



AWAKEN COMMUNITY
Church & Candidate Profile





Awaken in Transition

Awaken is a community of people learning to walk in the way of Jesus, partnering with God in the renewal of all things. Founded by Pastor Micah Witham, next July 2026 Awaken will celebrate 16 years. We will also be preparing to say goodbye to our visionary Pastor, Micah Witham.

Micah will be leaving Awaken in a healthy, thriving place, as he seeks a new chapter in his professional life. Our people feel immense gratitude for his founding a unique community of faith in a post-evangelical world.

As Awaken's people navigate this transition, there is a growing sense of both loss and enthusiastic anticipation for the next chapter in Awaken's journey. One area of anticipation relates to our Executive Pastor, Jenna Daniels, who will serve as Awaken's next Lead Pastor.

In 2026 Jenna will celebrate 14 years with Awaken, including 6 years of co-leadership with Micah. Jenna is our staff team leader. She has played a lead role in shaping the collaborative culture that is central to who we are in our staff team and volunteer base. November 2, 2025 Jenna was voted in by partners to move into the Lead Pastor role upon Micah's transition.

Because Micah played the lead role in our Sunday teaching team, Jenna's vision for Awaken includes bringing on a Teaching & Formation Pastor as a key part of her leadership team for Awaken's next chapter.

Our Search

As we look toward our next season, we're seeking a Teaching & Formation Pastor who will join us in that journey—a thoughtful and grounded pastor who brings both spiritual depth and imaginative vision.

We're searching for someone who can help guide Awaken in the next chapter of our communal teaching life, nurturing spaces for adult formation, curating the Sunday morning gathering, and developing staff and volunteers who serve with kids, youth and adults with wisdom, care, creativity, and collaboration.



Where We Have Been: Awaken's Story of Place

July 11th, 2010

A small group of thirty gathered in Cherokee Heights Park overlooking the Mississippi River to dream and pray about the kind of church we longed for. That summer, a launch team began to take shape. Together we imagined a community where people could bring their whole selves, where Jesus remained at the center, and where questions weren't just tolerated but welcomed as an honest expression of faith.

Dec 24th, 2010

On Christmas Eve, Awaken began gathering weekly—fittingly, in the Joke Joint Comedy Club. Quirky and non-traditional, it was the perfect beginning for a church committed to curiosity, creativity, and wrestling with the Scriptures. Soon, one service grew into two, and within five years, it was time to find a new home.

March 15th, 2015

We began worshiping in the renovated sanctuary of the former St. James Catholic Church. We transformed the space from a Catholic cathedral into a space that reflected our values of beauty and authenticity. It was in this space in our history where a few events marked us significantly as we grew and evolved.

2019

In 2019 we adopted a statement of full welcome and inclusion for our LGBTQ+ siblings. The COVID pandemic resulted in us becoming an increasingly regional church, drawing many from the suburbs, because of our approach to the pandemic. The murder of George Floyd rocked the world, including us, as a congregation across the river from where it happened. We found ourselves, a predominantly white congregation, engaging more intentionally around race and justice.

2023

In 2023, we were involuntarily removed from the Evangelical Covenant Church because of our stance on same-sex marriage—a painful yet clarifying moment that reaffirmed our commitment to be a place of radical welcome and love.

2024 - present

These experiences formed crucibles for us to collectively deepen and grow in what was important to us. We emerged with reinforced commitments to inclusion, antiracism, and to creating a healthy, holistic community environment for everyone. We're convinced that the Good News isn't the Good News if it isn't for everyone.

In 2024, when our lease ended, we discerned a new path forward and were led to a historic property at Dale Street and I-94, the longtime home of Lutheran Church of the Redeemer. In March of 2025, we moved into this building—perched on a hill in the historic Rondo (Summit-University) neighborhood, with views of the Capitol and the Cathedral. Rooted here, we hope to carry forward Redeemer's legacy while seeking to embody God's presence in this place, in solidarity with the history, resilience, and ongoing story of Rondo. Learning to seek the flourishing of this neighborhood in ways that support the good work already happening, while deepening our value of justice, is at the heart of this next season.





What Keeps People at Awaken?

People stay at Awaken in large part because they experience a community marked by authenticity, curiosity, and genuine relationship. Awaken is a faith community of more than 700 adults, youth, and kids. While our demographics tilt younger, we are also seeing a rapidly growing 55+ population. Many who find a home here come from evangelical backgrounds, though we also are home to those shaped by mainline traditions—and those exploring faith for the very first time.

