

LIFETIMES

December 2025

From the Pastor



Kai Nilsen
Senior Pastor

Holiday seasons amplify the hopes and hurts of everyday life. They are overflowing with the blessing of family and friends, or they may overwhelm you with the bitterness of an empty chair at your table. They are inspiring and infuriating; nourishing and nauseating; heartfelt and heartbreaking; promising and painful; joyful and joyless. Holiday seasons amplify the hopes and hurts of everyday life. That is particularly true when relationships are strained.

The Rev. Cameron Trimble recently wrote *A Prayer for Letting of the Shoulds*. As I think about my own life and relationships this holiday season, I find it to be a gentle source of encouragement and, dare I say, hope. Maybe you will too.

*God of honesty and healing,
You see the distance in our relationships,
the pain that festers in silence,
the tension that rises every time we hear their name.*

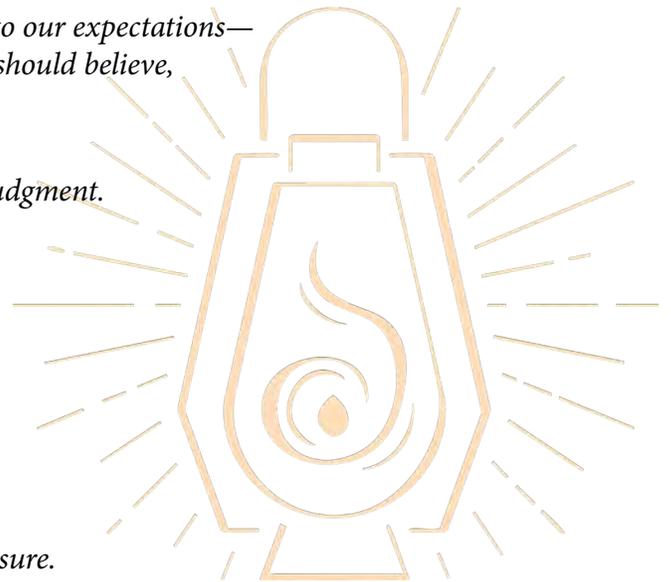
*We confess that we have clung to our expectations—
who they should be, what they should believe,
how they should act.*

*We confess that our grief
has sometimes hardened into judgment.
And our hopes, left unspoken,
have become sources of sorrow.*

*So help us release them—
not to excuse harm,
but to set ourselves free
from the prison of the past.*

*Help us grieve what never was.
Help us forgive what we can.
Help us find clarity, not just closure.*

*And when we are ready,
help us see others not through the lens of “should,”
but through the lens of shared humanity—
complex, beloved, imperfect. Amen.*



Holiday seasons amplify the hopes and hurts of everyday life. Let's amplify hope.

Peace, Kai



Joy McDonald Coltvet
Pastor for Faith Formation

Luke's Gospel begins the story of Jesus with this opening line: "In the time of Herod..." This detail may seem minor to modern readers, however, it reveals layers of information about the fearful world Jesus entered, one filled with rampant oppression, economic disparity, uncertainty, and instability. A world not so unlike our own. And yet, throughout the stories of Christ's birth, the whispers of angels deliver a surprising message: "Do not fear." In our own time, we might ask: is it even possible to be fearless in a fearful world? When Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the magi are each called into God's redemptive story, they do not deny their fears—they move through them. They ask questions, hold fast to courage, trust in good news, and say, "Here I am, Lord." When we find ourselves in fearful times, can we acknowledge our fears while also insisting on hope?

Every Advent, we light candles, sing carols, and pray for Christ's coming because we believe God entered a frightened world to bring good news. We hold onto hope because we believe that Christ did come—that's the promise of the season. Our hope is not flimsy or fleeting. It's gritty, resilient, and can endure—no matter what we fear or face. This season, let us insist on hope and trust that good news is greater than fear.

What can you expect this Advent?

In addition to meaningful Sunday worship around this theme of hope, watch for these extras:

Holden Evening Prayer

On Advent Wednesdays – December 3, December 10 and December 17 at 6 pm

In the middle of this beautiful evening prayer by Marty Haugen, we will offer a scripture, a time of silence (where you may simply be present and/or pray a simple breath prayer that we'll offer), and a poem.

Blue Christmas

On Wednesday, Dec 3, following Holden Evening Prayer, we will have a Blue Christmas

time of prayer and reflection in the chapel. Blue Christmas, Dec 3, 6:30 pm - Chapel

A time of quiet, prayer, candles, care for those who have experienced loss and are carrying grief or weariness in this season.

Advent Devotional – for personal use or to use in a Small Group

Our friends at [A Sanctified Art](#) have provided a special e-reader version of this year's Advent devotional, which you can access on your computer and mobile devices:

online.flippingbook.com/view/361593675/

In order to protect their work, please refrain from sharing this link or posting it on social media. We will also print copies by request for those who would like a printed booklet.

Daily Social Media Posts inviting us to breathe and pray a simple breath prayer each day ([Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)) OR if social media is not your thing, pick up a one sheet calendar of the breath prayers for each day in December.

