



# Lifetimes

August 2024

From the Pastor



*Pastor Kai Nilsen*

This summer, preaching through some of the primary stories of the Gospel of Luke has been both challenging and clarifying. The challenge for me is this: Jesus' vision for a just world is far beyond what I imagine, and my capacity to co-create that kind of world, in

contrast, seems so limited. Good news for the poor. Freedom for those oppressed. Release from physical and spiritual infirmities that bind. Welcome to the outcast. Mercy for the stranger. The world Jesus imagined.

What has been clarifying is this: The people who had the hardest time with Jesus' message aren't atheists or agnostics or practitioners of other faiths. The people who are most offended are the most religious, the most well-positioned spiritual leaders, the ones who seem most certain they understand what God is all about.

I wonder, sometimes, if I would have been similarly offended by his surprising and radical grace.

I wonder, sometimes, how willing I am to "follow" his lead today.

Yet, however challenging and clarifying the message has been, and is now, I have also been made more curious about what it would be like to live his message today.

Last Sunday, I presented a list of tensions between the world as it is and the world Jesus imagines. They included:

- Consumers vs. Caretakers of Creation
- Greed vs. Generosity

- Competition vs. Compassion
- Selfishness vs. Selflessness
- Violence vs. Shalom
- Fear vs. Love

It should be evident which describes the way the world as it, too often, is and which describes the world Jesus imagines.

But, let me say a few things about those binary choices:

It's never as simple as either/or. We live in the tension of both sides every day, every decision.

Jesus' vision is hard. As in the story of the Good Samaritan, it's easier to walk on by than to respond with mercy. Even so, that we can't easily and fully live into Jesus' vision is no excuse for apathy.

Change, in our lives and in the world, won't happen by simply thinking or hoping it will. It happens through intentional, gradual, consistent, practice of the better.

Luke's Gospel (and the second edition of it, The Book of Acts) reminds us that change is possible!

As I often say, "Jesus didn't come to help us build bigger and better churches; Jesus came to help us imagine and then co-create a better, more loving world."

What has been challenging for you in this message? Clarifying? Where do you find yourself being called to make a difference?

Peace, Kai



Tracy Strantz  
Council President

Growing up, I knew my hometown Lutheran church was part of the “ELCA” (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) but other than that, I didn’t know a lot about what that meant. I just liked the idea that my church was part of something bigger. That is how I view faith in general, we’re all part of something bigger. Since joining Council, I’ve welcomed the opportunity to learn more about our St. Paul Area Synod (SPAS) within the ELCA.

*The Saint Paul Area Synod supports the work and ministries of congregations right here in the eastern Twin Cities. A variety of programs and activities bolster congregational vitality, financially support fledgling missions, and coach effective stewardship practices. These tools for the church offer support for faith communities to learn, develop and thrive.*

*We are a church that believes God is calling us into the world — together. Companion church relationships enrich and deepen our ministries by exposing us to global challenges and perspectives as we seek to work with one another to build up the body of Christ and the world.*

(Excerpts from the St. Paul Area Synod mission statement.)

In this month’s Council update we’re excited to share perspectives from our congregation members

who attended the St. Paul Area Synod Assembly in May. A huge thank you to Don and Claudia Wiebold, Ken and Rosalie Grosch, and Vernita Kennen!

### Q: What were some of the most memorable moments for you during the Synod Assembly?

**Claudia and Don:** We appreciated the privilege and opportunity to be a part of the ELCA synod business and hear the presentations from Bishop Patricia Lull and various associates. We also appreciate the special focus each year (e.g. Planting Hope campaign in 2023, ELCA World Hunger’s 50th Year in 2024) and visiting the Mission Fair booths.



Claudia and Don Wiebold

**Rosalie and Ken:** Worshiping with our brothers and sisters in the synod; sitting at the many booths that shared the work of the synod and ELCA; welcoming Eternal Flame congregation — a new congregation made up mostly of Hmong immigrants, the first new synod congregation in the last 10 years; Recognition of the opening of the East Side School after large donations from Incarnation



Ken and Rosalie Grosch

and other synod congregations; renewing our faith with hope, as Bishop Lull shared the good things happening in the synod; realizing that we are not alone in our faith.