One of the defining qualities of Awaken is permission to ask hard questions. We believe, as Krista Tippett of On Being has said, that “questions breed answers of their own kind.” We don’t rush people to conclusions or expect certainty before belonging. Instead, we create space for honest inquiry, thoughtful dialogue, and faith that can hold complexity as we journey towards this person of Jesus. The kinds of questions people ask here—and are encouraged to ask—are often what draw them deeper into community.

If people are first drawn to Awaken because of the teaching and approach to faith, it’s community and relationship that tends to keep people at Awaken. When someone first comes to Awaken, we invite them to a “beverage of your choice” with a member of our staff. This initial conversation is not an intake process; it’s simply a chance to get to know one another. We are highly relational, believing that trust is built over time and becomes the currency that allows people to grow, heal, and take risks in faith.

We practice an open-handed posture with one another—holding people with grace rather than control. We give permission, offer support, and, when someone determines their time at Awaken has come to an end we aspire to bless them on their way. This generosity of spirit shapes how we lead, how we engage conflict and hard conversations, and how we have fun together - and we really do have fun together.



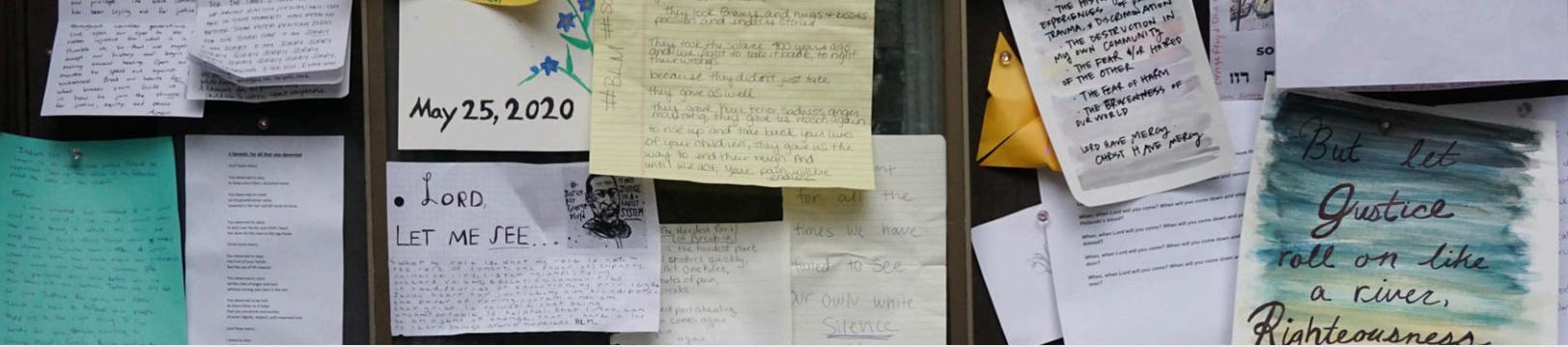
Sunday Mornings

While we have many rhythms that are important in the community outside of Sunday mornings, Sunday morning is a central one. Our typical liturgy involves a Call to Worship, music, a Song of Blessing the congregation sings over our kids as they go to their time of worship, Community Life, a 30(ish) minute teaching, Communion, a Benediction and Doxology to send people into their weeks.

Once a month we have a practice of Prayers of the People, where people from the community are invited to write a prayer for the world, our community, and our lives. We weave this prayer throughout a refrain we sing together. Once a month we celebrate a baptism or dedication of our littlest ones. During special Sundays or seasons we might include a missional partner update, our kids sharing a song they learned in Kids Community connected to what they're learning, an Artist in Residence talking about their work, or a new tradition: Paper Airplane Sunday where our kids throw paper airplanes from the balcony and the winner gets bragging rights. We do it because it's fun.

Sunday mornings provide an opportunity for the community to gather with each other and with God at whatever point they are in the journey. Teaching at Awaken takes the Bible seriously but includes theological imagination where we explore a variety of ways to interpret the text. We often say what happens from the front is the beginning of the conversation where people then wrestle with what's offered. In this sense people are invited to own their faith formation and maintain a sense of agency.

We work hard with the Spirit to keep Sunday mornings creative, collaborative, intentional, and excellent but not perfect. We are just humans after all - sometimes we have tech issues or someone forgets an announcement. We hope that what happens on Sunday mornings is rooted in our real lives AND the warm presence of God as we seek the way of Jesus in all of its beauty, challenge, and mystery.



