



Lifetimes

July 2024

From the Pastor



Pastor Kai Nilsen

On June 18th, I celebrated my 35th anniversary of ordination. It feels like a lifetime ago. The day drew my mind back to one of my core convictions, 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. And then I remembered a sermon I gave this last year "imagining" what that community of Jesus' followers could look like, feel like, do.

As we prepare to interview candidates this summer for a pastoral call and to lead our children's ministry, it's good to start with this end in mind:

Imagine a community of people known for their love—a love that is patient and kind, that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. A love that never ends.

Imagine a community of people fed up with the anxiety and fear leveraged by a culture that says you are what you produce; you are what you have; you are the titles you've earned, the positions you've held, the image you project; who instead become people who are fed and nourished by their first identity—image bearers of the universal God, loved no matter what.

Imagine a community so shaped by Jesus' ethic of love and justice that we resist our default to violence and retribution and become passionate seekers of reconciliation and restoration.

Imagine, in this community, less walls that divide and longer tables to gather around. Imagine black, brown, and white; rich and poor; healthy and sick; gay and straight; young and old; the convicted believers and the unconvinced questioners all welcome at the table because it is God's table, and God's grace and welcome are more staggeringly beautiful and expansive than we can imagine.

Imagine a community so deeply respectful of other religious traditions that promote love and justice and hope, that we gladly work hand in hand with one

another, fully aware that their future is our future. We are intimately bound together in this global community.

Imagine a community of people who are willing to be honest with weakness, with doubt, with uncertainty and, in spite of that or maybe because of it, gather with one another to listen to, to debate with, and to walk alongside, no matter the outcome.

Imagine a community where there is no shame in failure, in struggle, a community where tears of joy mingle with tears of sorrow in the one river of God's mercy and forgiving love.

Imagine a community of joy-filled laughter, a community that takes its call seriously but doesn't take itself too seriously.

Imagine a community that lives in such a way that the natural world and all creatures are equal partners in our decision-making. We are interdependent, our futures intimately intertwined.

Imagine a community where our kids would see themselves as God sees them—not for how they look or what they can produce or who they will be when they grow up someday, but beautiful and beloved simply for who they are this day.

Imagine a community willing to take risks of love even when they are resisted, of forgiveness even when not reciprocated, of generosity even if we never know the return. We risk boldly because we have received life freely from God.

Imagine a community of people known for their love—a love that is patient and kind, that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. A love that never ends.

What do you imagine? Remember, Jesus came to help us imagine and then co-create a better, more loving world.

A better, more loving world... imagine that!

Peace, Kai



Tracy Strantz
Council President

This month is a good time for a mid-year progress update. Earlier this year, our Congregation Council aligned on four goals for 2024. We're pleased to share that all four of our goals are actively underway and we are making progress. We appreciate the collaboration with numerous

committees and task force inputs, and with support from all of you.

2024 Council Priorities:

1. Achieve the first-year goals targeted in our 3YP.
2. Complete the 2024 capital projects.
3. Launch a stewardship campaign to support our 3YP growth goals and facility repairs.
4. Regularly engage with congregation, staff, and committee members in discussion forums centered on vision and progress in the 3YP.

Three-Year Plan Pillars:

Deepening Faith

- Innovate ways to encourage spiritual formation across the life stages.
- Enrich our worship & music experience.

Serving and Transforming Community

- Increase participation in our serving ministries.
- Expand the capacity and reach of our ministry partnerships.

Responsible Stewardship

- Build a culture of generosity.
- Ensure our organization, facilities and systems are aligned in support of our strategic plan.



We have established a Three-Year Plan Task Force to help us strategize on plan development and execution. This year is a pivotal year as we create detailed roadmaps and obtain program funding through our stewardship campaign. We've been meeting with ministry leaders to better understand their goals to grow their ministries and what's needed to support their plans.

