

LIFETIMES

January 2026

From the Pastor



Kai Nilsen
Senior Pastor

Our daughter got married in the middle of December, the fourth of our four kids. We are done! The week was exhilarating and exhausting. Friends and family gathered from around the country through all sorts of winter weather... exhilarating. Navigating downtown Chicago as we skipped from event to event... exhausting. And pricey. I wish I had purchased stock in Uber and SpotHero many years ago!

As you know, these pivotal life events generate layer upon layer of reflection and remembrance. We looked back. We examined all the nuances of the weekend. We projected forward. That's what happens in pivotal moments if you are part of the Nilsen family.

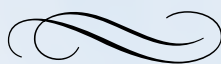
With that in mind, I'd like to share that our family (my parents and siblings) has updated its family blessing book to celebrate 25 years since its first publication. It was the hope of my dad before he died this year. So, my mother doggedly pursued the 25th edition, which is now out on Amazon, *For Everything a Season: 75+ Blessings for Daily Life!* This edition contains 25 more blessings, bringing the total to 100 blessings, including yearly holidays, life-stage transitions (going to school, getting a phone, leaving home, etc.), and poignant blessings for traumatic life events where it is difficult to find the right words to say and share.

Our hope, through all of it, is to provide a simple resource that individuals and families can use to connect our ordinary lives with the gracious and loving presence of God and one another. As you enter the new year, I've included the Blessing for a New Year (see page 2) so that you can look back and look forward in a guided way.

We need each other in community. Blessings to all of you as we enter this new year, 2026, together!

Peace, Kai

Blessing for a New Year



Preparation: You can assign each person present to read a section, or assign a leader for the entire session. You may also want to have your favorite beverage for a toast when finished.

Welcome: “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” Welcome to this time of honoring this past year and looking forward to the future with hope.

Prayer: God of new beginnings, thank you for this past year—the joyful moments and the growing moments, the celebrations and the defeats. Give to all the strength to entrust this new year to you, knowing that with you there is a future filled with hope. Amen.

Bible Text: “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

Reflection: As you reflect on the year past and the year ahead,

- One of the blessings of this past year was...
- One of the disappointments was...
- One way I changed is...
- One fear I have for this upcoming year is...
- One hope I have for this year is...

Ritual Action: Hold up your glass and say, “Trusting in God’s presence, I have hope for the future.”

Blessing:

May we release the disappointments of the old,
claim the possibilities of the new,
and rejoice in the gift of each day. Amen.

“For Everything a Season,” by the Nilsen family. Used by permission.





Tracy Strantz
Council President

Happy New Year!

As we celebrate the remaining days of the holiday season, your Congregation Council extends warm greetings to you and your families.

December was a meaningful month for our Council. We were delighted to welcome new members Becky Bergman and Matt Cambronne, who joined our December meeting as guests and will be formally installed in January. At the same time, we bid farewell to Jim Meinen and Amy Johnson, who completed their terms of service. We are deeply grateful for their dedication and leadership throughout their time on Council.

To learn more about Matt and Becky, please visit our updated Council webpage:

<https://www.incarnationmn.org/about/council/>

Looking ahead, preparations are underway for the upcoming **2026 Annual Meeting**. Please mark your calendars for **Sunday, February 22, 2026**. More details will be shared as the date approaches, including information for a Congregation Discussion Forum where we will preview and discuss updates in advance of the annual meeting.

In addition to preparing the 2026 budgets and annual meeting materials, several key initiatives will continue into the new year. We are in the process of updating the Incarnation Constitution to include both ELCA revisions and internal changes. A dedicated task force is carefully reviewing proposed edits to ensure clarity and alignment. We look forward to sharing updates on their progress during the February Discussion Forum.

We are also supporting the newly launched partnership with [LADC](#) (Lake Area Discovery Center) which will oversee our on-site preschool beginning in the 2026–2027 season. This transition will expand services and curriculum for preschool families, and marketing updates for the **Incarnation Discovery Center** (new branding effective with the 2026–2027 season) will be coming soon.