Formation

As previously stated, Awaken is made up of many who have had painful past church experiences, those for whom the promises of certain theological claims didn't quite pan out, those who are earnestly seeking God but a church experience that's a little different, and those with big questions about faith. There is a large range within this. Some are coming with pieces of the rubble of deconstructing, some come with a more solid understanding of faith, and some have even left faith but are still seeking growth and community. This has driven much of what we have historically offered in the realm of formation. Some of those offerings are below:

We've offered Covenant Groups, a high commitment, 9 month cohort that invites participants into the rhythms of life with Jesus: Stop (Sabbath/Rest), See, Hear, Recognize, and Respond. We did this for a few years before we transitioned our adult formation opportunities to Learning Labs. Learning Labs are learning experiences based on a topic connected to faith that meets 1-6 times. Examples of Learning Labs we've offered in the past include: Race and Whiteness, Healthy Sexuality, Sabbath Politics, Mental Health, and more. We have partnered with 40 Orchards in leading Scripture Circles for Awaken. Their approach to scripture has significantly informed teaching and formation at Awaken. We've hosted book studies and Sacred Sites Tours with Jim Bear Jacobs.

This next season of formation at Awaken holds significant potential and we are seeking to establish a clearer vision of what formation looks like. We recently hired a part-time Director of Spiritual Formation who is working on opportunities for Spiritual Formation at Awaken with a contemplative approach using their training in Ignatian Spirituality.

Leaning into Justice

While we play many notes at Awaken in the realm of formation, critical in this next season is a deepening of our value of Justice. This is part of Jenna's (new Lead Pastor) vision driven in large part because of our new location. We are proximate to long term impacts of racism and injustice in our neighborhood and have some muscle building to do here. We are seeking formation experiences that include sharpening our justice lens. The approach to deepening this value of justice is in the vein of contemplative action. As we pursue the repair of the world we want to preserve the animating Spirit that fuels the work with Jesus at the center.

Our **Mission**

The mission of Awaken Community is to partner with God in the renewal of all things. We believe God has invited the church to participate in the "mission of God" and that mission is all about redeeming, restoring, and recreating all that God made and called good.

Our **Vision**

We are a church that wants to gather around "The Well" that is the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. We want to be safe place for people to journey with Jesus at the center and where questions are welcomed.

Our Values

Jesus

Jesus is the highest authority and He is the Word revealed to us. Jesus is how we know what God is like and we want to gather around His life and teachings which we believe are a "well" of living water. We don't have a lot of "non-negotiables", but Jesus is one of them.

Justice

Justice is about repairing what is broken and putting things to right. Justice recognizes that there are systems at work in this world that are anti-Christ and that oppress one person while elevating another. The gospel is not good news for anyone if it's not good news for EVERYONE. While we have some commitments and partnerships as a community, Justice is a value that we hold in so far as the people live it out in their own lives.

Holism

We believe that the work of Jesus impacts every area of a person's life and culture. We reject unfounded categories that divide the world into uniquely sacred or purely secular. God is redeeming all of creation through Jesus.

Hospitality

In Jesus, the table has been set and humanity has been invited back into a relationship with the Divine. This love is extravagant, welcoming and inclusive. It knows no boundaries. We want to be a community that does the same for one another and for the world we live in.

Beauty

God is a creative God. We are made in the image of this God. Therefore, within every human is the desire and capability to create. Awaken values beauty, art, and the creative process where we tend to something from a vision in our minds/ hearts and bring it to life in time and space.

Authenticity

We want our insides to match our outsides and we want to be the kind of community where that is possible in the most appropriate ways. At Awaken we don't beat around the bush with tough issues and we commit to being honest with one another because we are interested in truth expressed in love and grace.



Missional Partners

Ain Dah Yung Center | Awaken dedicates 1% of offerings to Ain Dah Yung Center, which provides a healing place within the community for Native youth and families to thrive in safety and wholeness.

EveryMeal | Fills the food gaps for school kids so they don't go hungry on the weekend.

Wildflyer Coffee | We support and serve Wildflyer Coffee on Sunday mornings. Wildflyer seeks to provide employment opportunities and training for youth experiencing homelessness.

Walking With A Purpose | Is transforming homelessness one step at a time.

Awaken Community Garden | Utilizing Awaken volunteers and kids to help grow, harvest, and bag vegetables and flowers for distribution through Walking With A Purpose.

International Association for Refugees (IAFR) | Is helping people survive and recover from forced displacement.

Jonathan House (part of IAFR) | Shelters and provides holistic support to 32 asylum seekers from 16 countries.

