



Lifetimes

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December 13, 2015

Mailed: December 9, 2015

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ADVENT WORSHIP & SUNDAY THEMES

Wednesday, December 16 at 7:00 p.m.

The 2015 Sunday theme is "An Invitation of Advent"

November 29: "An Invitation to Presence"

December 6: "An Invitation to Quiet"

December 13: "An Invitation to Share"

December 20: "An Invitation to Wonder"

CHRISTMAS EVE: December 24

1:00 p.m. & 3:00 p.m. – Worship Designed for Young Families

5:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve Candlelight Contemporary Worship with Communion. Nursery Available.

7:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve Candlelight Contemporary Worship with Communion.

9:00 p.m. & 11:00 p.m. – Christmas Eve Candlelight Traditional Worship with Communion.

CHRISTMAS DAY: December 25

10:00 a.m. - Lessons and Carols with Communion

BLESSING OF THE HOUSEHOLDS: December 27

8:45 a.m., 10:05 a.m., 10:45 a.m., & 6:00 p.m.

From The Staff

Gary Medin

Senior Pastor



"Just ordinary people; God uses ordinary people; He chooses people just like me and you"

Jearlyn Steele sang those words as an encore at Incarnation's annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner in November. I'm not sure how you feel about being considered just an ordinary person, but in the scope of human history most of us appear on the outside to be fairly ordinary people. But while we appear to be fairly ordinary people, God has chosen to make us into extraordinary people reflecting God's light into the dark places of this world.

As the writer of the Biblical book 1 Peter says: You are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you - from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted. (1 Peter 2:9 - 10; The Message)

The annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner is a highlight for me in our ministry together at Incarnation. It is a special reminder for me of how important it is that ordinary people like you and me allow God to use us to spread and live the Good News of Jesus Christ in this world. Over 1,100 volunteers were invited this year to this event. And without every single one of those people volunteering time, energy, resources and gifts through countless ways, Incarnation would not reflect God's light into the world in the way we do.

Because people are willing to be used by God, this faith community doesn't shine just a small amount of God's light into this world, but rather there is a whole lot of God's light shining in this world through us, individually and together. Without so many being willing to be used by God in and through Incarnation's ministry, in and through their lives at work, their school, their neighborhoods, their family, this world would be a whole lot darker than it is. Seeing so many people gathered together at the volunteer dinner, I am especially reminded of the incredible privilege it is to be in ministry with all of you.

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I'm Finding Me

By Amber Marie

Incarnation's mission partner, Solid Ground, is an award winning nonprofit whose holistic approach to helping families build strong foundations is finding success with lifting them out of homelessness and poverty. Nothing gives us a better vision of how transforming this organization has been than stories, like Amber's story, of those who experienced this life-giving opportunity through the work of Solid Ground. As you read about Amber, know how much your prayers and support are appreciated and of lasting benefit. Amber originally shared her story as a speech to a congregation earlier in the year.

Hello, my name is Amber Marie. I am a strong, beautiful woman with a lot of aspirations for life. I uplift myself through my faith. I know that what I once was is not what I am today. I once was lost and broken, but now I am free. I am not afraid to be me. I am so humbled to be here to share my story. If it can touch and inspire you, all of my hard work is worth it.

I want to start by saying that I'm so grateful for my parents and my aunt that practically raised me. Even though my childhood was difficult, I want you to know that I love them with all my heart.

My parents were caught up in the street life, chasing drugs and attention. I was lost as a child, I would move to different houses every month living with different family members or friends. As a young child I lived on and off with my aunt, where my cousin and I were inseparable. We felt that all we had was each other. I remember when we were about 10 years old we started a club and charged all the kids in the neighborhood to participate. We would play with the kids and whoever won would get candy for a prize. The profit is what my cousin and I used to buy our own food. We always made the best of what we had.

