

LIFETIMES

July 2026

From the Pastor



Kai Nilsen
Senior Pastor

The last sermon my dad preached he asked, “What are the metaphors, the concepts, the nuances that speak to our scientific age, that speak to the political powers and cultural influences that are on the move in our time, that speak to the dis-eases of our day in ways that take our human dilemma seriously and energize us for now and for the future, not for the sake of preserving the institution called church, but for the sake of the dying humanity and planet?”

His question begs another question: Who are we going to be as Jesus’ followers in our time and culture? As you are likely aware, that question is up for grabs. Think about this:

- Some parts of our tradition disallow women from leadership (see current debate in the Southern Baptist Convention); others fully support.
- Some parts cozy up, without question, to people in power; others are free to critique that same power.
- Some parts clearly define who is welcome and who is not; other parts try to hold to “all are welcome,” not just as a slogan but a way of being.
- Some parts focus on getting people across the Jordan River to heaven; others focus on the kingdom of heaven that has come near and is being lived out in the heavenly and hellish realms of our daily lives.

So, who are *we* going to be?

Historian Garry Wills, in writing about the early church and the life of Jesus, observed, “The equality of men and women was a thing so shocking in the patriarchal society of Jesus’ time that his own male followers could not understand it.” And more revolutionary still was the reach of their love, which went beyond family and tribe and was extended to strangers and enemies. It made Christianity the most inclusive faith of the ancient world.”

Hear me when I say, “That’s the spirit we are continuing to tap into and be led by at Incarnation.”

There are two phrases, two concepts that we have used to peak our imagination and guide our actions. The primary concept is this:

We are learning to live and love like Jesus, for a lifetime.

- *Learning*: The word for disciple in the New Testament means “learner.” We are open to discovering, learning what this life with Jesus entails. Curiosity, openness, and humility define our learning posture.
- *Live like Jesus*: Disciples in Jesus’ time were never called to simply assent to certain beliefs about God. They were invited to emulate, to mirror the life of the Rabbi. We are learning to live like Jesus did. (Inward Journey)

- *Love like Jesus:* Jesus said it this way in John 13: 35, “By this everyone will know you are my followers, if you have this kind of love for one another.” We are invited to love each other, the world, our neighbor, the stranger, and even the enemy, like Jesus did. (Outward Journey)
- *For a lifetime:* Since this is a lifelong journey, we seek to engage the unique life stages (kids, youth, young adults, middle age, and seniors) that make up our community with one question, “What does it mean to follow Jesus in this time, at this stage of our lives?” The vibrancy of our community will reflect the unique stories we each contribute to the whole.

That brings us to the next phrase. Why would we want to learn to live and love like Jesus? So that we can...

Co-create a better, more loving world.

To respond to my dad’s question, these are the concepts that “speak to the dis-eases of our day in ways that take our human dilemma seriously and energize us for now and for the future, not for the sake of preserving the institution called church, but for the sake of the dying humanity and planet.”

Here’s my invitation: Let those concepts tumble around in your spirit and then ask God, “How can I be part of that kind of movement?”

Peace, Kai

Farewell and Godspeed for Mike Sell — Sunday, July 12



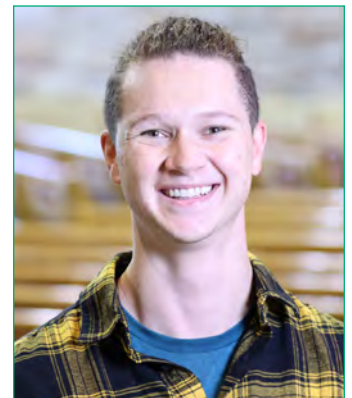
Joy McDonald Coltvet
Pastor for Faith Formation

In Sunday morning worship and at Sunday evening youth group

Mike Sell, our High School Ministry Leader, recently shared that a new chapter is opening in his life, and this means a transition for Incarnation in High School Ministry. This note is from Mike Sell, who has led our high school ministry for five years and has been part of the Young Adult work we have just launched these past few months.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to serve as the Faith Formation Leader for high school for the past 5 years and Faith Formation Leader for young adults this past year. I am incredibly grateful to this community for the connections I have made and the support I have received throughout this time.