Festive Christmas Worship

Christmas Eve worship will be offered at 1 pm, 3 pm, 5 pm and 7 pm

Christmas Day worship will be at 10 am

First Sunday of Christmas worship will be at 10 am



Tracy Strantz
Council President

This past month has been eventful! **On November 2, Council hosted our 4th Quarter Discussion Forum**—a dynamic hour of information sharing and engaging dialogue. We highlighted progress on the Three-Year Plan, including preschool strategy initiatives, ministry growth, and facility enhancements, and offered a preview of the November 16 Annual Meeting.

Thank you to all Congregation Members who participated in the November 16th Congregational Meeting following both Sunday morning worship services. The purpose of the November meeting is to seek Congregation approval for the candidates identified by the Nominating Committee to serve on Council, Synod Assembly, and the Endowment Committee. We are deeply grateful to the volunteers stepping into these roles and to the congregation for affirming them. These individuals bring fresh perspectives and a strong commitment to our mission.

Their bios and photos are included in both the Q4 Discussion deck and the Annual Meeting deck, published on our Council webpage. <https://www.incarnationmn.org/about/council/>

We are excited to welcome our new Council members, Rebecca Bergman and Matt Cambronne, who will be officially installed in January. At the same time, we extend heartfelt gratitude to Jim Meinen and Amy Johnson as they conclude their service on Council. Both have made lasting contributions:

- *Jim Meinen* has been a key contributor to the Three-Year Plan Task Force since its inception. Over the past year, Jim has guided the Preschool Task Force as they researched and developed a new preschool growth model, laying the foundation for expanding this ministry.
- *Amy Johnson* played a key role in preschool strategy development and her long-standing connections with the Preschool Committee and staff were invaluable. Amy also co-leads Incarnation's very successful Red Cross Blood Drives, now entering their third year.

Jim and Amy, it has been a privilege to serve alongside you. On behalf of the Congregation, thank you for your dedication and leadership.

We also celebrate all volunteers and staff who serve across ministry teams, committees, and action groups. The successes of this year are possible because of your commitment and partnership. We look forward to continuing collaborations in 2026. Together, we have passion, creativity, and determination to turn bold ideas into lasting impact. Remember the words from Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

The future is ours to shape—let's make our story extraordinary.

We welcome any comments, feedback, or questions you may have for Council. You may connect with us through email at council@incarnationmn.org or come visit us in person at the Welcome Kiosk on Sunday mornings. The Kiosk will be staffed by a Council Member **in between the Sunday worship services.** Depending on which service the Council Member attends it's possible you may see us before the early service or after the later service, but the primary availability will occur between the two services.



HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

DECEMBER 14, 2025, 7 PM

Freewill offerings gratefully accepted

Nationally acclaimed and charismatic jazz vocalist Jennifer Grimm, joined by her talented family and friends, will share her amazing vocal stylings in a program of holiday music.

Bring your friends and arrive early to enjoy a festive Christmas cookie!

(Performance time: 75 minutes)

Incarnation Lutheran Church
4880 Hodgson Rd, Shoreview, MN 55126
www.incarnationmn.org

INCARNATION
MUSIC SERIES



Sean Turner
Minister of Worship,
Music & the Arts

It's that time of year again! We are very excited about celebrating the coming Christmas season, and we gratefully look back at all of the wonderful music events that have taken place in the past months. Wonderful memories of T Mychael Rambo's stirring vocals, the Jack Brass Band, Cantor Inbal Sharett-Singer, the amazing choir experience at Carnegie Hall, the Ukulele Ensemble leading worship, and the incredible contribution to our worship services given by all participants in our choirs and ensembles. Not to mention the incredible concerts provided by the Incarnation Music Series! What a year — and still a month to go!

We are so grateful for your support of our programs. We have an incredible team in Amy Maakestad and Kathleen Johnson who pour their love and considerable expertise into everything they do. Participation in our ensembles has been growing exponentially over the last number of years, and we thank you for your gifts of time, talent, and commitment.

Our department has had the goal of increasing the awareness of our sanctuary space as a potential location for outside musical groups to host their concerts. This year, we hosted *Wingspan's Glee Club*, and we will host *Chorus Polaris* and *Bells of the Lakes* on December 7 at 3:00 p.m. Tickets for Chorus Polaris are available through their website <https://givebutter.com/GladTidings1207> or may be purchased onsite the day of the concert. Due to the increasing interest in our location as a concert venue, we find ourselves in need of volunteers to help with various aspects of hosting these types of events. If you would be interested in volunteering, please contact me at sturner@incarnationmn.org.

Wishing you all peace in this season!

Sean

Glad Tidings! from Chorus Polaris and Bells of the Lakes

Enjoy a concert of holiday splendor with Chorus Polaris and Bells of the Lakes, two of the Twin Cities' most cherished ensembles. This year's program, Glad Tidings, blends shimmering handbells and soaring choral harmonies to celebrate the season's joy and unity.

From the peals of Change Ring Prelude on "Divinum Mysterium" to the serenity of Biebl's Ave Maria, the program spans centuries and styles, featuring sacred works, spirited carols, and holiday favorites. Highlights include the vibrant *Riu Riu Chiu*, the charming *Christmas Time Is Here*, and the transcendent *Dona nobis pacem*, uniting both groups in a prayer for peace.