**Vernita:** It’s all about the gathered body of Lutheran Christians in our geographical area. It’s about worshipping together in larger numbers with raised voices, excellent music, excellent preaching (Bishop Lull is always good), and sharing the gift of Holy Communion with other congregation members. It’s about being “church together” as voting members. We come to that responsibility not representing ourselves or our congregations but as voters on behalf of all the members of the Saint Paul Area Synod. We vote to elect leadership, to adopt a budget for the synod’s work, to joyfully welcome new congregations (Holy Flame this year), and to discuss and vote upon resolutions and memorials. It’s also a connection to the churchwide ELCA; learning from the churchwide representative about what’s happening in the ELCA and beyond.



**Q: Would you encourage others in our congregation to participate as synod representatives?**

**Rosalie and Ken:** We encourage others to become involved in the Saint Paul Area Synod. We are strong because we have each other.



**Vernita:** Yes, it's about being renewed, restored, and revitalized as you return to Incarnation. It's about knowing that Lutherans are connected, thoughtful, and have fun as they gather in Assembly.

**Claudia and Don:** Yes, we would. We are privileged to have freedom of religion, so being part of our synod is an honor and blessing.

Please visit the [Saint Paul Area Synod website \(spas-elca.org\)](https://spas-elca.org) to learn more, review blogs, or subscribe to their email updates (select the "Subscribe to Synod News" option on the bottom right of the home page).

You can review past weekly synod e-newsletters under the "Our Synod" dropdown menu. You may

also read more about the 2024 Synod Assembly here:

Click here for the [2024 Synod Assembly Wrap-Up — Saint Paul Area Synod](#).

If you are interested in participating as a synod representative for Incarnation, please let us know by emailing us at [council@incarnationmn.org](mailto:council@incarnationmn.org) or come visit us in person at the Welcome Kiosk after Sunday worship services.

## An Invitation to the Next Council Discussion Forum

### Council Discussion Forum August 11 at 10:15 a.m.

Your Congregation Council invites you to join our next Discussion Forum on Sunday, August 11 in the Fireside Room from 10:15–11:15 a.m. We look forward to sharing updates and providing a time for Q&A and interactive discussion.



Sean Turner  
Minister of Worship,  
Music & the Arts

Greetings from the Music Department! What a wonderful July we've had in worship music! I'd like to thank our gifted congregational musicians Stephanie Sinclair and Suzy Schultz for providing our worship services with beautiful piano music this month. The summer choir sounded fantastic with its rendition of Andraé Crouch's "Soon and Very Soon". We are so thankful for the number of new guests who have joined us for our summer choir Sundays and look forward to some of them continuing in the fall. How about that interactive rainstorm anthem coordinated by Amy Maakestad?! That was a first-ever experience and such a creative blending of

congregational interaction, ILC ensemble members, and the exquisite poetry of Susan Palo Cherwien. Our final Sunday featured our beloved organist and pianist Lou Ann Reese. What a precious gift she is to our community! Thank you Lou Ann for your years of artistry and dedication to Incarnation's music ministry! We are busy planning for an exciting fall season of worship music! If you would like to participate in any way — we would love to have you join us! Please contact [Sean Turner](mailto:sturner@incarnationmn.org) at [sturner@incarnationmn.org](mailto:sturner@incarnationmn.org) regarding senior choir, soloist opportunities, and brass/string ensembles. Please contact [Amy Maakestad](mailto:amaakestad@incarnationmn.org) at [amaakestad@incarnationmn.org](mailto:amaakestad@incarnationmn.org) for bell choirs, children's choir, and prime chimers. See you in worship!

