long time organist and choir director, Steve Wilson, but we are truly blessed to have Maria Rayzvasser join us as our new Music Director. Maria is warm and incredibly talented.

Our three main ministries are thriving and serving our community in amazing ways. Our school turned 60 years old in 2017 (along with your aging pastor). LES continues to hold fast to our mission of being a place where we educate each individual child academically, emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually. We are proud of the fact that we can add to this mission statement that we are using innovative teaching methods, with an eye to the most essential and effective movements in education. Our school is extremely well respected in our community.

Our senior center continues to grow and we provide meals to more seniors than ever before in our 41 year history. The biggest challenge continues to be space. We have run out of room for our onsite seniors and we have run out of kitchen space to prepare the over 600 meals we deliver every day. We are hopeful that 2018 brings the promise of a brand new senior center building on our block. Negotiations are currently in process.

Our Healing Center is serving more people than ever before. There are always challenges with respect to public discretionary funding from our local representatives, but Antonia and her staff do an incredible job. Family violence breaks the spirit, but this wonderful ministry helps our clients to become whole again. We minister to children, teens, our clients and seniors. All age groups are affected by violence in relationships and Bethlehem supports this ministry financially, and with very talented members on the Board of Directors. This is work that few churches support, but we have embraced the Healing Center in a powerful way.

(more)

Pastor Paul's Monthly Message for February

(continued)

Bethlehem's finances are in good shape. We took in more income than ever before in 2017 and we gave away more money in benevolences than ever before. Both of these go hand in hand. A giving church is a growing church. We responsibly care for our property and are so grateful to those who stay on top of our capital improvement and maintenance projects. We have super volunteers working in our Sunday School, bringing the love of Jesus to more children than I can remember. Our Bethlehem Women's group is active and strong. Our young people still love to gather and the weekend retreat to Koinonia is always the highlight of the year. We have dedicated leaders on our church council and we can't say enough about the wonderful way Al Koehler has served as our President during his time on church council.

Last year, in my annual report, I accentuated our need to trust God. We thought we had a strategic plan all set, but God knew better. This year, I encouraged us to listen to God's voice and follow his direction. If you combine last year's report and this year's report, it seems that we are covering all the bases. Listen, follow and trust. At Bethlehem, that's what we do!

In God's Service,

Rev. Paul H. Knudsen

Pastor

February at a Glance

- 2/4 @ 10:30 a.m. -- Regular Sunday morning schedule
- 2/5 @ 6:30 p.m. -- Bay Ridge Center Board of Directors meeting
- 2/6 @ 7:00 p.m. -- LES School Board meeting
- 2/7 @ 6:30 p.m. -- Healing Center Board of Directors meeting
- 2/8 @ 7:15 p.m. -- SW Brooklyn Lutheran Council @ Good Shepherd
- 2/9 @ 4:00 p.m. -- Youth group leaves for Koinonia Winter Retreat
- 2/11 @ 10:30 a.m. -- Regular Sunday morning schedule (No Confirmation Class)
- 2/11 @ 4:00 p.m. -- Youth group returns from Koinonia
- 2/13 @ 6:30 p.m. -- Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper
- 2/14 @ 7:30 p.m. -- Ash Wednesday Worship w/ imposition of ashes
- 2/16 @ 6:30 p.m. -- Bethlehem Women's Group in the Joy Room
- 2/18 @ 10:30 a.m. -- Regular Sunday morning schedule
- 2/20 @ 7:00 p.m. -- Church Council meeting
- 2/21 @ 7:00 p.m. -- Lenten Meditation & Prayer
- 2/25 @ 10:30 a.m. -- Regular Sunday morning schedule
- 2/28 @ 7:00 p.m. -- Lenten Meditation & Prayer

Coffee hours are held in the Fellowship Room.