Join us for this festive musical journey on December 7 at Incarnation Lutheran Church in Shoreview. Let glad tidings uplift and inspire you!

Tickets: \$20 at <https://givebutter.com/GladTidings1207>



Glad Tidings!
from
Chorus Polaris & Bells of the Lakes

3:00 p.m., Sun., Dec. 7th
Incarnation Lutheran Church

4880 Hodgson Road
Shoreview, MN

choruspolaris.org/tickets

Adults (21+): \$20
Under 21: Free
20% discount for groups of 5 or more!

The poster features a dark green background with a stylized Christmas tree made of musical notes and a golden bell at the bottom left. A QR code is located in the bottom right corner.



Patty Nilsen
Senior Ministry Leader

More than 80 people attended the Kairos on Senior Ministry on November 9! In our time together, we had vibrant discussions around questions of “how do we” and “how does society” define “senior”, the joys and challenges that come with growing older, and how our faith encourages us during this time. I shared what called me to this role as well as what I have been learning in my first few months as I meet with individuals and groups about exiting ministries and community resources. The developing mission statement for Senior Ministry at Incarnation is to increase opportunities for community, conversations, and care for those approaching retirement and beyond. Attendees were invited to write down specific ideas in response to the question “How can our senior ministry enhance your life, your life of faith, and/or enhance the life of a neighbor or friend through fun activities, meaningful conversations around hot topics, and responsive caregiving during times of changing health for you or your loved ones?” Here are some of the ideas that were given:

Community:

- Primetimers and other shared meal events
- Game time (cards, board games, trivia, bingo, etc.)
- Story sharing, memoir writing
- Weekly coffee gatherings
- Movie, theater, art gallery group outings
- Creative (painting, photography, other arts)
- Line dancing, ballroom dancing, yoga, walking club
- Music groups in the day
- Biblestudy
- Gatherings with others who may have lost a spouse

Conversations:

- Meaningful Retirement or “Refirement”
- Legacy writing, legacy giving
- Political issues, bible study, health and wholeness
- Many issues around growing older
- Downsizing
- Senior living options
- Transitions after loss
- Laughing your way to healthier living
- Tech Tuesday (technology information, how to avoid scams)

Care:

- Medical equipment closet
- How can I help others?
- Caregivers Support
- Grief support
- Transportation/rides
- Handyman help
- Home visiting
- Incarnation Senior Directory

If you are interested in helping plan or serve as we begin offering some of the above options in the new year, please email me at pnilsen@incarnationmn.org.

PUBLIC PRAYER CONCERNS: Claudia Wiebold; Carlos Rodriquez; Julie Rowles; Joan Volkmann; Karen Gladen; Maria & family; Ron Anderson; Sitraka Rakotoarivelo; Pat & Ken Olson; Erin Holmen; Deb Rykken; Karen Stauder; Kara Genia & family; Jon Nelson; Kate Tollefson & family; Carol Beckerleg; Marian Ness; Lowell Odland; Linda Hudepohl; Eric Sinkula's mother; Ruth & Paul Howard's niece; Nicole & Troy Heller's brother-in-law; Kay Leerssen's daughter; Tom Henk's brother; Deb Rykken's brother; Sue

Bernlohr's mother; Mike Wielenberg's mother; Al and Carolyn Ek's son; Kara Johnson's friends Ken & Trish; Nancy Haugen's friends David, Michelle & family and Colette & family; Kim Wielenberg's friend, Cindy; Dede Mattison's friends, Allan and Yvonne; caregivers

SYMPATHY TO: the family of Anna Thorstad on her death; Shirley Kangas and family on the death of her daughter, Jennifer; Sally Lawless and family on the death of her father; Emily Villano on the death of her brother

PrimeTimers Presents: Star of Bethlehem

"Star of Bethlehem"

Thursday, December 18, 10:30 a.m.

Dr. Terrance Flower, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics and Physics at St. Catherine's University ties together the magic of the Christmas season and his knowledge of astronomy. What may have happened in the sky on that glorious first Christmas?

- **Thursday, November 20**
- **Doors open: 10:00 AM**
- **Program starts: 10:30 AM**
- **Lunch: 11:30 AM | \$10 (payable at the door)**

Don't forget to reserve your lunch spot—please give Julie Durbin call by **Monday, December 15**, at 651-484-7213 to sign up.

Dishwashing Volunteers Needed

We are looking for 10+ people who will support Incarnation ministry by helping with dish washing for funerals and special events.

- A commercial dishwasher is used so no standing over a soapy sink and limited drying is needed!
- The commitment is usually during day time hours and for roughly 2 hours.
- There are dish washing leads that will email when help is needed and you can decide your availability based on your schedule.
- The leads will also train new volunteers on how the kitchen works behind the scenes.
- If you volunteer for dish washing, you also get to partake in the yummy food that is served for that event!

If interested, please contact [Julie Durbin](#) in the office. Thanks for making Incarnation the place to be!

Welcome to Our New Members!