— Sean

## Volunteer with FMSC This Summer!



During the summer months, there are several ways to support our Ministry Partner, *Feed My Starving Children*. This is an excellent time to get kids who are especially busy during the school year involved in serving others. With all these opportunities, all are welcome to join in the fun, so feel free to invite your friends, family members, and neighbors to join in the fun. These opportunities are not limited to members of Incarnation.

- **Monthly Packing at FMSC in Coon Rapids:** Each month, shifts are reserved to pack meals at the FMSC permanent site in Coon Rapids. Shifts are available on the third Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday each month. The next opportunities are August 20, 21 and 22.
- **Food Truck Festivals:** The last Food Truck Festival will be held on Saturday, August 17 in Anoka.

Volunteers will receive credit for shifts worked which earns money for the 2025 All Hands on Hope MobilePack™. Responsibilities include checking IDs, securing wristbands, selling water, and providing general information (ID check and wristband volunteers must be 18 years of age).

Information is available on our [FMSC webpage](#) — including dates, times, and registration instructions. Thank you for your continued support of FMSC during the summer months! Your service will save lives!

### And save the date:

The next **All Hands on Hope MobilePack™** is scheduled to be held at Incarnation from April 30 to May 4, 2025. Look for more information including volunteer registration and donation opportunities coming this fall.



Welcome to the **Creation Care Corner** with information from the Creation Care Action Group. We believe that as Christians we are called to care for God's creation as an integral part of our Christian faith and identity. The Creation Care Action Group is dedicated to embracing this calling. We hope to inform you about Creation Care projects at Incarnation and provide ideas and resources for your own journey in creating a more sustainable world. We hope you find this information helpful. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact [Nancy Stutzman](mailto:nancystutzman@comcast.net) at [nancystutzman@comcast.net](mailto:nancystutzman@comcast.net) or [Mike Vant](mailto:mjvant@gmail.com) at [mjvant@gmail.com](mailto:mjvant@gmail.com).



### Today's Topic: Single-Use Plastic

Our oceans and landfills are drowning in single-use plastics. Single-use plastic products are made from fossil fuels and include plastic and polystyrene food and beverage containers, bottles, straws, cups, cutlery, and disposable plastic bags designed for or intended to be used once and discarded. The majority of single-use plastics are never recycled, and they take 1,000

years to break down in a landfill. Single-use plastics leach chemicals and microplastics that are harmful to humans and wildlife.

### What can we do?

Be mindful of how much single-use plastic you bring into your house. There are many easy ways to reduce our use of such products.

- Reusable grocery and produce bags are a great first step. Many stores sell reusable produce bags in different sizes to help avoid using plastic bags for our apples and avocados. Keep your bags in the car so they are always with you whenever you make a stop.
- Cleaning products are a huge source of single-use plastic from laundry detergent to dishwashing soap. There are many options for products that do not come in single-use plastic. Seventh Generation, Grove Collaborative, Blueland, TruEarth, Dropps, and Earth Breeze are just a few of the many brands offering various sustainable products, and they take up much less room in your cupboard!

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## Finance Report

June was an excellent month for Incarnation. The budget for income was \$189,542 and the actual income was \$219,682. Thank you for your generosity! Thank you, also for supporting the high school students going to the ELCA Gathing in New Orleans. There was extra income in June that helped pay for expenses.

Expenses continue to be under budget. June budgeted expense was \$198,449. Actual expenses were \$167,013. Part of these savings comes from having two empty staff positions.

For the year ending June 30, we received \$1,159,701 in income. The budget for this period is \$1,298,876.

For the year ending June 30, we have had \$1,142,562 in expenses. The budget for this period is \$1,282,020.

Please continue to give throughout the summer so that we will be ready to begin the program year with a healthy budget in September.


## Blood Drive

We are thrilled to enter our second year of hosting blood drives in our community! Please join us for our fifth quarterly blood drive at Incarnation if you're able. Tuesday, August 13 from 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. Follow the link to sign up or scan the QR code. Thank you!