Finally, we remain committed to advancing ministry and facilities improvements next year, supported by your generous contributions to our *Building for Our Future* campaign.

Thank you for your continued support as we carry momentum forward into 2026. We look forward to sharing more updates at the Annual Meeting and upcoming Discussion Forums!

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 **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.

Financial Report

Finance Report November 2025

November Actual Operating & Mortgage Revenue	\$404,186	YTD Actual Ops & Mortgage Revenue	\$2,424,244	YTD Budgeted Operating & Mortgage Revenue	\$2,444,178
November Actual Operating & Mortgage Expense	\$194,556	YTD Actual Ops & Mortgage Expense	\$2,432,112	YTD Budgeted Operating & Mortgage Expense	\$2,456,005
OPERATING TOTALS	\$209,630		-\$7,868		-\$11,826

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



EXPLOSION BIG BAND

FEBRUARY 1, 2026, 4 PM

Freewill offerings gratefully accepted

Drawing from the area's finest musicians, this 17-piece big band plays a diverse repertoire of rock and swing. You'll experience everything from classic big band chestnuts to more modern tunes and you may even be inspired to dance along!

(Performance time: 75 minutes)

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

INCARNATION
MUSIC SERIES

Greetings From the Music Department!



What an incredible year we have had! We are so grateful for your involvement and support of all things music at Incarnation! Participation in all of our ensembles and programs has grown exponentially. This is due to an incredible team that cares deeply about the work we are privileged to do here, as well as the welcoming and encouraging environment that you all create for everyone involved! Pictures speak so much better than what I could offer in text. Enjoy these images of a wonderful year of music making in service to our shared mission.

— Sean

*Sean Turner
Minister of Worship,
Music & the Arts*





Updates & New Schedule for *Wednesday* ILC Kids

Starting in the new year, there will be a few changes to ILC Kids Wednesday evening programming. We'll gather twice a month for kids of ILC to build community, connection, friendship, and fellowship, and to give parents a chance to join a small group or simply have an hour to themselves. Infants – Grade 5 are welcome!

We'll play games, craft, and have creative competitions, tying them together with a Bible Verse or Story. Infants – 4-year-olds will play and create in the Nursery, and 5-year-olds – 5th Grade will gather in the Youth Room. Registration is required for each child. See below for dates, times, and the QR code to register.

WEDNESDAY

ILC KIDS & NURSERY

Wednesdays 6pm-7pm

January 28

February 4 & 25

March 4 & 25

April 8 & 29





Patty Nilsen, Senior Ministry Leader

Happy New Year!

"This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

— Psalm 118:24

Caregivers Small Group

Are you or someone you know a caregiver in need of connection, encouragement, and support? A couple spots have opened in our January group.

If you would like to join us, please email Patty Nilsen at pnilsen@incarnationmn.org to sign up.

This group will meet Tuesdays 1:00-2:30 PM, January 6, 13, 20, & 27.

PrimeTimers: Pati Kachel Presents "Conversations with Corrie Ten Boom"



"Conversations with Corrie Ten Boom"

Thursday, January 29, 10:30 a.m.

Join us for a morning with local storyteller Pati Kachel as she presents "Conversations with Corrie Ten Boom." Through her vivid storytelling, Pati will bring this remarkable story to life, weaving moments of warmth, humor, and emotion that will leave you both laughing and moved to tears.