February 2018

Services | Activities | Special Events | Meetings

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>4 9:15 am—Adult Bible Class in the Parish Room 9:15 am—SS/Confirmation 10:30 am—Worship followed by Coffee Hour</p>	<p>5 6:30 pm Bay Ridge Center Board of Directors 7:00 pm—AA</p>	<p>6 7:00 pm LES School Board</p>	<p>7 6:30 pm Healing Center Board of Directors</p>	<p>8 7:15 pm SWBbyn Lutheran Council @ Good Shepherd 7:15 pm—AA</p>	<p>9 4:00 pm Youth Group leaves for Kohnonia Winter Retreat 7:00 pm—Scouts</p>	<p>10 6:15 pm—AA 7:30 pm—AA</p>
<p>11 9:15 am—Adult Bible Class in the Parish Room 9:15 am—SS/NO Confirmation 10:30 am—Worship followed by Coffee Hour 4:00 pm—Youth Group Returns from Kohnonia</p>	<p>12 7:00 pm—AA</p>	<p>13 6:30 pm Stirve Tuesday Pancake Supper</p>	<p>14 7:30 pm Ash Wednesday w/ Imposition of Ashes</p>	<p>15 7:15 pm—AA</p>	<p>16 6:30 pm Bethlehem Women's Group in the Joy Room 7:00 pm—Scouts</p>	<p>17 6:15 pm—AA 7:30 pm—AA</p>
<p>18 9:15 am—Adult Bible Class in the Parish Room 9:15 am—SS/ Confirmation 10:30 am—Worship followed by Coffee Hour</p>	<p>19 7:00 pm—AA</p>	<p>20 7:00 pm Church Council</p>	<p>21 7:00 pm Lenten Meditation & Prayer</p>	<p>22 7:15 pm—AA</p>	<p>23 7:00 pm—Scouts</p>	<p>24 6:15 pm—AA 7:30 pm—AA</p>
<p>25 9:15 am—Adult Bible Class in the Parish Room 9:15 am—SS/Confirmation 10:30 am—Worship followed by Coffee Hour</p>	<p>26 7:00 pm—AA</p>	<p>27 7:00 pm Lenten Meditation & Prayer</p>	<p>28 7:00 pm Lenten Meditation & Prayer</p>	<p>29 7:15 pm—AA</p>	<p>30 7:00 pm—Scouts</p>	<p>1 6:15 pm—AA 7:30 pm—AA</p>

SUNDAY WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

1/7 – 39
1/14 – 96
1/21 – 112
1/28 – 121

Bethlehem: The Growing Church!

MONTHLY OFFERING

November: \$8,726
December: \$21,723
January: \$8,458

God's great work at Bethlehem needs your financial support!

FELLOWSHIP

2/4 – Coffee Hour
2/11 – Coffee Hour
2/18 – Coffee Hour
2/25 – Coffee Hour

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

Every Sunday morning In the Parish Room
9:15 – 10:15 a.m. led by Carl Jacobsen

YOUTH MINISTRY

Koinonia Winter Retreat February 9th-11th



BETHLEHEM WOMEN'S GROUP

- Friday, February 16th @6:30 pm
Bring a Valentine's sweet and wear something red.
- Saturday, May 12th from 9 AM – 4 PM
We have a table at The Bay Ridge Senior Center Sidewalk Sale. Bethlehem women – if you would like to donate items, or volunteer – it would be greatly appreciated.
- Friday, April 20th – Sunday, April 22
Koinonia Spring Women's Retreat.
Reservations will have to be made. For information call/text – 917-873-8799 or see Lisa on Sundays.

VOLUNTEER?

- Anyone interested in partaking in the Worship Service, as Communion Preparers, Communion Assistants or Lectors, please speak to Dennis Monsen!
- Coffee Hour Volunteers ~ so we can enjoy food and fellowship every week! Please sign up!
- Altar Flowers in honor / memory of loved ones – sign up poster in the Church Narthex

BIRTHDAYS

2/3 – Ray Palermo
2/5 – Krystle Pietrafesa / Katherine Okun
2/7 – MaryLou Hlasney
2/9 – Kenny Brown
2/10 – Aimee Maliga / Elise Solversen
2/15 – Susannah O’Shea / Edward O’Shea
2/17 – Ingeborg Rupinski / Ben Puelle
2/19 – Ed Kiley
2/20 – Debbie Roth
2/22 – Robert Sletholt
2/24 – John Stephen Swiontak
2/25 – Kristina O’Shea / Laila & Olivia Mansour
2/28 – Lina Khristi

Best Wishes

ANNIVERSARIES

2/14 – Gary & Janice Solberg
2/14 – Holly & Roy Bakke
2/16 – Laura Caruso & Ramon Martinez

