

On the mind of the Rev. Adrian Dannhauser...

The word *agape* has been on my mind lately. First, because of the highly successful Agape Fund Bake Sale last weekend! Second, because of the dire need for more *agape* (Christlike) love in our world. And third, because of all the premarital counseling I've been doing lately.

Eros love is the love of romance. *Philia* love is the love of friendship. Both are loves that are based on our feelings or preference for a person. Agape love, in contrast, is based on God's command to love our neighbor. And who is our neighbor? Everyone, enemies included. It is the love of Christian duty grounded in our love of God and commitment to follow Jesus.

In his book *Works of Love*, Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard argues that agape love is essential for a marriage to be secure because romantic love alone is inherently unstable and prone to emotional chaos. "The love which simply exists, however fortunate, however blissful, however satisfying, however poetic it is, still must survive the test of the years. But the love which has undergone the transformation of the eternal by becoming duty has won continuity." (p. 47).

Friendships – indeed, all relationships – benefit from agape love too. It's the glue that holds them together when feeling isn't enough. Kierkegaard writes of God as a "middle term" (p. 58), which other scholars have used to invoke the image of an equilateral triangle with God at the top point, the self at the bottom left point, and the other person (whether that be neighbor/lover/friend) at the bottom right point.

In choosing how to relate or react to someone, we can build a path along the bottom of the triangle. This might work out just fine, or it might not. Again, human emotions are all over the place, and this horizontal path could end up being driven by selfish desires, codependency, or negativity.

The other option is to build a path that goes through God. That could mean stopping short of saying something unkind because you've run into God on your way to responding to someone who offended you. It could mean calling your parents because God says to honor your father and mother. (I doubt my daughter at college is reading this, but, hey, you never know.) Or it could mean answering a request for help when you "just don't have the time." As is often the case, you may find that loving action leads to loving emotion.

The point is to center God in our relationships just as we seek to center God in our lives. It's hard work, to be sure. But love, it turns out, hangs on a command.

Adrian+

TODAY AFTER CHURCH

12:30 to 1:15 p.m. All are invited to the Parish Dining Room to help make sandwiches for delivery to a nearby homeless drop-in center.

POTENTIAL BLOOD DRIVE AT INCARNATION

Incarnation would like to host a blood drive on a Saturday this winter in conjunction with the New York Blood Center (NYBC). For a blood drive to be successful, 60 people need to donate. As we explore the possibility of hosting a drive, NYBC would like us to "take the temperature" of our congregation to see if we're likely to get a good turnout from the parish.

Please add your name to the Blood Drive Interest Sheet at the back of the church or online at <https://bit.ly/4Aax7qe> if you would donate blood should you be available on the date of the drive.

KEEP IT COOL CAMPAIGN

We recently launched the Keep It Cool Campaign to replace our 70-year-old air-conditioning system in the church. As of today, we have received **\$107,457** in pledges and gifts!

We are well on our way to meeting our campaign goal of **\$150,000**. Will you help us reach it with a pledge to the campaign? Pledges can be fulfilled in 2027. Use the pledge card in your pew by filling it out or scanning the QR code. Pick up a letter from the Rector and Wardens at the back of the church to learn more about this capital project to *Keep It Cool* at Incarnation.

RALLY TO STOP EXECUTIONS IN IRAN

Tuesday, September 22, 9:00 a.m. Today, Iran is facing a grave human rights crisis. Executions, arbitrary arrests and imprisonment, torture, suppression of freedom of expression and belief, and persecution for exercising fundamental rights have brought tremendous suffering to many families. The Association of Iranian Americans in New York invites us to attend a rally at Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza (47th St. b/w 1st and 2nd Aves.) to stand in solidarity with Iranians calling for “No Executions.” Pick up a flyer in the narthex for more information and let the Rev. Adrian Dannhauser know if you can join her there.

SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY

Sunday, September 27, 10:00 to 10:40 a.m. Join us in the Parish House for the last session in a three-part series on *The Parables of Jesus: An In-Depth Look*. Led by the Rev. Greg Morgan.

OUR BELIEFS, OUR PRACTICES, OUR PARISH

Sunday, September 27, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Aimed primarily at helping newcomers and new members integrate into the parish, this three-part class is open to everyone who would like to know more about what our church believes and does. Join the Rev. Adrian Dannhauser in the Parish Dining Room for a discussion about Christian doctrine foundational to our faith. Remaining sessions will take place at the same time on October 11 and 25.

EVERY SAVE THE DATE FOR INCARNATE JAZZ!

Friday, October 30, 7:00 to 10:30 p.m. Sarah Pillow sings selections from her new jazz album, *Wanderer*. Followed by a screening of F. W. Murnau’s legendary film *Nosferatu* (1922), accompanied live by Dr. Kalle Toivio on Incarnation’s newly restored Aeolian-Skinner organ. Purchase tickets [through Eventbrite](#).