- Thursday, January 29, 2026
- Doors open: 10:00 AM
- Program starts: 10:30 AM
- Lunch: 11:30 AM | \$10 (payable at the door)

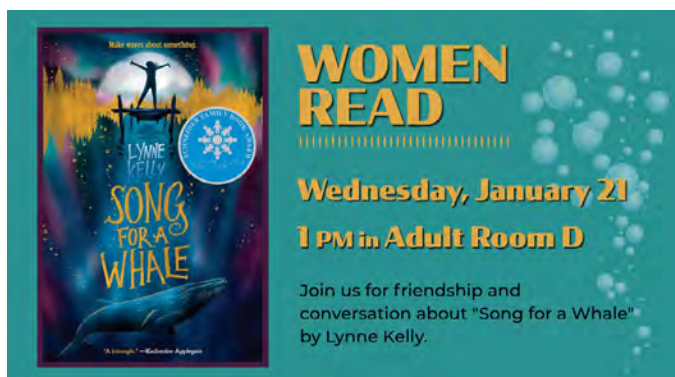
Don't forget to reserve your lunch spot—please give Julie Durbin a call by **Monday, January 26**, at 651-484-7213 to sign up.

Esther Circle January Meeting and Potluck

Esther Circle will meet at 10 AM on January 8, 2026, not on our usual "first Thursday" which is New Year's Day, and not at the usual 9 o'clock hour. We will be having our annual holiday potluck luncheon, which was postponed in December because of the funeral service for Anna Thorstad, a faithful member of Esther Circle.

In addition to sharing a lunch, we will be led beforehand in the January study in [Gather](#) magazine and will make decisions about sharing our offerings for the 2025 year. Any interested women are welcome to join us; bring a treat to share and come to the Fireside Room at 10.

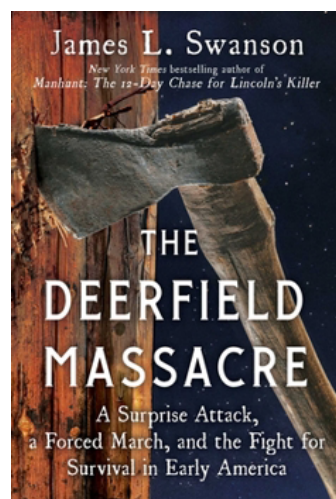




Next meeting: Wednesday, January 21
1:00 PM in Adult Room D

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!

Men's History Book Group



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:

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.



FEBRUARY — *"The Swamp Fox: How Francis Marion Saved the American Revolution"* by John Oller. The story of a militia army in South Carolina that disrupted the British "southern strategy".

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

Among the Congregation

PUBLIC PRAYER CONCERNS: Dottie House; Kathy Kvinge & family; Gil Hartley; Julie & Royal Erlandson; Carlos Rodriguez; Joan Volkmann; Karen Gladen; Maria & family; Ron Anderson; Erin Holmen; Deb Rykken; Karen Stauder; Kara Genia & family; Jon Nelson; Kate Tollefson & family; Carol Beckerleg; Marian Ness; Lowell Odland; Linda Hudepohl; Lorinda Mishek'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 Bob Fischer on his death; Joy Burdick & family on the death of her sister;

RECENTLY BAPTIZED: Leon Ray Thienes, son of Kaija & Ryan Thienes; Mabel Anne Matheson, daughter of Melanie & Tim Matheson

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.



Presenter: Matt Skinner, Asher O. and Carrie Nasby Professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary

January 11 & 18

Learning from Both the Tender and the Harsh Words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew

All four Gospels present Jesus as a teacher with both reassuring and unsettling things to say. The contrast is most striking in Matthew's Gospel, where you can read a passage full of grace and comfort, then turn the page and be taken aback by threats of judgment. How do Jesus's promises of mercy relate to his warnings?

This overview of some of the main themes in Matthew will offer a clearer view of how the Gospels remember Jesus's teachings, what those teachings mean, and how we might sort through them ourselves to better understand Jesus's message to us.

Skinner, also Scholar for Adult Education at Westminster Presbyterian Church, is a longtime cohost of Sermon Brainwave, a weekly podcast that helps preachers work with biblical passages as they prepare their sermons. One of his recently published books is *Matthew: The Gospel of Promised Blessings*, which explores the Gospel of Matthew and its most important themes.