Linda Aronson, Carol & Terry Bell, Charles & Jennifer Boline, Colton & Becky Borg, Dean & Sharon Carter, Mark & Jennifer Hansmeier, Mark & Jill Heggstad, Casey & Andrea Johnson, Victor Juran, Ben & Joy McDonald Coltvet; Craig & Sharon McNamara, Jan Messerly, Sam & Stephanie O'Keefe, Otto, Carl Otto, James & Diane Partlow, Andy & Katie Quarfoth, Annette Reagan, Brian & Anna Roach, Paul & Suzy Schultz, Jean Schwartz, Tiede, Paula, Peter, Lana Mark & Anita Udager

Solar Array Celebration



A celebration to inaugurate the startup of the Incarnation solar garden will be held from 10:00-10:15 am on Sunday, December 7, in Grace Hall East.

Also, there will be a solar garden information table in the atrium from 8:30 to Noon on 12/7. Members of the solar team will be available to answer questions, demonstrate live solar power generation, and give away electrical swag.

A dedicated team of Luther Dale, Dave Eckmann, Jim Fruehling, Tim Pratt, and Mike Vant led the development and implementation of the solar garden for Incarnation that would be one answer to Pastor Kai's challenge to help co-create a better and more loving world. This project has two primary goals: reduction in the burning of fossil fuels and electrical savings to be used for program enhancement and/or mortgage reduction.

Over the course of the three-year project the following key issues were addressed: selection of solar contractor Cedar Creek Energy, evaluation of roof vs. ground installation options, amendment to the North Oaks solar ordinance to allow a ground-based system, approval of a Conditional Use Permit by North Oaks, evaluation of funding options, new evergreens for additional screening, avoidance of new tariffs, and timing for the federal rebate.

The resulting 99kW solar garden will provide 90+ percent of ILC's electricity over the next 25 years with a projected electrical savings of over \$700,000. The project is fully funded by individual contributions and a 30% federal rebate.

Thanks to all who donated to the Building For Our Future campaign and for the support of the congregational council for making this facility a reality.



Welcome to the Creation Care Corner, information from the Creation Care Action Group. Our hope is to keep you informed about Creation Care projects at Incarnation as well as provide ideas and resources for your own journey in creating a more sustainable world. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact Nancy Stutzman at nancystutzman@comcast.net or Mike Vant at mjvant@gmail.com

Today's Topic: Have Yourself a Kind Green Little Christmas

We are reminded daily that we are in high season for consumerism. We know that in caring for creation, our lifestyle is crucial to our impact on the earth. Reduce, reuse, and recycle should be our guidelines in order to help sustain God's creation. That can be especially difficult in this holiday season. Here are some ideas to help you have a more sustainable Green Christmas.

- Give experience gifts: theater or music tickets, creative experiences, or consumable gifts of food, drink, and care items.
- Use re-usable or recyclable wrapping: festive cloth scraps that can be tied with a cloth bow or gift bags, or, if that's not possible, recyclable wrapping paper. Note that most wrapping paper is not recyclable — one exception is brown craft paper, which you can dress up with a reusable ribbon.
- When choosing a Christmas tree try a live potted tree that can be planted (research what variety can grow here and how to acclimate it after the holidays), or real cut trees.
- When choosing decorations, avoid tinsel (plastic and hard to reuse). String popcorn and cranberries. Consider what ornaments are made of when purchasing. Avoid glitter — it's plastic and will prevent recycling of items it's attached to.
- Avoid food waste: send food home with your guests and plan quantities realistically.
- Shop second-hand and/or local: toys for the littlest ones, retro glassware or other unique gifts for your adult kids, or a new holiday outfit for yourself.
- Avoid disposable plates, utensils, and napkins: think about borrowing from family, friends, or other guests for really big gatherings.
- Make sure your lights are LED.
- Bonus idea: Give where it's really needed — consider charitable contributions. And simplify. Think about whether drawing names in your family makes sense, and maybe ultimately choosing a charity as a group, or have the choice rotate among family members each year.

Seeking Financial Support From Local Businesses and Organizations



As we close 2025, the Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) Action Group is preparing to host our next MobilePack™ at Incarnation from April 22-26, 2026. Our goal is to pack over 614,304 meals which will feed 1,683 kids one meal a day for one year. In order to do this, we have committed to raising \$180,000 to pay for the meals we pack.

Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) was founded in 1987 and is a Christian non-profit organization dedicated to seeing all of God's children whole in body and spirit. This is accomplished by providing nutritionally complete meals specifically formulated for malnourished children. Donations fund the meal ingredients and volunteers hand-pack the meals. Meals are donated to FMSC food partners around the world who handle distribution. Kids are fed and lives are saved!

Over the years, members of the Incarnation community and beyond have come together hosting the All Hands on Hope MobilePack. Together we have

packed over 9.8 million meals, feeding 27,106 children a meal per day for an entire year!

As we get underway with planning for the MobilePack, we are looking for local businesses and organizations to help us raise funds and provide volunteers to pack the meals. Your donation will be extremely impactful:

- \$5,000 sponsors 3 classrooms of local students to pack for one shift
- \$10,000 covers the cost to pack 41,667 meals – approximately 15% of our packing goal
- \$25,000 feeds three villages of 100 children for one year
- \$50,000 pays for 208,333 meals to feed 570 kids for one year

With your donation, your business can receive logo placement on site throughout the MobilePack and on all social media channels. Your business will also be verbally recognized by the Action Team at each packing session.

