



Bethabara - Frequently Asked Questions

How would I arrange for a personal or group retreat time, ask questions or set up a visit, inquire about spiritual direction or pastoral counseling?

Just call Mary Van Andel at (269-857-7010) or email Mary or Ben at bethabara@comcast.net

What are the costs for Bethabara's services?

- Time in the retreat house is \$60/24 hour stay, \$70 for a couple.
- Fees for spiritual direction or pastoral counseling are on a sliding scale of \$50-75 per session. To encourage inquiry, Mary offers the first session without charge. If you decide to continue, you should plan to pay for the first and successive sessions.
- -Fees for groups vary according to what is needed but are comparatively quite modest, usually from \$40-\$65/ person. Retreat days typically include space, leadership, beverages, snacks and lunch.

Do I have to be a member of any particular religious group to come to Bethabara?

No. Though Mary and Ben are Christians, Bethabara welcomes people who come for the purpose of communion with God, whether they claim a religious tradition or not.

Are the facilities available for people/groups who do not have a religious purpose?

Yes, on occasion Bethabara is used by groups without a specifically religious purpose, but with an over-all humanitarian purpose. It is best to call and talk over your request with Mary. Scholars, artists and business people are welcome at Bethabara.

Is the retreat cottage comfortable year round and handicap accessible?

The retreat house is equipped for use all year round. It is heated by radiant heat in winter and has a fireplace for ambiance and warmth. In summer, it is cooled by windows and an overhead fan. It is not air conditioned. This is also true of the main house when group retreats are hosted. When you come on retreat, we encourage you to dress in layers, warm socks and slippers, to add and subtract as you need to, according to the weather.

Depending on an individual's needs, we can sometimes accommodate guests with handicaps, but regrettably, the facilities are not truly handicap accessible.

Is Bethabara in a remote location?

Not at all. Though it is sheltered and heavily wooded, it's only 45 minutes from downtown Grand Rapids, 15 minutes from Holland, 5 minutes from Saugatuck.

Include map

If I come to Bethabara for a personal retreat, what do I need to bring?

Just personal items: clothing, toiletries, favorite food items, a book or journal. All linens will be provided, although we do ask that guests who use make-up or strong chemical preparations for personal care bring their own washcloths and towels. Slippers and pillows are provided but some people prefer to bring their own. The bed is a high quality queen size futon, made extra comfortable with a lovely feather bed, and made up with cotton or flannel sheets, according to season or preference. In the kitchen, you will find Bethabara's own home made soup, bread, fresh fruit, cheese, eggs, hot and cold cereal, pancake mix, yogurt, coffee and tea, as well as basic cooking products and condiments such as oil, jam and syrup. All foods are vegetarian.

Of course, it's a completely personal choice, but most retreatants, especially people who are accustomed to being in constant communication with work or family members, will find that their retreat time is richer and more restful if they travel lightly, leaving behind electronics, piles of books, projects, and especially cell phones. Retreatants are welcome to leave the Bethabara phone number with spouses/friends for use in the event of an emergency.

What will I do on personal retreat without a program?

People who have a hard time slowing down or being quiet may find that a little structure is helpful to them, something we can help to provide. But most people, especially the ones who were nervous about unscheduled time alone, tell us they are surprised to discover how lovely it is to dawdle over morning coffee or really watch what the birds are doing, take a nap, actually savor their soup or enjoy a shower, take the time to reflect on their lives and relationships without constant interruptions, walk in the woods and really notice the diversity of plant life and the gurgle of the creek. There are books in the retreat house, simple art materials, puzzles and writing materials, but most people discover that once they allow themselves to notice what is right in front them, and give up trying to manage their lives, work, and other people from a distance, they discover they are neither bored nor restless. For those who prefer some help with their retreat time, it's smart to schedule a session of spiritual direction near the beginning of their retreat in order to help focus and to gain some tools to use the time well. Others prefer to use their time as they wish.

Bethabara

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