Several urgent facility priorities were identified by our Capital Projects Task Force last year. Top

priority for us is a much needed and overdue roof replacement. We are partnering with Inspec, a roofing consultant, who will help us finalize designs, review contractor bids, and oversee the process as it's under construction. While we are pursuing the roof replacement as quickly as possible, construction is anticipated to begin in Spring 2025. Designs should be finalized this summer and we should have contractor selection and initial pricing confirmed later this year. Detailed pricing will be evaluated once construction begins and we can assess existing damage. Other top priority projects, including replacing the remaining windows and updating our HVAC system (due to age and system obsolescence respectively), are getting underway this summer. We are also actively engaged with our Finance, Facilities, and Solar Committees to evaluate designs for a solar energy installation as part of our Responsible Stewardship initiatives. We are exploring options on how we could fund the effort and completing financial analyses of return-on-investment timing for multiple scenarios. We will have more details to share on all these projects in the coming weeks.

Our stewardship campaign, "Building for Our Future," will officially launch in September. We appreciate the early commitments and financial donations that are enabling us to move forward with our top-priority 2024 capital projects this summer. In the summer months, we typically experience a drop in financial gifts that may be correlated to fluctuations with in-person attendance. We are a community that is blessed with a generous congregation and we appreciate your financial support throughout the year. Please consider online giving as a convenient way to support our facility and ministry expansion plans.

Please see the [Facilities and Solar materials deck](#) that we shared in our June 2 discussion forum. We will have more updates and project timelines for our August 11 discussion forum. Please mark your calendars to join us that day in between worship services in the Fireside Room. You may also connect with us anytime through email at council@incarnationmn.org or come visit us in person after worship services at the mobile Welcome Kiosk.



Fast Furniture

Fast furniture is the clothing equivalent of fast fashion. Buying e-commerce and big box store furniture is an environmental nightmare. Many wood-style furniture pieces are made with particle board (sawdust and wood chips glued together). Particle boards cannot be sanded and refinished as they age, and the mixed materials make recycling impossible. According to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, laminates, particle boards, and medium-density fiberboard may release formaldehyde fumes, which are present in synthetic glues, adhesives, and paints.

Once furniture breaks and can't be repaired or recycled, it will end up in the landfill. The furniture that once polluted indoor air will also contaminate the environment with plastics and toxic chemicals. When it's replaced, the cycle starts again.

What to do? Buy secondhand — find furniture on community-based online marketplaces, flea markets, consignment shops, and thrift stores. Find materials that last, like solid wood. And repair, refinish, and reupholster. When you move, sell or donate your furniture to those in need.

Prayers of Celebration

The Maesse family invites prayers of celebration for Shelly's recent retirement in February 2024. Twenty of those years she worked at Incarnation supporting the staff and pastors. Many will remember her big heart and smile. She



and her husband Todd continue to be active members of Incarnation and, in retirement, plan to spend time at their lake with family and friends while following their love and passion for Fighting Sioux Hockey. Join them in prayer for this new season of life.



Pictured: Elinor, Chris, and Cindy from Incarnation

Thank you for your generous gifts of household items and financial contributions during our annual Spring Shower drive for families at Solid Ground! Multiple loads of items were delivered to Solid Ground throughout the drive because of the many new families moving in. The deliveries were met with open arms as the supply shelves at Solid Ground were running very low. Your contributions not only help to furnish homes but also provide a warm welcome to families as they transition from homelessness to stable housing. Solid Ground is immensely grateful for your ongoing support!

Incarnation will continue to collect new and gently-used household donations throughout the year. Please check out the list of needed items here:

<https://www.solidgroundmn.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Solid-Ground-Donation-Needs.pdf>

A hardcopy list is also located at the kiosk by Incarnation's front door. Please drop off donations in the office. Thank you for your generosity!

New Bike Rack

Do you enjoy riding your bicycle to Incarnation? Thanks to a generous donation provided by a fellow Incarnation bike enthusiast, we now have a bike rack set up by Door 2!



Summer Volunteer Opportunities with FMSC

Summertime is here — it's the perfect opportunity to spend time serving others. This is a good time to get kids involved. During the summer months, there are several ways to support our Ministry Partner, Feed My Starving Children, with a minimum time commitment.