Presenter: Gary Anderson, Retired Senior Pastor, Incarnation Lutheran Church

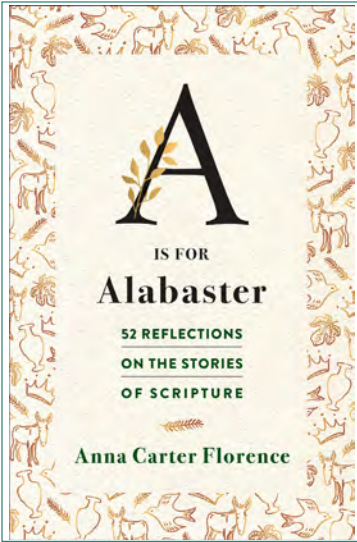
January 25

Religion & Politics: Like Oil & Water?

There is a great deal of confusion and disinformation about the relationship of religion and politics today. There are also worrisome, if not dangerous, associations between them being advanced by some churches and politicians. In this session, we will attempt to explore the complex relationship and the challenges flowing from it.

Anderson sees this subject as especially difficult for many Lutherans, given a historic disassociation of the two and a basic Lutheran attitude to just simply stay out of politics.

Following his retirement in 2004, Anderson served as interim seminary pastor at Luther Seminary for two years, then worked for the Saint Paul Area Synod of the ELCA as director of "Crossing Bridges," a three-year, \$2 million mission appeal. His alma mater, Gustavus Adolphus College, honored him with its 2009 Covenant Award for his significant contributions to the life and growth of both Gustavus and the Church.



A is for Alabaster: 52 Reflections on the Stories of Scripture **By Anna Carter Florence**

This book is a double abecedary — a book of short readings in alphabetical order. It is like an alphabetical tour through both the Old and New Testaments and will surprise you with topics and people, as well as words you may have forgotten were included in the Bible.

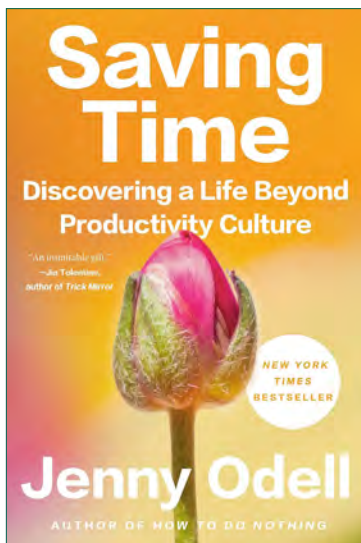
Perhaps the names Balaam and Puah are familiar to you, but do you remember Zelophehad's daughters? Who was Cornelius or Rhoda? And why include Yak, Oxen, or Yeast?

The book is useful not only for personal reading but is also great for groups or when you are called upon to lead a devotion and are simply at a loss for an idea or a topic. There is a good index, a lot of footnotes, and an index of scripture.

Even more helpful is a group discussion guide — the suggestion that everyone in

the group be asked to write down their own alphabetical list of biblical names, giving extra points if your entry for “L” is different from other lists, sounds like a great icebreaker.

Author Anna Carter Florence is a Presbyterian minister. She has written a book which combines ancient wisdom and new imagination.



Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond Productivity Culture

By Jenny Odell

Do you feel tied to time — always hurrying from one thing to another? Always looking at a clock? Always checking (and double-checking) a calendar? Do you find yourself trying to cram too many events, activities, and tasks into a single day? Do you frequently look for ways to “save time”? Many of us live like this but would like to feel less frazzled, worried, and even unhappy.

The book might be an excellent read for you. The author writes about our relationships to time, their causes, and some possible better ways to look at time and “steward the different rhythms of life” differently. She suggests that another way of looking at time might actually bring us healing rather than frustration. Think how good that might feel!

2025 Holiday Baking Drive Campaign for Ralph Reeder Food Shelf — THANK YOU!

We cannot thank you enough for your generosity in giving to our 2025 Holiday Baking Drive Campaign. We transported carloads of donations and baking goods throughout the campaign, weighing in at 2560 pounds. And one Small Group donated an additional 175 pounds for the holidays. In total, we donated 2735 pounds to the Ralph Reeder Food Shelf for holiday giving to our neighbors. That is over a TON of generosity! Thank you!!