NURSING HOME

Christine Scanlon, Reymundo Lariosa

*In Our Thoughts
& Prayers* 

HEALING & STRENGTH

Robert Serrano, Hermicenda & Hery Vallecillo, Billy Whelan, Doris Whelan, Donna & Indal Balkissoon, Bob Muselli, Lon Dayhoff, John Maceda, Caroline Hildreth, Shirley Tuccillo, Peter Fistanic, Marcus Caban, Ann DeMarco, Lenny Thompson, Anna Aboltins, Karen Kozoriz, Dawn Valentine, Helen Wires, Ed Shipwright, Carl and Mindy Jacobsen, Anne Okun, Anna Marie Zarr, Anna Atilas, Laura Woltman, Rose Barron, Marietta Blanchette, Edna Weber, Mia Frangoulis, Joseph Musco, Sheri Wilborn, Beverly Malmbeck, Kevin Flannery, Sr., Mike Riquier, John Fowler, Kristine Larsen, Adam Torres, Ruth Kennedy, Robert Hofmo, Mike Roszko, David Stayer, Julie Dawson, Cathy Keogh, Maureen Whalen, Marie Lane, Maryann Clark, Sal Turturici, Christine Landi, Twins – Cody and Owen, Kent Norvin, Claire Capron, Gianna Pizzimenti, Jerry Farnen, Shawn Walters, Edith Zito, Barbara Muselli, Joe & Dottie Gizzarelli, George Stuart, Lynne McLaughlin, Chloe Sletholt, John E. Sletholt, Barbara Vlaovic, Ralph Villano, Manghild Olsen, Mary Sandoval

IN SYMPATHY

Evangelos Geroulanos
October 23rd
Love and condolences to Spery
Tslirides, our 2nd Grade
teacher on the loss of
her father.

STRENGTH & PROTECTION

Joseph Gordon, Paul Boackle, Joshua Roman,
Nico Hernandez Medina

Peter Tierney
October 20th
Love and condolences to the
Tierney and Reilly Families.

Church Council Highlights — January 16, 2017 Meeting

Bay Ridge Center (presented by Pastor Paul)

- The NYC Department for the Aging is very positive regarding the construction of a new senior center at 456 Ovington Avenue. Final negotiations are taking place with the property owner.

Worship & Music (presented by Dennis Monsen)

- It was nice having two worship services on Christmas Eve (10:30 a.m. and 11:00 p.m.). This was unique, since Christmas Eve fell on a Sunday. This enabled younger families to worship at Christmas. The council requested the Worship/Music commission to consider an alternate time for our Candlelight worship, so more people could enjoy this meaningful worship service.
- Other wonderful worship experiences included, Christmas Day, Deacon Tony filling in for Pastor Paul, and Victoria Hofmo's Three Kings program.
- It was noted that the organ needs some extra attention this year. More money will be allocated in the 2018 budget for "Piano & Organ" than in previous years.

Lutheran Elementary School (presented by Al Koehler)

- A letter went out to the church and school community announcing Lorraine Tuccillo's retirement at the end of the school year. Corinne King has been chosen as our new principal beginning July 1st.
- Additional retirement announcements will accompany the re-registration information. A plan is already in place to ensure stability for our school and calm any possible uneasiness felt by our school parents.
- An online survey was given to our school families highlighting our specialty programs (i.e. Art, Architecture, yoga, gardening, etc.). Over 2/3 of our families responded and the feedback was excellent.
- A documented Security Plan will be put in place for our school and security upgrades will be pursued.
- Tuition will increase moderately in the next school year.
- LES finances are in order, progressing as expected with a balanced budget.
- Corinne King has begun attending all School Board meetings to ensure a smooth transition.
- Interested in adding an additional member on the School Board to replace Helen Roszko's seat.

Property (presented by Steve Solby)

- No property work done in January.
- A list of property improvement items were shared for 2018. Most necessitate warmer weather before they can begin. The work will be prioritized by the Property Commission.

Sunday School (presented by Kathy Finkelstein)

- Mentioned again, how nice the Christmas pageant turned out. Everyone did a great job.
- The new Sunday School curriculum has been received for the Spring.
- The Sunday School lesson for Three Kings Sunday aligned nicely with Victoria Hofmo's Three Kings/Epiphany program in church.
- Our teenage Sunday School assistants are great (Aaron, Hannah & Valentina)
- The Knudsen grandchildren did a wonderful job as greeters last Sunday.

Healing Center (presented by Pastor Paul)

- The financial health of the Healing Center will be the focus for the board of directors in 2018. Some of the public discretionary funding was cut this year, so more money needs to be raised by the board.

Evangelism (presented by Deacon Tony)

- Calls were made to our older church members during the recent snowstorm to ensure their safety. It is so meaningful that Deacon Tony reaches out in this way.

Fellowship (presented by Al Koehler for Kim Tran)

- The Bethlehem women will be meeting in the parsonage on Friday, January 19th.

Public Relations

- No report this month.

