



A Bible Study from the LCMS Northern Illinois District

About this study

Dear Friends in Christ,

COVID-19 changed the world! It brought suffering, death, and grief to countless people as God's gifts in front-line workers and first responders did their best to maintain life and quickly seek solutions to protect the public through the vaccinations that have now become a part of our lives.

Another challenge that the pandemic brought was to our social structures. As places of fellowship and gatherings closed, children learned on Zoom, and many workers and businesses built new ways of carrying on their jobs from home-based work stations, society sought to adapt to the need to guard against the virus through physical distancing.

The Church also sought to find a path that balanced the need for followers of Christ to still receive His Word of forgiving grace with the need to safeguard against the spread of the illness. This led many congregations, schools, and ministries into innovative ways to communicate Jesus' love. Services, Bible studies, classes, and church meetings went online, and leaders of congregations proactively began to learn how to effectively use social media platforms to proclaim God's Word, disciple God's people, and reach out to a world that does not know Jesus as Savior. Thanks be to God that He has given His Church ways to share His Good News even as much of our society was shut down.

As more of our society has received the protection that comes with vaccination, places of public gathering, including congregational ministries, are reopening. Yet, many across America have expressed a hesitancy to return to in person community or even an outright determination that, with their own spiritual needs met through online communication, they will not be returning to an in person connection to the life of the Church.

The logo for InCarnate Community features a stylized orange flame-like shape on the left. To its right, the word "InCarnate" is written in orange, with the "n" in blue, and "Community" is written in blue below it.

InCarnate Community

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While not seeking to disparage the good our Lord can and does work through online ministry, this study seeks to address the great blessing there is in being an in person community of faith. In this study, we will explore how our Lord has designed us to be in community, and He works in our lives the fruit of faith in Him as we, in person, gather as His followers around Word and Sacrament. It is my hope that through this study you will grow in your appreciation for the gathering of fellow believers around Jesus' Means of Grace, be equipped to better understand how we bear Christ's image in His world, and see the wonderful blessing our Lord works through us in local faith community.

These four sessions are designed to adapt to a 60 – 90 minute format. The lessons can be conducted at church or at home. You will need to have access to the internet and our NID YouTube site for the video portions of each session. There may be more materials in each session than any one group can cover in an hour. Feel free to use the materials at your own pace or to pick and choose sections and questions you feel would most benefit your group.

Sermon resources are also being provided on our district website nidlcms.org/incarnate-community-bible-study should your pastor wish to conduct a related sermon series during the weeks your church participates in this study.

Each Sunday afternoon during the weeks of the original run of this study, there will also be a livestreaming program on our Northern Illinois District YouTube channel that will discuss the content of these sessions with President Buss and his panel of guests.

Your Servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in brown ink that reads "Rev. Kristopher Whitby".

Rev. Kristopher Whitby

Rev. Kristopher Whitby,
Assistant to the President, Mission and Ministry