Monthly Packing at FMSC in Coon Rapids: Each month, a group of Incarnation community members gather to pack meals at the FMSC permanent site in Coon Rapids. Shifts are available on the third Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of each month.

Food Truck Festivals: Several Food Truck Festivals are happening throughout the Twin Cities this summer. Members of the Incarnation community who volunteer 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 volunteers must be 18 years of age).

Information for these events is available on [our FMSC webpage](#) including dates, times, and how to register. 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!

A Summer Service Project

Last Friday, seven of us were able to meet and put together about 60 kitchen packs for Bridging. In addition, thanks to the generosity of this group, we not only covered the \$615 cost of supplies, but can also give a \$300 check. Thank you so much for supporting Bridging and giving your time and financial support. For those who couldn't make it, we will plan another event this fall.

Happy summer, everyone!

— Michelle Anderson



Men's History Book Group

The Men's History Book Group will view and discuss history DVDs in July and August rather than read books. Here is the schedule:

July 9 at 9 am: "Slavery by Another Name," gives voice to the largely forgotten victims and perpetrators of forced labor.

August 6 at 9 am: "Africa's Great Civilizations". From the birth of humanity to the empire of Egypt.





Sean Turner
Minister of Worship,
Music & the Arts

Greetings from the music department! Happy summer! I was thrilled to see so many guests join us for summer choir this month! Among the many positives, it brought home the strong connections that can be built through music-making and a desire to serve this community. Thank you to everyone who invited

someone and put into practice our end-of-service mantra — “Bring a friend.”

Our next summer choir date will be July 21. We meet at 8:00 a.m. in the sanctuary for a short rehearsal. We would love to have you join us! If you have questions about summer choir or participation in Senior Choir during the year, please contact [Sean Turner](#).

I have been delighted with the number of congregational musicians sharing their gifts in worship this month. A big thank you to Lily Grafstrom, Stephanie Sinclair, Lou Ann Reese, Paul Tillquist, and Monica Murray. We are greatly blessed by your willingness to serve our congregation in this way.

On July 7, there will be one service offered beginning at 10:00 a.m. This service will be held indoors in the sanctuary.

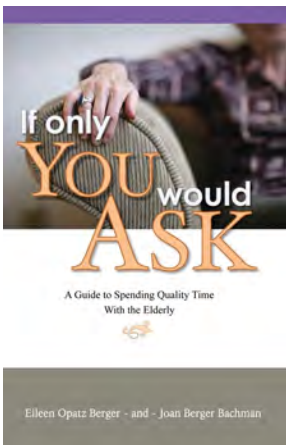
We are excitedly planning music for the fall and hope many of you will take part in the various ensembles that we have here at Incarnation. For information about bell choirs, prime chimers, or children’s choir, please contact [Amy Maakestad](#).

See you in worship!
— Sean

Apostles Library Book Review

If Only You Would Ask: A Guide to Spending Quality Time with the Elderly

By: Eileen Opatz Berger and Joan Berger Backman



Definitions of elderly vary but “past middle age” usually wins out. (Of course, then you have to define middle age.) But, do you have parents who are advancing in years? Are you a caregiver for someone who is beginning to live with dementia? Are you a friend or someone who visits people and finds conversation difficult? This is a title you will want to read, take notes, and perhaps reread.

The authors, a mother-daughter pair, Eileen Opatz Berger and Joan Berger Backman, are Minnesotans

with a goal to “promote quality conversations.” Eileen is quoted as teaching “When you are in a social situation, always make an effort to ask each person three questions. This shows that you are interested in what they have to say.”

This book is a wonderful conversational resource — and also reinforces the power of listening. Under each main topic for conversation is a list of possible questions as well as words to spark your own thinking. Some examples of topics include: How much money does it take to have a good life? What kind of movies do you like? How would you describe your health? Why did you get married when you did — or why didn’t you? How important has reading been in your life? When was the first time you received a medal or an award for something?