Today I wish to share that I am now off on another adventure in my life. As many of you may know, I have always had the passion to serve those who have struggled with mental health and addiction which is why in June of 2025 I enrolled at the Hazelden Betty Ford Graduate School to pursue my Masters in addiction counseling. Balancing these schedules has not been without its challenges but is something I was glad to do, as I was able to remain here as a part of our ministry team for as long as I could. As my school program has now moved out of the classroom and into the clinical environment, I must pursue the clinical internships necessary for my licensure. My internships will not take me far and I plan to remain in the Shoreview area, but this means my last day at Incarnation will be July 15. This decision has been bitter-sweet as I reflect on all the things I have been able to accomplish with our youth program these past few years.



Mike Sell, Faith
Formation Leader for
High School

In the time since I began this position, I have had the opportunity to lead students on trips to the Boundary Waters, canoeing on the waters of Lake Superior in the Apostle Islands and accompany our students to New Orleans for the national youth gathering. Our youth group is comprised of students who take a deep ownership in this community which has been slowly fostered in the years following the pandemic with an attitude that demonstrates God's love in a world so in need of it. I am incredibly proud of our students and am blessed to have been a part of their faith journeys. This summer I will lead one final trip to Duluth with 14 high school students for a service trip working on community gardens and kitchens where we will see the needs of our neighbors in Duluth and deepen our understanding of God's presence in our lives. I cannot express how great my sense of gratitude is to this community for welcoming me in during a time of global uncertainty and organizational transition yet treated me with love and allowed me to serve our youth with the gifts that God has given me. Incarnation will forever be my home. Thank you for a wonderful five years and I promise this is not a goodbye, but farewell until we meet again.

We are so grateful that Mike walked this journey with us and are excited that he will be doing ministry in another way, for those struggling with addiction. What an important calling on his life.

In the weeks ahead, we will think about and then decide who will lead these key ministries in the short term and long term. On Sunday, July 12, we will bless Mike on his way during both worship services. If you wish to send him a card, feel free to send it to the office, and we will make sure it gets to him.

With gratitude,

Pastor Joy (and Pastor Kai, who shared much of this already in the *It's Tuesday* from June 16)

A Jam Session to Transform Your Fruit

Join us in the kitchen at Incarnation Lutheran for an afternoon and evening "Jam Session" of song and sweetness. We'll transform the berry harvest from Good Courage Farm into jam for sharing with our food access partners and our generous supporters. Never canned before? No problem! We'll teach you the art and science of safe canning and invite you to play a manageable part in the production and preservation process.

While we work, we'll sing! The Good Courage "farm-ily" will share encouraging songs of hope and gratitude that you can take home, along with a half-pint of currant jam for yourself or a friend.

There will be two shifts. Come for one or both:

- 2:00 PM until 5:00 PM — set up and a batch of jam
- 5:00 PM until 8:00 PM — a batch of jam and clean up

Please RSVP for the Jam Session so that we can plan for fruit and equipment.

RSVP at this link:

<https://www.goodcourage.farm/event-details/jam-session-at-incarnation-elca-shoreview>



Loving Our Neighbors: Thank You for Supporting Solid Ground

Last Thursday, two groups of Incarnation volunteers were bustling about at Solid Ground...

Thanks to the Incarnation community's generosity, three vehicle-loads of household supplies from our Spring Shower are headed to Solid Ground's new Willow Lake Apartments.

Located 13 minutes away, these apartments will house 12 families starting in August, offering both stable housing and on-site support. Your contributions ensure these families move into fully stocked homes, providing them with the dignity, comfort, and hope needed for a brighter future. Meanwhile, an Incarnation gardening group arrived at East Metro Place on a hot and steamy Thursday to tend the raised garden beds.