Church Council Highlights — January 16, 2017 Meeting (continued)

Finance Report (presented by Christine Puelle)

- The December 2017 (year-end) financial report was reviewed and accepted as presented. It was an extremely positive report.
- The draft 2018 budget was reviewed. The motion was made and passed to recommend the adoption of the 2018 budget as presented, at the annual congregational meeting on January 28th.

Pastor's Report (presented by Pastor Paul)

- Visitations (6), Funerals (2), Baptisms (0), Weddings (0)
- The youth group will be going to Koinonia for their winter retreat February 9 – 11. Deacon Tony will fill in for Pastor Paul at Bethlehem that Sunday.
- The annual meeting will take place after the worship service on Sunday, January 28th.
- The Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper will be Tuesday, February 13th.
- Property sale: No change in status to the sale of our 415 Ovington Ave. apartment building.
- The final 2017 Benevolence spreadsheet was shared. Bethlehem donated a record \$91,500 to other ministries last year. Since 2001, \$1,090,500 has been given away!
- A request to use our parish room was approved for a Scandinavian East Coast Museum Fastelavn fundraiser.
- The Nominating Committee recommendations for church council were approved.
 - 2nd 3-year term (Laura Caruso, Tony Clemente, Kim Tran)
 - 1st 3-year term (Doris Dunn)
 - 1st 2-year term (Lisa Johansson)
- Special thanks was given to Al Koehler for serving our congregation so well as our president. His service, dedication and strong leadership will be sorely missed.



Dear Members and Friends,

After many years of breakdowns and repairs, our 18 passenger bus has been allowed to retire. The Department for the Aging has replaced it with a 10 passenger vehicle. That is going to require some changes to our planning for transportation. So, I want to explain them all. I also want to go over the “rules” for qualifying for transportation here at our Center.

Through our contract with DFTA, Bay Ridge Center offers transportation to individual members who are “mobility impaired” on a daily basis. In order to qualify for the service, individuals have to live in Community Board 10 and have a physical limitation which prevents them from using public transportation. Furthermore, individuals must be “members in good standing” and have gone through a “mobility assessment” by our staff. There is also a requirement that once you are “qualified” for the transportation that you must reserve a place on the bus 24 hours in advance. However, that reservation request does not guarantee that we can pick you up at the time you want. Because we have only 10 to 12 seats on the bus, we need to pick up folks in the most efficient way possible.

I wish we could operate the buses to be more responsive to everyone’s desires, but it is not possible. We are not running a car service. We cannot offer door to door service on demand.

Recently, we have noticed that folks reserve a seat 5 days a week and then routinely don’t use it all 5 days or they do not cancel the trip. That means that the bus driver goes to their door and waits 10 minutes or longer, tries calling them to see if they are coming. It delays everyone else’s pickup times which means other folks are waiting outdoors and getting cold. Also, it means that we have turned away others who wanted/needed to come to the Center that day. It’s selfish and unfair to everyone.

So, we have to institute some changes to make sure everyone has a fair chance to use the program. If you only come in 3 days a week, please do not ask us for service 5 days a week. If you cannot come in a day, you must call in the day before. If you are currently scheduled for daily transportation and habitually cancel or do not appear for your ride, we will reduce your scheduled pickups so that we can offer the service to others who are currently being denied. It is unfair to run the bus half empty, when so many need to use it. If you don’t notify the Center of cancelling 3 times, we will be forced to suspend your services for 30 days.

As a last point, there can be no changes to the return times without an approval from Nicole. If you are scheduled for 1:00 pm you cannot switch to 2:00 pm. Those scheduled at 2:00 pm cannot switch to 1:00 pm either. Lastly, drivers are not authorized to change their routes, so please do not ask them to do so. Should you want to change anything, please speak with Nelson in the office or call 718-748-0650.

Please help us to make transportation be as efficient and available to everyone as possible.

Marianne Nicolosi
Executive Director



From LES 2017 Annual Report presented on January 28, 2018

Dear Bethlehem,

In my message last year, the key word was “change”. This year it is “transition” which is kind of the same thing! When I spoke about change, it was change that took place in our curriculum and the new teaching approaches that we were implementing.

“Transition” has become a lot more personal for five of us “1950 something gals.” December 31st was Janet Cerutti’s last day at LES, and Gail Solby, Christine Fredricksen, Linda Schaefer and I have decided to transition into the next phase of our lives at the end of this school year. That word sounded a whole lot better to us than retirement!