Use this book — and get those conversations rolling.
— Jo Zschomler
Library Committee

2024 Tons of Love Campaign For Ralph Reeder Food Shelf

For numerous years, Incarnation has engaged in 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.

This year, we would like to see if we can get a **ton** of non-perishable donations, i.e. 2000 pounds, donated to RRFS, along with the virtual tons of financial donations that are so generously given.

Bring your donations to Incarnation from June 30 – August 4, any time the building is open.

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

1. by purchasing a bag of non-perishable food or household items from your favorite store,
2. with an online financial gift [via Realm](https://onrealm.org/IncarnationLuth/-/give/now) (go to <https://onrealm.org/IncarnationLuth/-/give/now> and choose “Ralph Reeder Food Shelf” as the Fund),
3. by writing a check to Incarnation with “Tons of Love” in the memo,
4. 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.

Suggested Weekly Donation Focuses:

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 1 through 6, pullups, wipes, diaper ointment, pouches, toddler friendly snacks.

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 in 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!

Among the Congregation

SYMPATHY TO: Jim Mishek & family on the death of his sister; the family of Kathy Winchell on her death; the family of Carl Johnson on his death; Liv Rosin & family on the death of her father; Linda Brynjulfson & family on the death of her husband; the family of Joe Wicks on his death

RECENTLY BAPTIZED: Amelia Jo Cherry, daughter of Samantha & Alexander Cherry; Adeline Grace Swenson, daughter of Alexandria & Kyle Swenson; Cassie Zogg, daughter of Sydney & Kyle Zogg

Memorials

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

Date Range: 5/19/24 to 6/19/24

Donor	Fund Name	In Memory of:
Jerry & Sharon Dufeck	Memorial – Sr. Ministries (Care Team)	Dale Anderson
Jim & Carol Fruehling	Memorial – Ralph Reeder Food Shelf	Carl Johnson
Mary Birkeland	Memorial – Undesignated	Marian Johnson
Betty Poehling	Memorial – Undesignated	Marian Johnson
Krista Wolter	Memorial – Undesignated	Marian Johnson
Joyce Anderson	Memorial – Undesignated	Roger Mattison
Mary Birkeland	Memorial – Undesignated	Roger Mattison
Arvin & Jane Gehrking	Memorial – Undesignated	Roger Mattison
Jan Johnson	Memorial – Endowment	Roger Mattison
Dale & Vernita Kennen	Memorial – ELCA World Hunger	Roger Mattison
Greg & Jan LeMay	Memorial – Undesignated	Roger Mattison
Gene & Mary Lou Lindholm	Memorial – Undesignated	Roger Mattison
Marlys J. Nelson	Memorial – Undesignated	Roger Mattison
Anna Thorstad	Memorial – Undesignated	Roger Mattison
Don & Claudia Wiebold	Memorial – Feed My Starving Children	Margaret Gray (Tim Gray's Mom)
Joyce Anderson	Memorial – Undesignated	Nancy Ruehling
David & Carol Jacobson	Memorial – Undesignated	Nancy Ruehling
Jim & Carol Fruehling	Memorial – Endowment	Kathy Winchell

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.

Small Group Ministry

Creation Care Small Group Opportunity — Connect and Learn Together



What would a Christ-centered view of creation look like? This short, summer small group will learn about creation care, while also connecting with one another. The group will use “Our Kairos Moment”, a study based on the ELCA’s social message “Earth’s Climate Crisis.”

What is our place in creation and how is our story in creation part of God’s larger creation story? How is creation care connected to public health, agricultural challenges, care for the vulnerable and other concerns. What are some next steps to care for the earth and for one another? How do we answer climate anxiety with hope by being agents of change? Facilitators: Mike Vant and Nancy Stutzman. Preview “Our Kairos Moment” at <https://bit.ly/3X3HgUr>. For more information: incarnationmn.org and enter “new small groups” in the search bar. Register: nancystutzman@comcast.net.

When/Where: Mondays, 6:30-8:00 p.m., at Incarnation | **Dates:** 7/8, 7/22, 7/29, 8/5