Additionally, you have been very generous in making financial donations this fall and through the holiday season. Through your generosity, we have received \$26,900! Ralph Reeder Food Shelf can make great use of these funds, acquiring items that are greatly needed through their channels. Again, thank you!!

During this season of giving, thank you for being a part of our “Church Without Walls” ministry and providing generously for our neighbors through our partnership with the Ralph Reeder Food Shelf.

While this year’s campaign has officially come to an end, food insecurity, unfortunately, has not. Please continue to support the Ralph Reeder Food Shelf and those they serve here in our community.

Incarnation donation link — choose ‘Ralph Reeder Food Shelf’ in the Fund drop-down:

<https://pushpay.com/g/incarnationmn>

Ralph Reeder Food Shelf donation link:

<https://www.ralphreederfoodshelf.org/donate>

Solid Ground Welcome Baskets



- Brooms & dustpans
- Mops & Vacuum cleaners
- Microwaves & Kitchen utensils
- Knife sets of 3 & Pot & pan sets
- Kitchen wastebaskets
- Mixing bowls & bakeware
- Queen-size bedspreads, comforters, quilts
- Crib sheets
- Children's plates, bowls, sippy cups and silverware

Welcome Baskets
January 4- 25, 2026

Drop-off at Incarnation in the bin marked Solid Ground

Help welcome Solid Ground families as they settle into their new homes and community. A Welcome Basket filled with essential household items is given to each family when they first arrive at Solid Ground. Your generosity not only meets a crucial need for families transitioning from homelessness but also serves as a warm and hospitable welcome to their new homes and community.

Please consider donating one or more items from their wish list: brooms & dustpans, mops, vacuum cleaners, microwaves, kitchen utensils, kitchen wastebaskets,

pot & pan sets, crib sheets, mixing bowls, bakeware (cookie sheets, 9x13 pans, 9x9 pans etc), queen size bedspreads/comforters/quilts, children's plates, bowls, silverware & sippy cups.

Donations can be dropped off at Incarnation in the bin marked “Solid Ground Welcome Baskets” from January 4 through January 25. Monetary donations are also appreciated as they will help provide Welcome Baskets items throughout the year when supplies run low. Please indicate “SG Welcome Baskets” in the memo line of donations. Thank you for your generosity!

Reflecting on 2025 and Looking Forward to 2026



As we turn the page on the calendar to a new month and year, the Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) Action Group would like to extend our thanks for making 2025 another successful year of feeding God's hungry kids around the world.

Together, we accomplished this through initiatives such as our monthly meal packs at the FMSC permanent site in Coon Rapids, volunteering at FMSC's Pack at the Park at Target Field, and Food Truck Festivals. Our biggest accomplishment was our 18th All Hands on Hope

MobilePack™, where we raised over \$180,000, welcomed more than 2,000 volunteers to pack 614,304 meals, which fed 1,687 kids for one year. Your time and financial resources truly make a difference in the life of a child.

In 2026, we will be hosting the next All Hands on Hope MobilePack™ at Incarnation from April 22–26. Once again, Incarnation will transform into a space to welcome volunteers to pack meals and feed kids. If you would like to be a part of this exciting time, there are many ways you can help:



- Mark the dates on your calendar and round up a group of volunteers to pack with. These could be family members, neighbors, church groups, civic groups, friends from the gym, or workplace. All are welcome — age 5-95!
- Prayerfully consider a financial donation to help pay for the meals we will pack. We have committed to raising \$180,000 for this event.
- Think about assisting behind the scenes as a specialized volunteer. You will help check volunteers in, direct them in the packing room, and perform other duties as assigned.
- Volunteer to donate a meal to feed the Action Group and FMSC staff during the event. Gather your small group, book club, or another group of friends to pitch in.
- If you are a small business owner or belong to a local civic organization, consider a financial donation and gathering a group of employees/members together to pack meals during one (or more) shifts.