<https://tinyurl.com/ILC-Blood-Drive>



For questions or more information, please contact [Gil Hartley](#).



<b>Blood Drive</b> Tuesday, August 13 from 10 am–4 pm	<b>Sign Up at</b> <a href="http://incarnationmn.org">incarnationmn.org</a> Click on "Serve"
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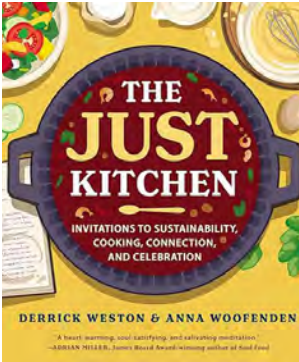
## Solid Ground Coat Drive



Winter is a challenging time for many families. Your generosity can provide warmth and comfort to our neighbors at Solid Ground. Please consider donating new or gently-used coats, boots, hats, weatherproof gloves, snow pants, and scarves. All sizes are needed. The families at Solid Ground will appreciate the warm gear for cold walks to bus stops and for children playing in the snow. A collection box will be available inside Incarnation from September 1 to October 6. Monetary donations are especially helpful to purchase coats or boots when sizes are not available to meet the needs of families. Feel free to invite family, friends, and neighbors to participate. We believe that by coming together as a community, we can make a significant impact and bring joy to the lives of our Solid Ground neighbors. Any winter wear donations not used by Solid Ground families are brought to the Alley Shoppe in Arlington Hills Lutheran Church, helping more people stay warm this winter.

Volunteers will be needed to work in a group setting at Incarnation to help sort and mark donations in September. Additional volunteer opportunities will be available the second week in October to set up the Coat Shop at Solid Ground and assist families in the selection of winter wear. Times to be announced. If you can help with one or more of these opportunities please contact [Claire Gilbert](mailto:claireg11@msn.com) at [claireg11@msn.com](mailto:claireg11@msn.com) for more information.

## Curious about the “why” of hunger? Want to work to end hunger?



No, the Incarnation Hunger Awareness and Advocacy group doesn't have all the answers to the big questions but we are on a journey of learning and working together to alleviate hunger in the world. We invite you to join us on that journey.

The group meets on the third Tuesday of the month, September – May, at 10:00 a.m. In addition to our book study (this year using *The Just Kitchen: Invitations to Sustainability, Cooking, Connection, and Celebration*), we connect with other groups working to end hunger, and seek and support avenues for advocacy on local, state, and federal levels. We also plan an annual field trip. Our first fall meeting is September 17 and you are most welcome. Questions? Contact [Vernita Kennen](mailto:Vernita.Kennen) at [dvkennen@aol.com](mailto:dvkennen@aol.com).

## Primary Election Day is Tuesday, August 13

One of the rights we have as citizens is the right to vote. This includes voting in local, state, and federal primary and general elections. A primary election determines which candidates will be on the ballot in the November general election.

You can vote in person on Election Day, Tuesday, August 13 OR you can vote by mail or in person June 28-August 12. The important thing to do is TO VOTE!

There may be two kinds of offices on your primary ballot: partisan offices and nonpartisan offices.

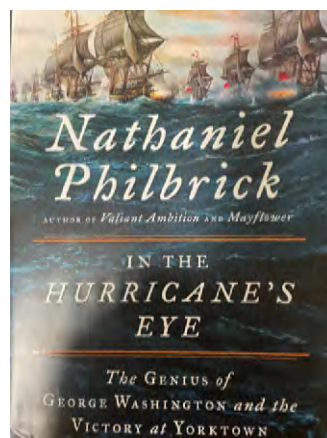
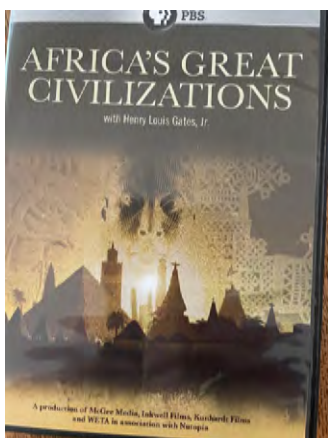
**Partisan offices** will list a political party next to a candidate's name on the ballot. All state and federal offices—such as U.S. representative or Minnesota

senator—are partisan offices. You can only vote for candidates from one political party. If you vote for candidates from more than one political party, your votes will not count. You decide when you vote which one of the parties you will vote for.