Corinne King will officially become Principal on September 1st. She has been working tirelessly at making sure that this transition will be smooth for our LES families. Needless to say, I am extremely proud of Corinne and know that I am leaving LES in good hands.

Yes, there have been many changes at LES over the past 60 years, yet we have remained true to our mission. While providing our students with a solid academic curriculum, at the core of who we are is teaching our children about the love of God. We sing, pray and worship together. This will never change.

Bethlehem - Thank you from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to be the Principal of your school for 19 years. It has been an honor and an incredibly rewarding time for me. I have met so many wonderful families and worked with so many incredible and talented people in the classroom and in the office. Thank you Joanne and Janet for keeping me grounded when things got a little crazy. No one could have possibly asked for a more supportive School Board; and Pastor Paul – thank you for not listening to me when I told you that you were crazy to even offer me this job.

Sincerely,

Lorraine M. Tuccillo

Principal



From LES 2017 Annual Report presented on January 28, 2018

Dear Friends,

In 2017 we reached 4,564 people in the following ways:

DIRECT SERVICES

The Healing Center provided supportive counseling, safety planning, and leadership development, referrals to housing, food and clothing, advocacy assistance to obtain orders of protection, information about immigration rights, court proceedings and legal counsel. The families leave our center knowing what their next course of action will be. We had 215 visits recorded in our sign in book for client services.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Through community outreach and education, The Healing Center reached out to local schools, churches, tabling at various community events, Brooklyn Public Library and other community based organizations. We reached 3,742 individuals through presentations and outreach.

YOUTH COMPONENT

We provide a group forum for teens (Daughters of the Lotus) that have witnessed or experienced violence to discuss gender, power and control issues, girls gain skills to become peer leaders and public presenters. The 6th Annual NYC Teen Dating Violence Awareness Walkathon was held on April 22, 2017. Approximately 300 people, majority teens, gathered Downtown Brooklyn and walked across the Brooklyn Bridge creating awareness on issues of teen dating violence and sexual assault. The Walkathon ended with a press conference on the steps of City Hall.

Hi5 CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

We received a grant from the ELCA Children's Endowment Foundation to work with children that witness domestic violence in the home. We will provide individual and expressive art therapy. Through individual therapy children learn strategies for coping and staying safe, and open up freely about their trauma. Expressive art allows children to use music; paints and other means to communicate their feelings, thoughts and fears in a non- threaten way.

ELDER ABUSE

With City Council funding for Elder Abuse we provided culturally competent services to seniors who do not report abuse, due to language and cultural barriers. We provided direct assistance related to safety planning, resources and referrals. We presented educational awareness to 607 seniors. We reached out to organizations and churches in the southwest part of Brooklyn, NY. Topics discussed were signs of elder abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, neglect, exploitation, abandonment, and what does culture say about elder abuse.

(more)



(continued)

WORKING WITH FAITH COMMUNITIES / ANNUAL INTERFAITH BREAKFAST The Healing Center held its 10th Annual Interfaith Breakfast together with multi-religious leaders. This year's theme was "Embracing the Sacred in our Work to End Intimate Violence". Speakers included leaders from the Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist tradition, 55 people attended. We also partner with Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church to bring domestic violence workshops to people of faith and social service providers. These workshops are held every month.

ANNUAL FUNDRAISER The Healing Center celebrated 17 years of providing services to victims and survivors of domestic violence on December 6, 2017. Our fund raiser was sponsored by TD Bank.

FAMILY CHRISTMAS EVENT The Healing Center completed 2017 on a successful note. Our Children's/Family Christmas event, is one of our most exciting events for our families was a success, due to the support we received from Bay ford Associates, a civic organization and The Pour House from Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. They provided over 200 toys; ham for mothers, and donations for the cost of the food served at the event. Lutheran Elementary School also provided toys; gift baskets for the mothers and gifts cards for our teens, mothers from the school gift wrapped all the toys. In addition, Bethlehem Lutheran Church's Choir, provided hats, scarfs and gloves. Santa Claus was a community resident who put a smile on the children's faces, taking pictures with approximately 60 children. Each child received 3 to 4 gifts/toys. The Fort Hamilton Public Library also partnered with us and brought the Bilingual Birdies a musical interactive show for the children.