We will be publishing the packing shift dates and times later this month with links to register. To stay up to date on all FMSC news, sign up for Incarnation's weekly worship emails, follow us on the social media channels below, or visit our [web page](#).

Facebook: @IncarnationMobilePack
Instagram: @fmisc_at_incarnation



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: Safe Salting Practices

This is a beautiful but sometimes hazardous time of year. As we venture out onto snow and ice, we need to be careful on slippery sidewalks. But we also need to be cautious about how we treat our sidewalks so we do not harm our water and environment. Chemicals that contain chloride are very harmful to water quality, and the damage does not mitigate over time. It only

takes one teaspoon of salt to pollute 5 gallons of water permanently. Melting and runoff from driveways and sidewalks go into storm drains that lead to the nearest lake, river, pond, or wetland. They do not go to a treatment plant. Other downsides of using products with chloride include damage to the lawn and vegetation and a potential hazard for pets. Be sure to read the label of any product carefully for complete information. A possible alternative to products with chloride is by Entry, with a Green Seal Certified recommendation. Some recommendations for using less salt include

- shoveling early and often to reduce ice build-up
- checking the outside temperature (not below 15° F) so that the salt will actually be effective
- use salt sparingly, about a coffee cup amount to treat 150 square feet

Enjoy our Minnesota winter safely, but also be kind to our 10,000 lakes.

Source: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/business-with-us/smart-salting-training>

Thank You, Incarnation!

The staff & Youth at LifeHaven send many thanks for the generous gifts from Incarnation through the LifeHaven Youth Holiday Gift Drive! There were more than 120 gifts (including a beautiful handmade crib quilt & hand knit blankets) and \$300.00 in gift cards given to twelve youth and their children.

Fifty additional gifts were donated to the LifeHaven House & Program. This included items to welcome new youth to LifeHaven, such as PJs, slippers, desk chairs, & comforters. There were also items donated to help youth transition into independent living, such as pots & pans, 2 vacuums, & dishware sets. \$875.00 in gift cards were donated to the LifeHaven Program for year-round use for birthdays, rewards for achieving set



goals, use before benefits become available, & other emergency situations. We also had \$1,000.00 given to the LifeHaven program in cash donations that were very timely in repairing & replacing two LifeHaven house refrigerators!



The LifeHaven House is currently housing & supporting five youth & their children. LifeHaven staff also continue to support & be a resource to seven young adults & their children that have transitioned out of LifeHaven and into independent living.



Small Groups in the New Year

We are about to begin a new season of Small Group Ministry!

Look for the Small Group tables on **Sunday mornings, January 4, 11, 18**

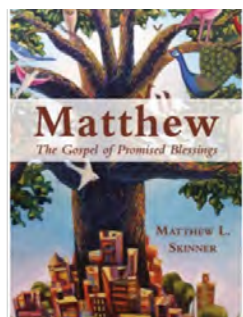


Our Money Stories

“Christians are usually sincere and well-intentioned people until you get to any real issues of ego, control power, money, pleasure, and security. Then they tend to be pretty much like everybody else. We’ve often given a bogus version of the Gospel, some fast-food religion, without any deep transformation of the self; and the result has been the spiritual disaster of “Christian” countries that tend to be as consumer-oriented, proud, warlike, racist, class conscious, and addictive as everybody else—and often more so, I’m afraid.”