Growing up as a teenager I would chase love in all the wrong places, yearning for that love that had abandoned me. My aunt lived a mile away from my mom. I would go to my mother's house every once in a while to check on her, only to see a house full of users and abusers. When I was there, I would make everyone leave, clearing the house with such anger and animosity. But in the corner of my eye I'd always see this guy. He was always there with big shiny things, all flashy and charming. He was my enemy in disguise supplying everything underneath my eyes. He was mister smooth, coming to where I lived with his shiny things. We started being friends, and he made promises and gave me false dreams. He was six years older than me, so never did I think that we would be more than just friends. For my 18th birthday, he promised me a car and seduced me with a fairy tale dream of love, hope and prosperity. I thought he was my prince that was going to sweep me off my feet. Instead he was a nightmare that became reality.

The first time that he hit me I was hurt and angry. I left him, of course. After that he lured me back in with his manipulating ways, showing me what I thought was love. As time went on that hit turned into hitting, the disagreeing turned into arguing, the yelling turned into name calling. It progressively got worse. The bruise turned into black eyes, the marks turned into scars. All of it combined turned into fear. All along, my family was hurt and upset, they were there to defend and help me. At that stage I was so vulnerable and naive that I would believe that he could change - I would go back to him.

He started secluding me from my family and eventually friends so that I would only have him. My mentality started to change to thinking I could not survive without him. I thought I would be left alone on the streets with no home. At that time I felt like there were no other choices. I am a person who always tries to see the good in people. I loved him and thought that he loved me. I thought that I could change him and that there was a purpose for us to be together. I would take the abuse and beatings thinking that was his way of loving me.

As time went on, he would leave to cheat on me and there was the one summer where I knew I was absolutely done. I moved in

with my sister. She helped me open my eyes to realize I could be more. She helped me get into beauty school, it was then I found my passion. I graduated with big dreams and opportunities.

But then, his manipulating ways took hold of me again, selling me a story of a family. We got back together and I got pregnant. It was also the beginning of the end for me. Things got worse as time went by and after having my daughter, I was scared out of my mind, raising a child when I could barely even survive. I stayed in the relationship with him, trying to make it work, thinking my daughter needed a daddy. After having her, baby #2 came along. The atmosphere was toxic and not good for my girls. My daughters strengthened me, giving me a new determination. I secretly started seeing some of my family again. I would sneak away to see my sister. She encouraged me and helped me build my faith to leave. We made a plan, stuck to it, and it set me free.

After a while of living with my sister, I decided to go to a battered women's shelter. I was there for two months. I cried so many nights but they were tears of joy, I was just so happy to be free. I had a sense of "this is my life, I can do it". I knew it was a stepping stone that God was giving me. I knew that with God's strength I could do it. It was tough, but it was a lot easier than it had been.

When coming to my first appointment with Solid Ground, I started crying. I was so thankful. I was amazed to even be taking these steps. I had never had my own place and didn't know all it entailed to make it happen. Rachel was so helpful throughout the whole process. After actually moving in, I was afraid to live alone, but coming home and having two doors that had to be unlocked really made me feel safer.

After moving in I found a full time job and started going to church. I had so much on my plate. I was used to having more time with my girls. I did not want to add anything else to our crazy schedule, I missed them way too much. It was then, when feeling overwhelmed, that Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) classes started. I would go to DBT and say "how many more classes do we have" while crying from missing my girls so much. It was when I saw genuine affection for my life from Ms. Jazi I knew that she was onto something good. I became wiser and more mindful, being able to understand and know that all things are possible. She taught me how to make my house a home. Now this is my home and I wouldn't want it any other way. Without this place and everything that Solid Ground does, I wouldn't be who I am emotionally, financially, mentally and as stable as I am today. DBT was a true blessing in disguise. I now have the tools and resources to succeed. I think about the future and different types of possibilities that I never thought could be. I am so thankful.

Meeting with my advocate Mary Ann helps me clear my mind, stay focused and stay on track with things. I have learned that in order to achieve my two and five year goals that I have to achieve and stomp out my day to day goals. The budgeting class that I took here with FamilyMeans changed my life. It was a true breakthrough for me, it helped me to manage my money and to live prosperously.