Each year, these generous and dedicated volunteers prepare and enrich the soil, then plant a variety of flowers, herbs, and vegetables for families to enjoy throughout the growing season. The gardens provide fresh produce, colorful beauty, and a welcoming outdoor space for residents. They also offer families and children an opportunity to learn about gardening, caring for plants, and the rewards of growing their own food while enjoying a peaceful place to gather and take in the view.

Thank you for your time, donations, support and prayers for families at Solid Ground,

—Diane Betterley

Thank you to all those who attended the Solid Ground's ***Every Family Needs a Home Breakfast***. Gabby, a Solid Ground resident, shared her story about her journey to Solid Ground and the support she received to stabilize her life and build the confidence to create a brighter future for herself and her family. It takes a community to provide the support, opportunity and hope to help families like Gabby's overcome adversity and emerge stronger. Gabby's family is one of 441 families served by Solid Ground in 2025!!!

"I didn't think I was ever going to get out of that dark place that I was in... I never in a million years would have thought I would be here today." — Gabby

Our community of support and prayers help carry on Solid Ground's mission to care for our neighbors during some especially difficult and traumatic times.



Make an Impact: How You Can Help Fight Summer Food Insecurity



2026 Tons of Love Campaign For Ralph Reeder Food Shelf

For many years, Incarnation has run an important summer campaign for the Ralph Reeder Food Shelf called **Tons of Love**. This has always served as one of the ways Incarnation responds to the weighty issue of summer food insecurity. And the need continues to grow!

Bring your donations to Incarnation from June 28 to August 2, any time the building is open.

While weighing your summer priorities, we pray you will consider supporting the **Tons of Love** campaign:

- by purchasing a bag of non-perishable food or household items from your favorite store,
- with an online financial gift via Pushpay (go to <https://pushpay.com/g/incarnationmn> – and choose “Ralph Reeder Food Shelf” as the Fund),
- by writing a check to Incarnation with “Tons of Love” in the memo,
- by purchasing (anytime) from the list below of suggested weekly donations focused on needed items, which the Ralph Reeder Food Shelf has a difficult time sourcing at a discount.

Remember that your financial donation is very powerful. Stretch your financial gifts and let Ralph Reeder Food Shelf purchase what they need, when they need it—often at discounted prices. Every dollar counts!!

Tons of Love is one way we live into our calling as we respond to the larger world, where food insecurity assistance is needed even more than ever these days. Our mission:

Filled by God’s grace, we feed the hungry in heart, body, mind, and spirit.

Be a part of getting the most food and household items possible into the homes of as many of our neighbors as possible who especially need it this summer! Thank you for your generosity!



TONS OF LOVE FOOD DRIVE 6/28 - 8/3 WEEKLY NEEDS



WEEK
1

SUMMER ESSENTIALS-ketchup, mustard, mayo, bbq sauce, grill seasoning, sunscreen, kid-friendly bug spray, band-aids, triple antibiotic ointment.

WEEK
2

LUNCH IS SERVED- macaroni and cheese, chili, soups, stew, ramen, canned tuna and chicken, meals in a can, hormel compleats.

WEEK
3

SNACK TIME - granola bars, cereal bars, fruit snacks, chips, crackers, cookies, pudding, nuts, dried fruit.

WEEK
4

SQUEAKY CLEAN - laundry detergent, dish soap, dishwasher soap, bar soap, body wash, deodorant, shampoo, toothpaste, powdered cleanser, all purpose cleaner, toilet paper, kleenex, paper towels.

WEEK
5

OH BABY! Diapers - size 5 and 6, pullups, wipes, diaper ointment, pouches, toddler friendly snacks.

Last year, the Ralph Reeder Food Shelf gave out over 1.1 million pounds of food through 53,000 individual visits from our neighbors in need. Thank you for your help!