International Justice Mission (IJM) | Is working to end the business of modern slavery.



The Role of the Teaching & Formation Pastor

Primary Responsibilities

The Teaching & Formation Pastor will play a vital role in our community shaping a journey of discovery, belonging, and participation in God's renewing work in the world. This role will help our community make sense of our stories, deepen our experience of God, and live out the way of Jesus in meaningful, everyday ways.

This role is both pastoral and creative, guiding the teaching life of our congregation, curating the Sunday worship experience, utilizing our active music and arts communities, nurturing adult formation, and overseeing Kids Ministry, Student Ministry, and Formation staff all while leading with care and shared purpose in a collaborative team setting.

Teaching

As one of Awaken's primary communicators, the Teaching & Formation Pastor will craft and share sermons that weave together spiritual depth, lived experience, and wisdom for what it means to be human.

Working collaboratively with the Lead Pastor, worship planning team, and staff, they will help shape the overall rhythm and arc of teaching throughout the year. Their teaching will invite us deeper into the love of God, the way of Jesus, and the shared work of partnering with God in the renewal of all things.

They will help cultivate a teaching culture that values curiosity, honesty, and transformation, and will occasionally mentor or equip others who teach in various settings at Awaken. The Teaching & Formation Pastor will teach two to three times per month while the Lead Pastor will teach one to two times per month.

Adult Formation

The Teaching & Formation Pastor will nurture, design, and guide opportunities for adults to be formed in the way of Jesus. This includes developing creative spaces for learning, dialogue, and spiritual practice that help people explore faith with openness and integrity.

They will collaborate closely with the Lead Pastor & Director of Spiritual Formation to design a holistic approach to adult discipleship—integrating Sunday teaching, classes, formation experiences, retreats, etc. around a shared spiritual vision. The Teaching & Formation Pastor will also help resource and equip staff, teachers, and facilitators to create environments of belonging, reflection, and growth.

Staff Oversight

Our staff purpose statement is: We collaborate to create and experience transformative, authentic encounters with God, Self, and Community. We seek to walk lovingly with those who have been entrusted to us on this leg of their journey as we move towards our collective future. Our staff values are: Creativity, Growth, Fun, Trust, and Compassion.

In collaboration with the Lead Pastor, the Teaching & Formation Pastor will provide one-on-one care and direction for certain staff roles —cultivating a healthy, collaborative, and mission-driven work environment. This includes supporting team culture and values, providing encouragement and accountability, and ensuring alignment with Awaken's mission, values, and priorities. The Teaching & Formation Pastor will help foster a rhythm of work that is sustainable and life-giving, empowering staff members to use and develop their gifts fully in service to the community and to rest when needed.



The Person We're Seeking Will Be...

Rooted in Jesus | Grounded in the life and teachings of Jesus, and able to translate that wisdom into language that speaks meaningfully to a post-evangelical, questioning, and curious community.

A compelling communicator | Someone who can teach with depth, honesty, and creativity, connecting the story of God to the complexity and beauty of human experience.

Collaborative and relational | A leader who values shared leadership, works well with others, and contributes to a healthy, connected team culture.

Spiritually healthy | Committed to their own ongoing spiritual formation and attuned to the movement of the Spirit in their life and in the life of the community. Comfortable navigating the tension and mystery that comes with spiritual growth.

Emotionally intelligent | Cultivates an ongoing awareness of and ability to manage their own emotions and recognize the emotions of others. Capable of leading with empathy, humility, and clarity.

Hospitality centered | Able to bring an engaging presence to a room without dominating, to host a space where people feel welcome and in community, without needing to be the life of the party.

Creative and adaptive | Approaches teaching and the Scriptures with theological imagination, an ability to see the bigger picture, and lead with creativity as Awaken continues to grow and evolve. Expresses a healthy level of adaptability when things might need to shift.

Urban ministry savvy | Competent in navigating the nuances of our new neighborhood even as Awaken is a regional Twin Cities Metro faith community.

Justice minded | Values the pursuit of justice realized in the world through connected to the story of Jesus



Key Requirements

A clear sense of call or invitation from God to pastoral ministry, and the ability to articulate that story in a way that reflects depth, self-awareness, and authenticity.

A Master's level Seminary degree or equivalent theological training is required.

At least five years of ministry leadership experience, ideally in a medium to large church or community-based ministry setting, with experience in an urban or diverse context preferred.

Ordination or openness to ordination within a reputable Christian tradition that aligns with Awaken's mission, theology, and values.