In this short amount of time I have humbled myself in so many ways. I want to be a humanitarian and cosmetologist. I know that I can change the world one style at a time by making people feel beautiful and bringing that spark into their eyes. I'm building friendships and creating an empire so that one day my girls can call it their own. My next journey in building a better life for my family is studying for more business knowledge and networking with nonprofits that help with feeding children and bringing awareness of domestic violence.

When people first see me, they see a single mother with two beautiful little girls. But what they don't see is a survivor, a warrior of strength and integrity. I am a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a cousin, and a friend. I am a person with a voice. This voice that I have now is a voice that I once never had. As people, the number one way to survive and persevere in the world is through our voice. It is with our voice that we can proclaim our love for one another. It's in our voice that we can discuss topics in the world, where we can make a difference. Within finding my voice, I found my freedom and my future. Thank you for being here today.

Adult Learning: Winter 2016

Incarnation's "Learning" value begins: Learning is essential to a dynamic and deepening faith. A growing understanding of the life graciously given in Jesus Christ illuminates our daily walk. This winter there are a number of learning opportunities being offered that are designed to help participants in their daily walk with Christ.

Dave Ramsey: Financial Peace University

Sundays, January 10 - March 6 (not February 7), 4 - 5:30 p.m.

Do you want to get your finances back in order after holiday spending? Are you looking for tools that help you build and follow a budget that better matches your values? Do you want to get out of debt or save for the future or just start fresh in the new year? If any of these motives apply to you, then Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University could be a fit for you. This course will be facilitated by Pastor Jeanne Hartfield with video instruction by Dave Ramsey. Cost: \$89 for an individual or a couple, includes course materials and access to online resources. Child care is available for children up to 8 years old. Register in the Incarnation Office by Wednesday, January 6.

The Big Picture: The Gospel of Luke

Tuesdays, January 19 & 26, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

The Gospel of Luke is the primary gospel that will be used in worship for the current lectionary year. This two session Bible study will give you background and an overview of themes in this gospel as well as a Bible reading plan. Register in the Incarnation Office by Monday, January 18.

Living with Loss, Healing with Hope

Monday, February 22, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Many transitions, while difficult and challenging, are predictable in the course of life. Others break the rules, shattering dreams and hopes, interrupting or forever changing lives. Such occurrences can be personal or might be responses to local, national or world events. Maintaining resiliency at such times can be difficult. Hope may not return easily. In this interactive session, led by educator and author Ted Bowman, participants will explore a framework for grieving, which includes shattered dreams. A mixture of literary, psychological, and spiritual resources which can aid in finding hope and healing will be woven throughout the session. Register in the Incarnation Office by Thursday, February 18.

In addition to these offerings, Kairos has an engaging line up of speakers and themes on Sunday mornings and the Walk Through the Bible study will continue on Wednesdays at noon. Visit incarnationmn.org/connect-grow/adults for more information and a complete list of opportunities.

INCARNATION LUTHERAN CHURCH GENERAL FUND - INCOME & EXPENSE REPORT FOR THE MONTH ENDING OCTOBER, 2015

REVENUE	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET	YTD VARIANCE
Member Envelopes/Loose	\$1,403,374	\$1,450,218	(\$46,844)
Special Env./Misc.	39,713	31,206	8,507
Special Appeals	0	2,646	(\$2,646)

Total Offering	\$1,443,087	\$1,484,070	(\$40,983)
Other Income	7,209	10,761	(3,552)

Total Income	\$1,450,296	\$1,494,831	(\$44,535)
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EXPENSES	YTD ACTUAL	YTD BUDGET	YTD VARIANCE
Missions	\$183,999	\$184,583	(\$584)
Salaries/Wages	\$1,115,076	\$1,129,167	(\$14,090)
Ministries	\$69,348	\$90,958	(\$21,610)
Administration	\$55,198	\$68,333	(\$13,135)
Building	\$136,528	\$151,125	(\$14,597)

Total Expenses	\$1,560,150	\$1,624,167	(\$64,071)
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Net Income (loss)	(\$109,854)	(\$129,336)	\$19,482
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CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Beginning of the Month balance \$131,307

Net Income for the month 38,500

Mortgage Payment (28,540)

Other Capital Expenses (161)

Monthly Ending Balance \$141,106

Thank you for supporting the ministries, missions, and programs of Incarnation with your continued contributions. Your gifts are greatly appreciated.