Ralph Reeder
Food Shelf

COMMUNITY EDUCATION
Mounds View Public Schools



Patty Nilsen
Senior Ministry Leader

Primetimers — A Summertime Lunch Thursday, July 23, 10:30 AM-12:30 AM, Grace Hall

Register now for this summertime lunch gathering with Pastor Nilsen, who will be leading a conversation about the life and ministries you experience at Incarnation and hopes you have for our congregation for the next three years. Your stories, experiences, history, and perspectives are valued, and we want to hear from you!

Please call the church office to register for lunch by July 21.

Morning Musings Journal Club — Our Second Session Monday, July 13, 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM, Fireside Lounge

In response to requests from many of you who recently attended the Wellbeing Wednesday session on prayer/spiritual journaling, monthly journaling sessions will be held this summer. We were thrilled that you reported feeling energized by the process of writing in the presence of others.

Sessions will begin with a short opening, followed by “bursts” of writing. A prompt/topic will be given, and participants will have 5-10 minutes to write about it. Time for discussion and optional sharing will be included.

Bring a pen and a journal. Coffee and tea will be available. Attend as you are able, all are welcome — NO registration required.

Interactive A Cappella Vocal Concert at Lyngblomsten Saturday, July 18, 10-11 AM, Lyngblomsten Lino Lakes

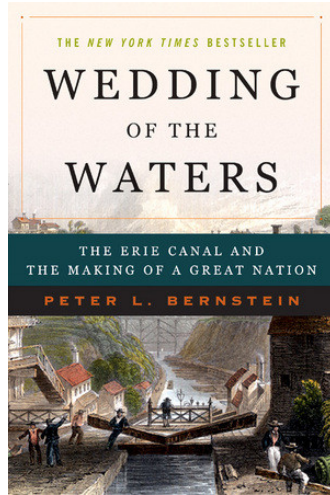
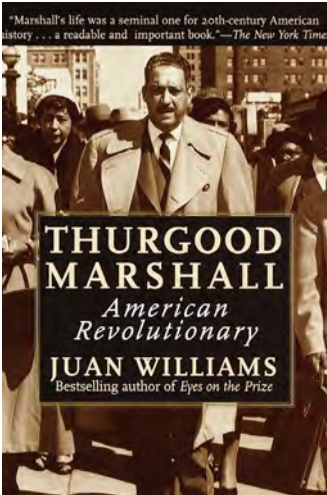
Join Lyngblomsten for an interactive a cappella vocal concert on July 18. The Waters Run Deep explores the many ways music connects us—to one another, to our stories, and to the world around us. The Summer Singers' interactive performances invite audiences to listen, participate, and experience music from new perspectives. The performance is followed by a Q&A. The Summer Singers will be performing on July 18 from 10–11 AM at Lyngblomsten at Lino Lakes (6070 Blanchard Blvd., Lino Lakes, MN 55014) and from 2–3 PM at Lyngblomsten at Como Park (1415 Almond Ave., Saint Paul, MN 55108). Free, no registration required. For more information, contact Nicole Buchholz, Director of Lifelong Learning & the Arts, at nbuchholz@lyngblomsten.org or (651) 632-5459. Our congregation is a member of Lyngblomsten, a Christian nonprofit organization providing healthcare, housing, and community-based services for older adults since 1906.

Young Adult Ministry News

Young Adults of Incarnation, come meet Mike at the Vadnais Heights Starbucks for after church coffee and brunch on Sunday July 19 (12 PM–2 PM). This will be a great time for returning college students to connect with us about how life is going and get updates about upcoming young adult events for the summer!

1016 Hwy 96 E, Vadnais Heights, MN 55127





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:

JULY — *“Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary”* by Juan Williams. An account of a remarkable man with an outsized, multifaceted personality — a driven crusader, committed pathfinder, cantankerous dissenter, and unrestrained raconteur.

AUGUST — *“Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation”* by Peter Bernstein.

After completion in 1825, the Erie Canal made the journey to reach new territory quicker and safer; it no longer required the skills and daring of a Daniel Boone or Lewis and Clark to venture out to new lands.