A demonstrated ability to lead collaboratively, cultivate healthy teams, and build trust through empathy, communication, and integrity.

Theological curiosity and openness—a posture that honors Scripture, engages culture thoughtfully, and welcomes honest questions as part of faith.

A track record of teaching or preaching that connects spiritual depth with real life, inviting people into reflection, growth, and transformation.



Our State and Area

Life in the Twin Cities | St. Paul is a city where history, resilience, and creativity meet. Just across the river from Minneapolis, it's known for its strong neighborhoods, vibrant arts and food scenes, and abundant green space—where you can move from city streets to river bluffs and trails in minutes.

The Summit-University and Rondo Neighborhoods | Perched above the Mississippi River, Summit-University reflects the beauty and diversity of St. Paul life. With historic homes, tree-lined streets, and walkable access to local shops, cafes, and cultural spaces, it is a neighborhood where past and present intersect. It represents some of the complexities of wealth, privilege, and injustice in our city—an invitation for a faith community like Awaken to live into the tension of beauty, justice, and shared belonging.

This was once the heart of St. Paul's Black community, Rondo carries a living story of both deep loss, enduring resilience, and deep community. Though devastated by the construction of I-94 in the 1960s, Rondo remains a place of vibrancy, hospitality, and justice-seeking. Its legacy of community continues to shape a vision of equity and repair. Residing in the Rondo neighborhood, Awaken is committed to listening, learning, and partnering in ways that move that vision forward.

Why St. Paul | St. Paul consistently ranks among the best U.S. cities to live, offering world-class health care, strong schools, professional sports, and a thriving creative scene. As the most ethnically diverse city in Minnesota, it is home to Black, Asian, Hispanic, Indigenous, immigrant, and refugee communities who shape the cultural fabric of the city. For Awaken, being rooted in St. Paul means embodying a faith that is deeply local—learning from our neighbors, participating in the city's flourishing, and practicing a gospel that takes both justice and joy seriously.



What Has Shaped Us

Below are voices, movements, and experiences who have shaped us... does this sound like your faith stream?

Networks | The Wild Fig Network, Post Evangelical Collective, Evolving Faith, Jesus Collective.

Authors | Sarah Bessey, Emily Freeman, Barbara Brown Taylor, Meredith Miller, Ibram Kendi, Resmaa Menakem, Kelly Brown Douglas, NT Wright, Richard Rohr, Walter Brueggemann, Rob Bell, Brian McLaren, Robin Wall Kimmerer, Randy Woodley, Karl Barth, James Cone, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Morgan Harper Nichols, Brene Brown, William P Young, Colby Martin, Austin Channing Brown, Howard Thurman, John O'Donohue, Padraig O Tauma, Donald Miller, Paulo Coehlo, Mary Oliver.

For Our Kids | The Book of Belonging: Bible Stories for Kind and Contemplative Kids, the Bible Project, and the Jesus Storybook Bible.

Podcasts | The Bible for Normal People, Liturgists, You Have Permission, the Rise and Fall of Mars Hill, Homebrewed Christianity, Holy Smokes, Journey Home, or TV series like Shiny Happy People.

Music | The Porter's Gate, Common Hymnal, Urban Doxology, The Brilliance, Paper Horses (Taylor Leonardt, Jess Ray, Sandra McCracken), Gungor, Switchfoot, All Sons & Daughters, Hailaker.

Benefits Disclosure

The base compensation range for this Minnesota-based role is \$90,000-\$105,000 (based on pastoral experience of 11 to 20+ years).

In addition, we offer benefits designed to support the well-being of our staff.

For this role, the benefits include:

- Medical Insurance Stipend
- 403(b) Plan
- 403(b) Plan Employer Contribution
- Paid 12-week Sabbatical after 7 years
- Paid Time Off
- Cell Phone Reimbursement
- Spiritual Renewal Time
- Professional Development Opportunities
- Annual Spiritual Formation Retreat
- Flexible Schedules outside of Core Staff Times

The Next Step

If this vision resonates with you—if you're energized by thoughtful teaching, spiritual formation, and collaborative leadership—we'd love to begin a conversation.

Awaken is a community that values authenticity, curiosity, and belonging. We're trusting that the Spirit is already at work preparing the right person to join us in this next season of renewal and growth.

To apply, please send your resume, a brief statement of your approach to teaching and formation, and links to one or two recent sermons to [***pastorsearch@awakencommunity.com***](mailto:pastorsearch@awakencommunity.com).