From the Staff, continued from pg. 1

As Lutherans, we don't believe that only some are called by God, that just pastors are called by God, or that just church staff are called by God, or that even just certain Christians are called by God to do God's work in the world. We believe that all followers of Christ, all Christians, are called by God to be God's instruments to do God's work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference God has made for us. A calling to be God's people in the world is not just for a few, but for all of us as followers of Jesus Christ. It is a calling for you.

As Jearlyn and Billy Steele reminded us that night, as all of us gathered together reminded each other, as we are reminded every time we gather together in worship, God uses ordinary people; God uses all of us, to do the extraordinary, to spread God's love more and more into this world. Pray that we will let that truth sink more and more into our lives and allow God to use us in ways we can't even imagine.



Worship, Prayer & Among the Congregation

Recently Hospitalized: Jane Backer; Carl Buettemeier.

Sympathy to: Steve Johnson and family on the death of his mother; the death of Marlowe Hamerston; Will and Kevin Sharpe on the death of their mother.

Congratulations to: Kristin and Brice Bloxham on the birth of Silas James.

Connect & Grow

Small Group for Women: The Practice of Living our Gifts and Values

What is your unique combination of values, gifts, and interests? How can you add purpose and meaning to life and make a difference for others? This group is a chance to deepen your appreciation of the gifts God has given you, using *LifeKeys* and other resources. Suggested contribution: \$15. Register: dfloe@incarnationmn.org. Pre-register for nursery (additional cost). When: Five Sundays, 5:30 - 7:00 pm, January - March.

Looking Ahead: 2016 Summer Small Group for "Recently Retired" or "About to Retire"

Connect with others in a similar stage of life. Explore how to live with purpose, meaning, joy and a growing faith, in this new life stage. The group is based on, *How to Retire Happy, Wild, and Free*. Suggested contribution: \$10. Leaders: Dan and Ellen Kratz. Register: dfloe@incarnationmn.org.

Congregational Business

Congregational Meeting

There will be a congregational meeting on Sunday, January 31 at 12:15 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Meeting business will include a review of 2015, a vote to approve the 2016 operating budget and the 2016 mortgage management budget, and the first of two required votes for approval of a revised Incarnation Constitution. All confirmed youth and active adult members are invited and encouraged to attend this meeting.

When: Sunday, January 31, 12:15 p.m.



End of Year Reminder

Checks and cash that are placed in the offering plates, paid on line or delivered to the Incarnation Office on or before Thursday, December 31, will be credited to your 2015 giving statement and may be claimed as a charitable contribution deduction for 2015. Mailed gifts must be postmarked on or before December 31. Thank you for your support!

Stock Gifts to Incarnation

To qualify for a 2015 charitable contribution deduction, stock transfers must be completed before December 31, 2015. Incarnation's policy is to sell the stock immediately, but because of the volume of stock transfers the last week of the year, it often takes several days to complete the transaction. Please make stock gifts as early in December as possible and let Debbie Morse, Incarnation's Financial Secretary, (dmorse@incarnationmn.org) know what your intentions are for the gift. Thank you!

Incarnation Lutheran Church Office: 651-484-7213

Web Site: www.incarnationmn.org - If registering online, most major debit and credit cards accepted
If payments are made at the Incarnation Office, Visa and Mastercard are accepted for payment.

Address Service Requested

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Incarnation Lutheran Church



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