FMSC has earned the highest 4-star rating from Charity Navigator for 19 years. 88% of every donation goes directly to feeding kids. And an amazing 99.8% of meals shipped reach their destination. Rest assured donations are going directly to the people who need it around the world.

If your business or organization is interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact [Don Martin](#) or the [Incarnation office](#). We look forward to exploring this life-changing opportunity with you.

Until All Are Fed!

ELCA GOOD GIFTS AVAILABLE DECEMBER 7 and 14

As members of the ELCA, we believe that God's love in Jesus is a gift. The ELCA Good Gifts program is just one way you can share that love with others. Stop by the ELCA World Hunger display on December 7 and December 14 to contribute through "Good Gifts" as you prepare for the Christmas season ahead.

Possibilities include:

- \$25 provides a hygiene kit

- \$30 provides vaccinations for a child
- \$40 provides school fees and a uniform for a girl
- \$50 provide a share of a fish farm

Come by the table and give a gift in honor of someone special; it's easy to do and will go far to make the life of someone who lives elsewhere in God's world know the love you are willing to share through Jesus.

Welcome to the 2025-2026 Kairos season. The Kairos logo, the Jerusalem cross, is a universal symbol for Kairos/God's time. Kairos sessions will be held at 10:15 AM in the Fireside Room.



December 7
Parents Letting Go

Parents are more challenged to let go of adult children than in past generations. We need to learn how to let go, whether the young adult is living at home or not. Letting go in love is foundational and has its roots in our experience of God's love in Christ. Stoltzfus counsels parents and writes about young adult parenting challenges in his recent book, "The Parent's Launch Code: Loving and Letting Go of Our Adult Children." His website: parentslettinggo.com

Presenter: Jack Stoltzfus, Clinical Psychologist, author and America's Launch Coach™



December 14
Part 2: Foundations of Hope: Ruth and David

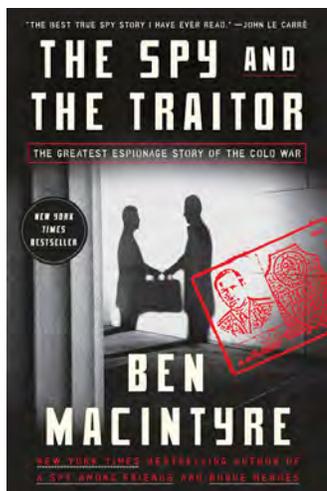
Advent is about hopeful waiting, but we're not the first ones to wait and hope for a Redeemer. The Bible is filled with stories of hope, including the stories of two particular ancestors of Jesus: Ruth and David. Come study anew the stories of the Moabite widow and the flawed Israelite king, her great-grandson, who helped lay the foundation for the story of Jesus the Messiah, the center of our Advent hope.

An ordained ELCA pastor, she served at churches in Iowa and Wisconsin before coming to Luther. She co-hosts the podcast, "Everything you wanted to know about the Bible but were afraid to ask" at EntertheBible.org. She is also a frequent contributor to WorkingPreacher.org.

Presenter: Kathryn Schifferdecker, Prof. of Old Testament, Luther Seminary

2025 CONFIRMANDS — OCTOBER 26, 2025

Markus Anderson, Eleanor Bakken, Vivian Bergengren, Charlie Betty, Abigail Bjelland, Oliver Blaseck, Allison Coyle, Colin Dunn, Leah Fury, Kaitlyn Genia, Michael Genia, Alexander H Halverson, Everett Hansen, Kate Hansmeier, Scarlet Hastreiter, Samuel Heineman, Stella Hemquist, Noah Johnson, Henry Kopacz, Ezra Kuhl, Peyton LaNore, Sage Mahrt, Dylan Morse, Lindsey Mortenson, Brinley Muller, Charles O'Brien, Braden Popp, Salma Poveda, Theodore Quast, Caleigh Sather, Isabelle Scanlon, Emmett Strauss, Lilah Tyler, Aili Vance, Ava Vance, Nathan Varro, Lillian Wahlberg, Gemma Wolfe

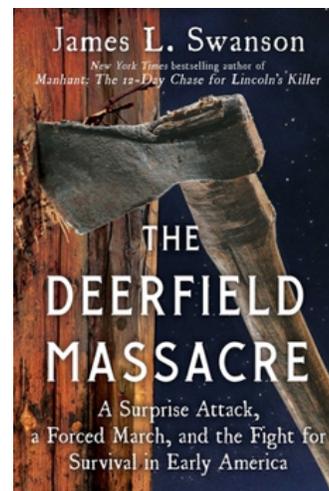


The Men's History Group meets on the first and third Tuesday at 9 AM in Bethany Lounge to discuss a non-fiction history book selected by one of the members. Anyone interested in the subject is invited to attend any session, even if you have not read the book of that month. Here are the next books:

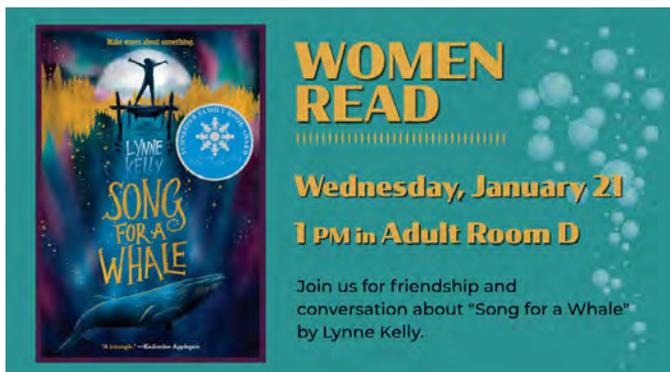
DECEMBER — *“The Spy and the Traitor: The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War”* by Ben MacIntyre. This story unfolds with the pace and drama that recalls the novels of John le Carré, who says of this book, “The best true spy story I have ever read.”