We are grateful to our funders that make it possible to continue with our mission:

- Bethlehem Lutheran Church
- Brooklyn District Attorney
- NYC Council Member Carlos Menchaca
- NYC Councilmember Vincent Gentile
- NY State Senator Marty Golden
- NY State Assemblyman Felix Ortiz
- The New York City Council
- TD Bank
- ELCA – Metro NY Synod
- ELCA Children's Endowment Foundation
- And many donor gifts

Sincerely,

Antonia Clemente

Executive Director

AN ALL-OR-NOTHING MARRIAGE ? *

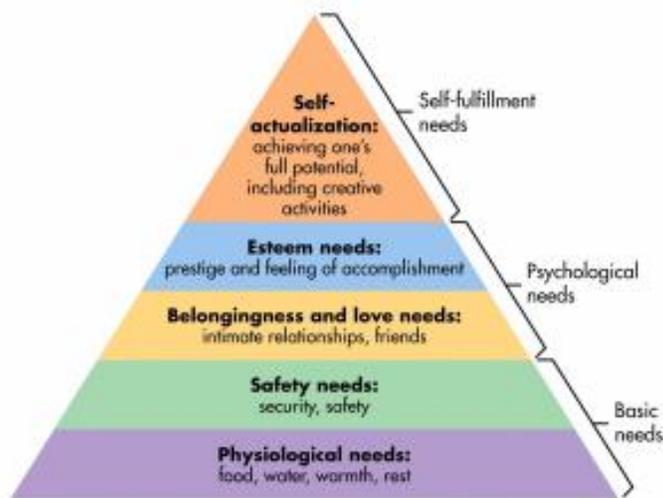
By Rev. Dr. Ronald Lehenbauer, LCC Pastoral Therapist

Do we expect more from marriage today than our parents or grandparents did? Our culture is rapidly changing, and marriage is changing with it. In our times marriage is no longer a precondition for becoming a grownup, getting it on, ensuring economic security, or having kids.

In this 21st century, spouses seem to want more from their partners and more from marriage. They seek partners who will bring out their best, most authentic selves, who can spot potential in their mate, and find (Michelangelo-like) the beautiful sculpture within the block of stone.

We still want the basic benefits of couple-hood. We still want security. We still want a passionate lover. We still want good parenting skills. Those come standard. We continue to view our marriage as a central locus of love and passion, and we continue to view our home as a safe-haven in a heartless world. But, in addition, we also need someone who promotes self-expression and personal self-actualization.

The history of marriage is like the ascent up a Maslow-like mountain of needs and desires. At base camp are economic and physical safety. Higher up the mountain, it takes a different kind of effort to make a marriage work. We are expected to be each other's coach, therapist and champion, while also being vulnerable, familiar and playful.



A good marriage relationship with trust and commitment provides not only a safe-haven, characterized by intimacy, understanding and differentiated communication. Marriage is also about creating shared meaning, honoring one another's life's journey, and helping make each other's dreams and aspirations come true. (Cf. John Gottman's "Sound Marital House.") We need to figure out both what our partner needs at any given point, and how we, with our own challenges and quirks, might be able to provide it.

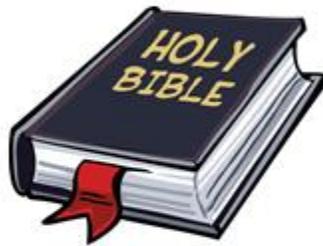
The climb to the top of this marriage mountain may seem difficult, but the rewards are considerable, placing in reach a whole new level of intimate connection, unity and joy.

There's no magic formula for traveling up this mountain together. But some primary gifts and behaviors are: differentiated dialogue, being responsive to each other's emotional bids, having fun together, giving your partner the benefit of the doubt with positive sentiment override, occasionally lowering your expectations for what your partner can do for you, and carving out some time just for each other.

This "new" idea of marriage, I believe, was the original vision for marriage by our Creator-God. And because we are imperfect human-partners, there will be missteps, failures, and disappointments along the path up the mountain, with frequent need for forgiveness, compassion and grace. Therefore we will be happier in our marriages if we can gracefully accept that it's not all-or-nothing.

* Dr. Ron Lehenbauer, a couple therapist at the Lutheran Counseling Center, has extensively based this article on Belinda Luscombe, "Why marriage is harder than ever – and maybe better too," Time (9/25/17, p.25), reviewing Eli Finkel's book, The All-or-Nothing Marriage; and using John Gottman, "The Sound Marital House," The Gottman Institute, 2001.

Adult **Bible**
Class



Sunday Mornings
9:15 – 10:15 a.m.
In the Parish Room

led by Carl Jacobsen

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

4th & Ovington Avenues

Brooklyn NY 11209

718-748-9502

www.bethlehembayridge.org

Sunday Worship Service at 10:30 AM

All are welcome here



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