Questions? Contact Jerry Gilbert at dacta49@msn.com.

Among the Congregation

PUBLIC PRAYER CONCERNS: Guy Ahlstrom; Doug Ward; Lowell Odland; Dawn Schwantz; Dede Mattison; Karen Ruff; Ronald Anderson; Dottie House; Carlos Rodriguez; Erin Holmen; Karen Stauder; Kara Genia & family; Jon Nelson; Kate Tollefson & family; Carol Beckerleg; Marian Ness; Linda Hudepohl; Sarah Steil's mother; Paul Howard's sister; Linda Brynjulfson's sister; Kara & Mike Johnson's son & daughter-in-law; Katie Gray's daughter, Erin; Nicole & Troy Heller's brother-in-law; Grant Rykken's brother-in-law; Sue Bernlohr's mother; Mike Wielenberg's mother; Al and Carolyn Ek's son; Judy Nelson's friend, Leona; 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: John Miller and family on the death of his sister, Colleen; Kay Leerssen & family on the death of her daughter, Angela Herr; the family of Deb Rykken on her death; the family of Larrie Reese on his death; Tom Henk & family on the death of his brother; the family of Rachel Eklund on her death

BAPTIZED: Molly Zogg, daughter of Kyle & Sydney Zogg; Madelyn Claeys, daughter of Joe & Katelyn Claeys

Financial Report

FINANCE REPORT FOR MAY 2026

From the Statement of Financial Activities Report

MAY Actual Operating & Mortgage Revenue	\$229,304	YTD Actual Op & Mort Revenue	\$1,068,534	YTD Budgeted Oper. & Mort. Revenue	\$1,201,836
MAY Actual Operating & Mortgage Expense	\$249,573	YTD Actual OP & Mort Expense	\$1,243,572	YTD Budgeted Oper. & Mort. Expense	\$1,254,257
OPERATING TOTALS	-\$20,269		-\$175,038		-\$52,421



Welcome to the **Creation Care Corner**, information from the Creation Care Action Group. We hope to keep you informed about Creation Care projects at Incarnation and to provide ideas and resources for your own journey toward 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: Composting Is About To Get Much Easier

Composting is a way to easily help reduce the amount of waste that goes into landfills, and it is about to get easier for many residents of Washington and Ramsey counties. Currently, compost pick up as part of regular trash barrel contents is available in 28 cities in Washington and Ramsey counties. Starting July 6, the program will be expanded in Ramsey County to include communities such as Gem Lake, White Bear Lake, White Bear Township, Vadnais Heights, North Oaks, New Brighton, Shoreview, Mounds View, and Arden Hills. Washington County will add the communities of Forest Lake, Hugo, Marine on St. Croix, May Township, and Scandia. Residents will be able to order a free supply of 6 or 13-gallon compostable bags. **To participate, you must use the free bags provided by Ramsey and Washington counties.** See information below for how to order those bags. As you fill the bags, simply knot the top and throw it into your regular trash container. Compost bags will be collected with your other trash and sorted at the waste management facility. No drop off or separate container is needed.

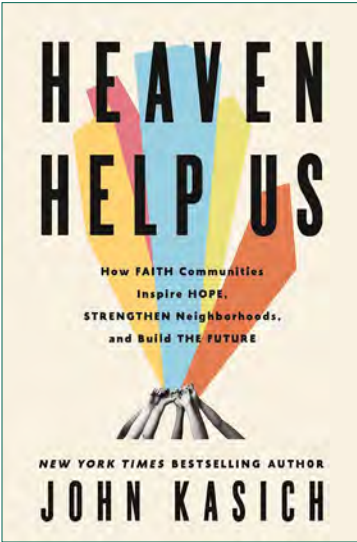
Food scraps comprise more than 20% of household trash by weight. Composting helps the environment in several ways by:

- Protecting the climate by reducing methane emissions from landfills.
- Reducing waste.
- Recycling organic materials into a valuable soil amendment – compost.
- Recovering nutrients in organic materials keeps them local.
- Creating green jobs.
- Extending municipal landfill life by diverting organic materials.