—Richard Rohr, *Breathing Underwater: Spirituality and the 12 Steps*

Join in this Small Group for a safe space to talk about your own life stories and how you have been shaped by your relationship with money. Consider this an opportunity to begin the new year in a positive way. We will use the fuller version of the *Our Money Story Study Journal* to support our conversation. Offered by Tim Gray—suggested timing, Sunday afternoons at 4:00—reach out if you’d like to propose different timing



Matthew: The Gospel of Promised Blessings by Matthew Skinner

Planned to begin in January 2026

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, begins January 14



Parents Small Group

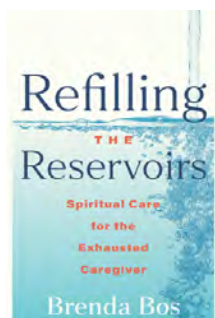
This Small Group’s purpose is to gather parents of young (and growing) children to grow in faith together, build relationships with one another, and share conversations about the joys and challenges of parenting. We will dig into God’s living word, share ideas, and explore how to form faith together with our children and as a family. All are welcome, including Incarnation Preschool families and those worshipping at Incarnation who have a preschooler. ILCKids/Childcare is available for participants in this Small Group with advance registration. To register for childcare, see the link below.

Wednesdays, 6-7 pm on the following dates: January 28 (pizza), February 4 (pizza), February 25 (Lent), March 4 (Lent), March 25 (Lent), April 8 (pizza), April 29

Small Group Leader: Caleb Cordes

<https://onrealm.org/IncarnationLuth/PublicRegistrations/>

[Event?linkString=NTM5ZDM2NDYtYzhhYS00Mjc4LWE0NTgtYjNiMDAxMzE5NTNm](#)



Renewal and Encouragement for Caregivers — *this group has limited openings, contact Katie or Patty to be added*

The purpose of the group is to meet with others in our faith community who are serving as caregivers, share our stories, and to find encouragement and renewal through deep listening and companionship over our month together.

Optional book — *Refilling The Reservoirs* by Brenda Bos—we will discuss some topics from the book, but it is not required reading.

Small Group Leaders — Katie Solfest & Patty Nilsen, Small Group Room C

Tuesday afternoons in January 6, 13, 20, and 27, 1:00 – 2:30 pm



Practicing Meditation with the Psalms — *this group is full, contact Emily to be added to the waitlist*

We will meet in the chapel with candles and dim light. Participants can sit in a traditional chair or bring a mat or blanket to sit on the floor. We will listen to one Psalm together and have a short conversation on it. Then we will do a traditional guided meditation, including deep breathing, attention to body, listening, etc. Before the meditation is complete, we will hear the Psalm again and end with a breath prayer. We will all leave quietly.

Small Group Leader: Emily Schwieters

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

A Preview of Lent Small Groups



Tell Me Something Good: Grounding Ourselves in the Good News This Lent

Lent was originally a season for those new to faith to learn and prepare for their baptism at Easter. During that time, they would study what was central to Christianity. What are the core, foundational parts of Jesus' life and ministry? What makes it good news? Can we trust that the good news is truly good, even when it challenges us?

The good news brings us back to our roots, back to what grounds us: loving our neighbor, caring for the vulnerable, pursuing justice and mercy, and resting in God's unending grace.

The good news grows like a mustard seed that flourishes rapidly into a tree to shelter the birds. It sounds like children laughing. It feels like feet washed with tender care. The good

news is alive in the world. When we are grounded in the good news, the goodness of God can infinitely flourish and grow.

We hope this series will provide fertile ground for conversation and worship, rooting our hearts and lives in the expansive goodness of God. This Lent, may the teachings of Jesus lead us forward. Let the good news ground us. And let that good news inspire us to take action in a world desperate to hear, see and taste what is good.

Interested? Sign up at Small Groups table on January 4, 11, 18

Sharing the Saint John's Bible Outside Incarnation



Because the purpose of The Saint John's Bible is "to ignite the spiritual imagination of people of all faith journeys throughout the world," we also include a Visio Divina experience (sacred seeing), usually using the Creation illumination.

As an owner of a Heritage Edition of The Saint John's Bible, Incarnation is asked to share this limited edition, fine-art replica with others. Over the years, the Saint John's Bible Action Group of Incarnation has visited over 10 groups, including congregations, senior living facilities, and civic groups. We bring two or three of the seven volumes that make up the whole Bible to display and give a short, interactive presentation on the planning and making of the handmade, illuminated Bible.