JANUARY — *“The Deerfield Massacre: A Surprise Attack and the Fight for Survival in Early America”* by James L. Swanson. A long-forgotten story of tragedy and survival on the early American frontier and the plight of Native Americans as they struggle to preserve their ancestral land.

For more information, contact Jerry Gilbert at dacta49@msn.com.



Women Read



Next meeting: Wednesday, January 21
1:00 PM in Adult Room D

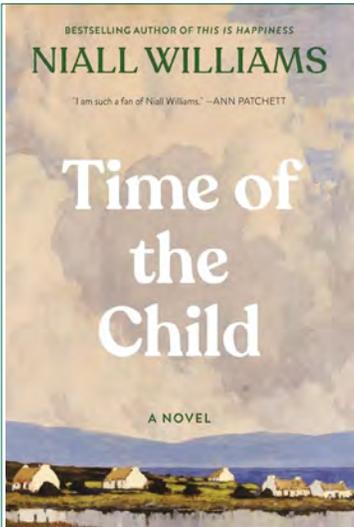
A 12-year old girl is a tech genius but also deaf. Her disability defines her to others as not very smart. When she hears about a blue whale who cannot communicate with other whales, she understands and wants to help. This heart-felt story shows how determination can make big waves. Come and join us!

Hope for the Holidays

Hope for the Holidays is a program of Global Refuge (formerly Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service). It provides an avenue for us to send a message of hope to immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, reminding them that they are not alone during this holiday season. Our new neighbors have persevered through incredible challenges to find refuge in the United States—and while many are no longer in immediate danger, their journeys are far from over. They are now navigating the ever-changing policies that threaten their security in their new communities and the challenges of maintaining their immigration status. And unfortunately, many may never reunite with their families.

As we enter a season of friends, family, and celebration, let us share the gift of connection with those who may be feeling insecure or alone. Let us remember those who may be thousands of miles away from family and the homes they were forced to flee. Sign a card (instructions provided), sending warmth and friendship. The cards are available in the library; signed cards go in the basket with the bow. They must be returned by December 3 for mailing.

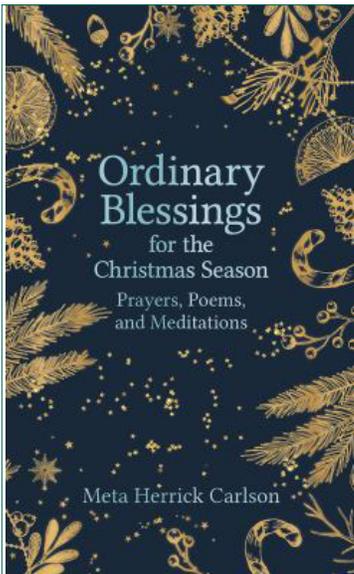
Donations to help with the cost of mailing are welcome, too.



Time of the Child By Niall Williams

Time of the Child by Niall Williams returns readers to the town of Faha, a smaller and newly electrified town in Ireland in 1962. The beginning of December and the Advent Fair bring all sorts of people to the village—and an extra person, an infant found and brought to Dr. Troy. Troy’s daughter, Ronnie, becomes attached to the baby and makes the family relationship between father and daughter the centerpiece of the story. There is a tender subplot of the church Canon sliding into dementia that is delicately and humorously handled, too.

This is very much a community as well as a family story. It is a reminder that miracles can still happen today. It is very much an Irish story with beautiful language meant to be read aloud as well as a Christmas story. Who could ask for more? (Unless it were to look for This is Happiness, another of Williams’ stories about Faha.)



Ordinary Blessings for the Christmas Season: Prayers, Poems, and Meditations By Meta Herrick Carlson

Ordinary Blessings for the Christmas Season: Prayers, Poems, and Meditations by Meta Herrick Carlson probably sounds familiar to you. That may be because we have another of her titles in our library. Carlson is a Minneapolis pastor and poet.

Carlson divides her book into several topics, such as “Blessings for Celebrating Christmas in the World,” which has blessings for mail carriers, Mall Santas, and wrapping presents. There are “Blessings for Holiday Travel”, Blessings for Holiday Grief”, and Blessings for the Holiday Table”.

She includes “Blessings for the Ancient Christmas Story” with special words for shepherds, angels, magi, and even Herod. There are also blessings for St. Nicholas, St. Lucia, and Our Lady of Guadalupe. There are Blessings for Each Day in Advent, as well as “Blessings for the Twelve Days of Christmas”.

This small book of blessings will fill your heart throughout the Advent and Christmas season.