For more information about this program and how to order your free bags, go to <https://foodscrapspickup.com>

You can learn more about the benefits of composting at <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/benefits-using-compost>





Heaven Help Us: How Faith Communities Inspire Hope, Strengthen Neighborhoods, and Build the Future

By John Kasich

We live in a world, nation, community, and even church today where despair and cynicism abound. Where we go to bed anxious and get up feeling not much better. Where we wonder how things will turn out for us, for our children, and for our grandchildren. Here's a title that can make us feel more confident that people CAN make a difference, and there are ways to bring about the change we would like to see.

Heaven Help Us: How Faith Communities Inspire Hope, Strengthen Neighborhoods, and Build the Future by John Kasich might be the answer to one of those sleepless nights. You may want to keep a copy on your nightstand as a reference. Or consider it as a good graduation gift for a young person in your life.

As a former congressman and governor of Ohio, John has had the opportunity to know about, see, and learn from a number of different communities. He continues to be a national leader in bringing people together, not dividing them, to work for a better world. This title uses examples of faith communities, the power of individuals to make a real difference, and how the resourcefulness and ingenuity of some of those who sit next to us in the pews on Sunday can bring things about that we would not expect.

Kasich reminds us that "Good is happening in our country. Join in."

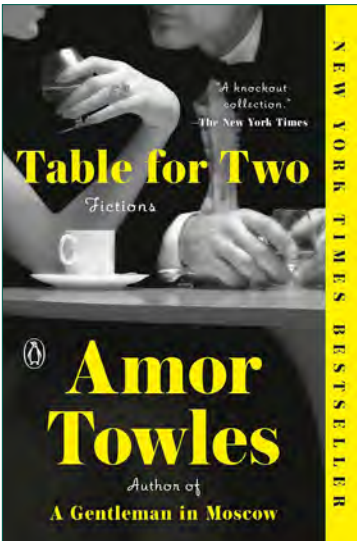


Table for Two

By Amor Towles

Many readers know the name of Amor Towles from his novel *A Gentleman in Moscow* (highly recommended if you have not read it). His latest book, *Table for Two*, is a collection of six short stories plus a novella. While many of us don't like short stories because we are left seemingly wanting more, all the reviews of this book suggest the stories are complete and full.

One of the stories is set in Moscow, another in California, but most are set in New York. The characters are varied, complex, relatable, and often quite likable. There are plenty of human connections, even in times of hardship. And Towles continues to include humor, an old-fashioned sense of place and time, and careful observance of persons as well as places. There is a common thread of people touching the lives of other people, even sometimes at a table for two.

The novella is set in Hollywood, and the characters are varied as they meet Eve. They even include a movie star you might remember, Olivia, as in "Gone With the Wind," who adds a wild goose chase to the plot. These stories are all different and could stand alone, but here they are in one lovely and well-written book.

The Incarnation community continues to provide life-giving blood to people in need in our region and across the country. We'd love to have you as one of those vital blood donors at our next blood drive on **Tuesday, August 11, 2026, from 10 PM–4 PM.**

If you'd like to make an appointment to donate blood, please follow this link:

<https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/drive-results?zipSponsor=IncarnationLutheran>

The Red Cross is always eager to maximize the good your donation can do. One way to do that is to do a Power Red donation. This is a donation in which you give 2 units of red blood cells and receive the plasma and platelet fractions back. If you'd like more information about Power Red donation, please follow this link:

<https://www.redcrossblood.org/donate-blood/how-to-donate/types-of-blood-donations/power-red-donation.html>



Connecting Families to Their History at Incarnation Cemetery

Modernizing Our Records: Incarnation Cemetery Partners with Chronicle and Goes Digital

Incarnation Cemetery will officially launch a new cemetery software tool in partnership with Chronicle in July 2026.