**Nonpartisan offices** will not list a political party next to a candidate's name on the ballot. For example, county, city, township and school board offices are nonpartisan. Nonpartisan offices will be listed on the back side of the ballot. You can vote for any candidate. The candidates receiving the most votes will be on the November general election ballot.

—Hunger Awareness and Advocacy Group

## Men's History Book Group



The Men's History Book Group will meet in the **Bethany Lounge at 9:00 a.m.** on the following days:

**August 6:** “*Africa's Great Civilizations*”. From the birth of humanity to the empire of Egypt.

**September 3 and 17:** “*In the Hurricane's Eye*” by Nathanael Philbrick: How George Washington, Nathanael Greene and the French Navy ended the Revolutionary War.

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

Date Range: 6/20/24 to 7/20/24

<b>Donor</b>	<b>Fund Name</b>	<b>In Memory of:</b>
Gary & Mary Ann Anderson	Memorial – Endowment	Kathy Winchell
Steve & Kris McCormack	Memorial – Undesignated	Chuck Jantzen
Don & Claudia Wiebold	Memorial – Undesignated	Chuck Jantzen (Kris McCormack’s Brother)
Gary & Mary Ann Anderson	Memorial – Endowment	Carl Johnson
Dede Mattison	Memorial – Undesignated	Carl Johnson
Anna Thorstad	Memorial – Undesignated	Carl Johnson
Jack & Karen Ruff	Memorial – Undesignated	Carl Johnson
Murt Seltz	Memorial – Undesignated	Carl Johnson
Jim & Carol Fruehling	Memorial – Ralph Reeder Food Shelf	Esther Bruggemann (Joan Volkmann’s Mother)
Marlys M. Nelson	Memorial – Quilters	Joe Wicks
Multiple Donors	Memorial – Undesignated	Stan Peterson

*The list above reflects donations that were made payable to Incarnation Lutheran Church in memory of someone. Memorials are applied to whatever fund the donor designates. If not designated, sometimes the family requests what 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.*



Among the Congregation

**PUBLIC PRAYER CONCERNS:** The Incarnation Call Committee; Brian Bergin; Kara, Jackson, Michael & Kaitlyn Genia; Jon Nelson; Kate Tollefson & family; Jan Kuhrmeyer; June Fischer; Kirsten Blaseck; Wayne Quehl; Carol Beckerleg; Gene Lindholm; Marian Ness; Joe Stepka; Lowell Odland; Linda Hudepohl; Katie Johnson’s cousin; Sue Bernlohr’s mother; Lana Bergin’s brother; Nicole & Troy Heller’s brother-in-law; Mike Wielenberg’s parents; Al and Carolyn Ek’s son; Mike & Kara Johnson’s friend, Jenny; Dave Deschene & Joy Burdick’s friend, Neil; Kim Wielenberg’s friend, Cindy; Dede Mattison’s friends, Linda and Yvonne

**SYMPATHY TO:** the family of Stan Peterson on his death; Joan Volkmann & family on the death of her mother; the family of Charles Knox on his death; Frank Petersen & family on the death of his brother; Robert Elliott & family on the death of his brother

**RECENTLY BAPTIZED:** Stanley Kyle Thibodeau, son of Eleanor & Kyle Thibodeau; Chloe Cloutier, daughter of Clayton & Mariah Cloutier; Lucy Elizabeth Wood, daughter of Shannon & Henrik Wood

**RECENTLY MARRIED:** Jen Murray and Michael Larson; McKenzie Bohling and Kyle Neuendorf