Lifetimes Newsletter Deadline for January: December 17



The deadline for submissions to the January 2026 Lifetimes newsletter is **Wednesday, December 17**.

Please send your submissions to Marina Nyberg at mnyberg@incarnationmn.org



INCARNATION

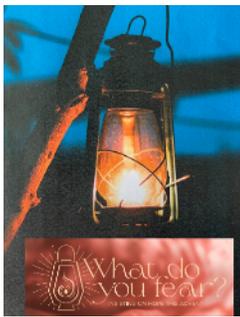
SMALL GROUPS

Advent Small Groups

What do you fear? Insisting on Hope this Advent

When we find ourselves in fearful times, can we speak honestly about our fear while also insisting on hope? This Advent, we share a booklet (by e-Reader or paper copy) that takes the angels' message seriously and trusts that Christ's birth truly is good news of great joy for all people. We'll look closely at the fear looming in the background during the time of Jesus' birth and consider the fears that we hold now. Fear can divide and paralyze us. This Advent devotional booklet gently invites us to identify where fear is present—both in the Advent story and in our lives—while also finding our way together toward hope. Our hope is not flimsy or fleeting. It's gritty, resilient, and can endure.

There is still space for people to sign up in three of our short-term Advent Small Groups—in addition, long-term Small Groups are welcome to use these materials as you meet together this Advent. To register, contact the group leader directly or Pastor Joy at jcoltv@incarnationmn.org



Advent Theme — What Do You Fear? Insisting on Hope This Advent

This is a short-term Small Group experience and there will be several different days/timeframes/formats to choose from, and groups will meet 3-4 times during the Advent season (Nov 30 to Dec 23).

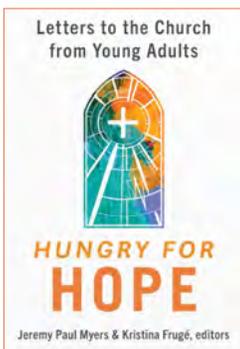
Offered by:

- Dianne Timmer — Sunday afternoons in Arizona — group has openings
- Melanie Ahlstrom — In-person at Incarnation, Wednesdays at 5 pm — Dec 3, 10, 17 — group has openings
- Donna Rauch and Deb Morey — In-person at Incarnation, Wednesdays, 10 AM – Dec 3, 10 and January 7 — *group is full but taking names on the waitlist.*

Preschool Parents/Parents of Young Children Small Group

A Bible study for parents interested in exploring the challenges of raising our children to be more dependent on God than us as they grow up. We will dig into God's word, discuss approaches and parenting insights from God that we can, in turn, apply at home. Spouses switch off who comes. It's organically worked out that dads come one week and the moms come the opposite.

Tuesdays in December, Dec 2 and 16, 8:30 – 9:30 PM at the Cordes home
Small Group Leader: Caleb Cordes



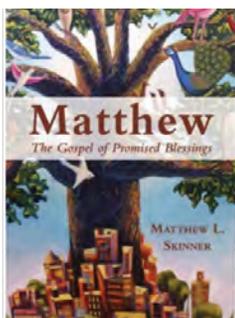
Hungry for Hope Young Adult Small Group — *group has openings*

Small Group Leaders — Pastor Joy and Mike Sell

3rd Tuesday of the month, 6:30-7:30 PM

Will meet six times: Nov 18, Dec 16, Jan 20, Feb 17, Mar 17, Apr 21

Matthew: The Gospel of Promised Blessings by Matthew Skinner



Planned to begin in January 2026—five open spots for this January group

The Gospel of Matthew portrays Jesus and his message as full of tender compassion and urgent warning. This six-part exploration of an enigmatic Gospel takes readers into the themes, topics, and tensions at the heart of Matthew's story about the life and work of Jesus. Chapters focus on blessing and comfort, judgment and retribution, the meaning of discipleship, Jesus' vision for the Church and world, conflicts and complaints, and how the Gospel of Matthew speaks to believers today.

Components include video teaching sessions featuring Matthew Skinner and a comprehensive Leader Guide.

Offered by:

Liv Rosin — on Wednesdays in the early afternoon, starting in January

Our Money Stories

*As you reflected on the theme in November, were you interested in a deeper conversation with a small group about the way that your own life and faith has been shaped as you remember, release, reimagine, and reconcile? Consider this new short-term small group led by Tim Gray that will use the full version of the **Our Money Stories Study Journal** to explore the focal scriptures through art, reflections, and writing prompts. Proposed timing — Sunday afternoons at 4:00 PM*

Caregivers Group — group is full but taking names on the waitlist

Small Group Leaders — Katie Solfest & Patty Nilsen

Tuesdays in January 6, 13, 20, and 27

Practicing Meditation with the Psalms — group is full but taking names on the waitlist

Small Group Leader: Emily Schwieters

Meeting five Monday evenings, 6:30-7:30 pm. Jan 5, Jan 19, Feb 2, Feb 16, March 2

We honor the memory of loved ones in the memorial gifts given below:

Date Range: 10/5/25 to 11/19/25

| Donor | Fund Name | In Memory of: |
|---|--|--|
| Joyce Anderson George & Connie Aram | Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Undesignated | Shirley Clare Shirley Clare |
| Andrea Johnson Larrie & Lou Ann Reese | Memorial - Small Group Ministry Memorial - Worship Music | Rev. Glen Floe Rev. Glen Floe |
| Larrie & Lou Ann Reese | Memorial - Worship Music | Carolynn Granquist |
| Andrea Johnson | Memorial - Ralph Reeder Food Shelf | Jan Kuhrmeyer |
| Dick & Merida Abraham Gary & Mary Ann Anderson Nancy Erickson Jim & Carol Fruehling Paula Harris Dale & Vernita Kennen Sue Krabbenhoft Will & Carolyn Liebenow Jon & Jill Nelson Marlys M. Nelson Gina Nerison Larrie & Lou Ann Reese Matt & Julie Rowles Beverly Seabloom Paul & Ruth Tillquist Cal & Sharon Wilson | Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Endowment Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Esther Circle Memorial - Operating Memorial - Esther Circle Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Esther Circle Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Ralph Reeder Food Shelf Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Worship Music Memorial - Endowment Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Worship Music Memorial - Endowment | Mary Lou Lindholm Mary Lou Lindholm |
| Bruce Lohn | Memorial - Operating | Nancy Lohn |
| Paula Harris | Memorial - Operating | Roy Nilsen |
| James & Sally Anderson Joyce Anderson Joy Burdick Ruth Dahlgren Jim & Mary DeJarlais Ruth Johnson Allan & B. Elaine Erickson Eric Griffin Gail & Mark Grina | Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Feed My Starving Children Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Undesignated Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson Elizabeth Swanson Elizabeth Swanson Elizabeth Swanson Elizabeth Swanson Elizabeth Swanson Elizabeth Swanson Elizabeth Swanson Elizabeth Swanson |

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|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| David & Sherri Gulbranson | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Doug & Deb Gulbranson | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Ed & Avis Hagen | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Thomas & Lou Ann Hellmich | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Brian & Lynnae Henry | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Lynne Holt | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Dale & Vernita Kennen | Memorial - Library Fund | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Peter & Patricia Koontz | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Steve & Nancy Lindquist | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Andrew & Jennifer McCurdy | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Linda Merriam | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Marlys J. Nelson | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Doraine Newland | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Dick & Nancy Olen | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| John & Karen Olson | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Barbara Outcalt | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Bruce & Sharon Pearson | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| LeRoy & Kathleen Pedersen | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Connie Pofert | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Todd & Karen Reed | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Larrie & Lou Ann Reese | Memorial - Worship Music | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Claudia Sajevic | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Audrey Schultz | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Todd & Heidi Strumpfer | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| D. Philip & Juliann Swanson | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Roger & Gloria Tamte | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| John & Renee Troselius | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |
| Becky Utecht | Memorial - Undesignated | Elizabeth Swanson |

The list above reflects the donations that were made payable (or endorsed/transferred) to Incarnation Lutheran Church in memory of someone. Memorials are applied to whatever fund the donor designates.

If not designated, sometimes the family requests which fund they would like the memorials designated to. Note: If a memorial gift is received and the check isn't written out to Incarnation Lutheran Church, it will be forwarded directly to the organization that the check was made payable to. Those memorials are typically acknowledged by the organization that receives the donation.

Financial Report

Finance Report October 2025

| | | | | | |
|---|------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|---|------------------|
| October Actual Operating & Mortgage Revenue | \$213,559 | YTD Actual Ops & Mortgage Revenue | \$2,020,058 | YTD Budgeted Operating & Mortgage Revenue | \$2,203,994 |
| October Actual Operating & Mortgage Expense | \$242,416 | YTD Actual Ops & Mortgage Expense | \$2,237,557 | YTD Budgeted Operating & Mortgage Expense | \$2,241,844 |
| OPERATING TOTALS | -\$28,856 | | -\$217,498 | | -\$37,850 |

Thank you for your continued generosity. Please help us finish the year strong and on budget!

Advent & Christmas Schedule

Sundays in Advent, December 7, 14, 21 | 9:00 AM and 10:30 AM

We follow our usual schedule on Sundays in December.

Wednesdays in Advent Worship

December 3, 10, 17 | 6:00 PM

Holden Evening Prayer. Services will be live-streamed.

Blue Christmas

December 3 | 6:30 PM

A short, quiet service of readings, candle lighting, and being present with one another for those feeling a little blue or weary. We will be in the Chapel for this service.

Advent Fest

December 5 | 6:00–8:00 PM

An all-ages Advent celebration. *Registration for this event has closed.*

Jennifer Grimm — "Home for the Holidays"

December 14 | 7:00 PM

Jazz vocalist Jennifer Grimm returns to the stage with family and friends for a memorable program of holiday music. A free concert as part of the Incarnation Music Series.

Christmas Eve Worship, December 24 | 1:00, 3:00, 5:00, and 7:00 PM

1:00 PM: Family Worship

3:00 PM, 5:00 PM, 7:00 PM: Christmas Celebrations with music and candlelighting.

We welcome children at all worship services.

Christmas Day, December 25 | 10:00 AM

A service of Lessons and Carols

First Sunday of Christmas, December 28 | 10:00 AM

One service at 10:00 AM