This software solution allows us to migrate and maintain our cemetery records into an electronic format. This will make it easier for staff, our current caretaker, funeral homes, and monument companies to access records. It will also be available to the public to view and locate a loved one's grave and to select a lot for purchase.

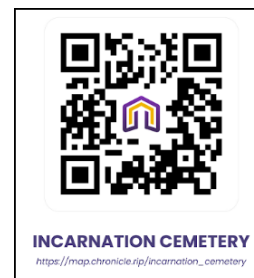
The ability to easily locate a loved one's grave was recently helpful to a family member who was able to track family genealogy back 16 generations, some of whom were among the earliest burials at Incarnation.

You can access the software by clicking on this link or QR Code:

https://map.chronicle.rip/incarnation_cemetery

You will also be able to access it via a link on our website moving forward:

<https://www.incarnationmn.org/incarnation-cemetery/>

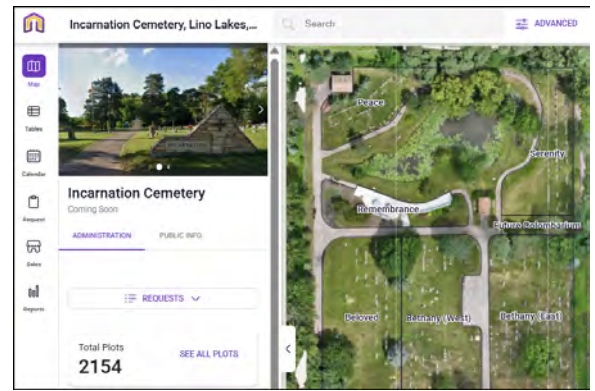


Project History

This project has been in progress for over a year, and we are excited to offer this tool as part of our ongoing cemetery management. Part of the project included taking aerial photographs of the cemetery via a drone, as well as individual headstone photographs.

Volunteers

We are grateful to the cemetery team for their insight in moving forward with investing in this project. Special thanks to Steve Dorr, Steve Belor, and Amy Faymoville for researching various cemetery software solutions. We'd also like to acknowledge our 2025 summer interns, Elise Hoecke and Dinkenesh Coltvet, for their many hours spent scanning deeds, cremation certificates, and disposition permits. And to our current volunteers, Kathy Belor and Deb Hartley, who have been assisting with uploading the electronic documents.



We'd also like to acknowledge Jerry Hawkins, who faithfully volunteered and managed all the cemetery's logistics for 40-plus years. This was an incredible gift of time, and we are so very grateful to Jerry for everything he did over the years! Gratitude to our previous administrators, Danette Griffith & Brad Solberg, and volunteer, Mike Vant, for his assistance in organizing records.

Incarnation has been incredibly blessed to have had many volunteers over the years who have given their time to maintain the cemetery through weekly lawn mowing, gardening, and landscaping. The cemetery is well known for being well-maintained, and we are so very grateful for those who have served in this way!

Memorial Feature — Coming Soon!

The cemetery software also allows families to upload a special memory or information about a loved one buried at Incarnation. There is a fee for this; however, a portion of the cost is returned to Incarnation to support ongoing cemetery needs. This feature will be accessible shortly after the public site goes live.



Cemetery Committee

Our current committee members are: Bill Reichwald, Jerry Hawkins, Dick Christiansen, Steve Belor, Steve Dorr, Dave Carlson, John McClellan, Jerry Gilbert, Rick Gravley, and Amy Faymoville. If you are interested in volunteering at the cemetery or serving on the cemetery committee, please reach out to Bill Reichwald, Committee Chair, at bill.reichwald@gmail.com or directly at 612-751-6379.

Lot/Niche Sales & Questions About Accessing the Cemetery Software

For additional questions or information regarding purchasing a final resting spot, please reach out to: Amy Faymoville, Cemetery Coordinator, at afaymoville@incarnationmn.org or directly at 651-560-7056.