In this, participants gaze prayerfully and deeply at an image, noticing details, colors, and feelings that arise; meditate on what it might mean for them; and be open to God speaking to them through the image.

We recently visited the senior group (the JOY group—Just Older Youth) of Mount Carmel Lutheran Church. In their thank-you note to us, they said, "We all learned so much about how it was made, and then to see the beauty of it was very special."

If you know of a group outside of Incarnation that would enjoy learning about The Saint John's Bible, please contact Grant Rykken (gdrykken@gmail.com) or Pastor Joy (jcoltvvet@incarnationmn.org).

Solid Ground Christmas Joy

Our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to making Solid Ground's Christmas truly special. Your generosity in donating Christmas trees, purchasing gifts for families, organizing, wrapping, and delivering presents, capturing heartwarming photos of Solid Ground families during the holiday party, baking delicious Christmas cookies, creating a cookie decorating activity with all the frosting and sprinkles, and assisting at the holiday party has brought much joy to families this Christmas season.

Giving Statements

2025 Giving Statements will be distributed electronically at the end of January via our new donor management system called Pushpay. Watch for the email. Note: It will include all donations for 2025 regardless of what system it was processed through (Realm or Pushpay).

Frequently Asked Questions

What is changing?

We will no longer be using Realm as our donor management system. We are transitioning to Pushpay.

Has there been any communication about this?

An initial communication, including a video clip, was sent via the It's Monday email in October. If you are not currently receiving the It's Monday weekly email and would like to be added to the communication list, please contact Marina Nyberg at mnyberg@incarnationmn.org

Why did some members/donors get direct email communication, but I never did?

If you currently donate electronically via Realm as a recurring gift, you should have received an email with instructions for setting up your new recurring donation in Pushpay. This was not sent to other members/donors as there was nothing to change.

How do I make a one-time electronic donation in Pushpay?

The new electronic giving form for Pushpay is already in place. You can donate directly from Incarnation's website: <https://pushpay.com/g/incarnationmn>

Why do I keep getting emails to set up my new donation?

The Pushpay email reminders will stop once you have set up your new electronic donation. If you previously had a donation across multiple funds, the reminders will continue until all donations to those funds are migrated. If you have changed your donation and need the reminders manually stopped, please send an email to Amy Faymoville, Gifts Manager at afaymoville@incarnationmn.org

I haven't been giving electronically, but I would like to start doing that through Pushpay. How do I do that?

You can set up recurring donations directly from Incarnation's website: <https://pushpay.com/g/incarnationmn>. If you need assistance with this, contact Amy Faymoville or stop by the church office and complete an authorization form, and we will set it up on your behalf.

I donate via a distribution from my IRA or as a grant from my donor-advised fund. Can I continue to do that?

Absolutely. Continue to make those requests through whoever manages your fund. Incarnation would prefer to receive donations via a physical check rather than an electronic donation, which makes it easier to sync up with a donor. Those checks will continue to go through our normal weekly counting process, be entered into Pushpay, and applied to your giving record and allocated to the fund(s) you designate.

How will you be handling year-end giving statements for 2025? Will I receive two statements? One from Realm and one from Pushpay?

No, we will be running the 2025 year-end giving statements toward the end of January 2026, after we have migrated 4 years of historical donation data into Pushpay. You will receive a new Pushpay statement that includes all your donations from 2025.

How do I see my donations in Pushpay?

If you have already migrated your recurring donations or given a one-time gift online, you already have an account in Pushpay and can log in to see your donation. When you open the donation form <https://pushpay.com/g/incarnationmn>, click on **Your Account** and then select **Manage Account** in the upper right-hand corner to view your donations that were processed in Pushpay.

Is Realm going away?

Not at this time. We will continue to use Realm to manage our people profiles and information. However, all donations will go through Pushpay. The exception is that we will continue to accept payments for some Registration Events and for Preschool tuition processing. We are currently discussing whether Realm will be replaced by another tool in the future, so stay tuned.