

Heartbeat of Justice

Mary, a teen engaged to Joseph, received the startling news that God had chosen her to birth hope into a bleak world. Quite an honor of the divine kind, yet quite a dishonor of the humankind. This pregnancy would ignite gossiping whispers and many a raised eyebrows among the villagers. Still, Mary said “yes,” relaying the brave and life-changing words to her angelic messenger: *Let it be according to God’s will.*

While young and innocent, Mary knew what even the most learned and worldly person failed to grasp: The Mighty One can and will do great things for all who have been told that they are not good enough to garner any worthy attention.

The holy mother-to-be also knew there was something greater in the works than her own blissful domesticity with Joseph. Her “yes” would bless generations to come. How often do we realize that our “yes” to God creates a ripple of blessings? When will we ever truly allow God’s plan to override our best laid plans for tomorrow? Can we give up our dreams so easily and so eagerly for that of God’s vision for us?

So in awe to be cast in the salvation story, Mary begins singing of God’s power that sends the rich away empty. While the scholarly name of Mary’s song is “The Magnificat” it could easily be called “The Heartbeat of Justice,” for each word hits the right note of how God will dismantle the systems of oppression.

Mary had her season of saying “yes” to God. Now it is our turn, for we are being invited to play a pivotal role in the unfolding saga of salvation. It is our time to sing “The Heartbeat of Justice,” making clear every note of God’s care for all who have been forgotten.

But what exactly would our “yes” to God require? According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, every “yes” to God is accompanied with a “no.” As the German pastor, theologian and anti-Nazi dissident during World War II once reflected, “Our ‘yes’ to God requires our ‘no’ to all injustice, to all evil, to all lies, to all oppression and violation of the weak and poor.”

“The Heartbeat of Justice” is playing. Who will sing it out loud?

Mighty and loving God, as Christmas songs fill the air with promises of jingling bells and flying reindeer, may our ears be attuned to the true song of Christmas. May we hear the lyrics of a justice seeking Love that sets prisoners free and lifts those kicked to the gutter. May we hear, may we sing, and may we find ourselves whispering our “yes” to You. May Your will be done in our lives. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today’s Sunday Bulletin.)



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

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1200 E Highland Acres Rd, Bismarck, ND 58501

701-223-2915 www.uccbismarck.org

December 14, 2025 at 10 AM Worship

Third Sunday of Advent

Pastor: Rev. Gretchen Deeg | Pageant Lead: Tamara Waters-Wheeler

Music: Boram Chern | Video: Kirby Kruger

**Rise in body or in spirit.*

*NO MATTER

Sing! 35

No matter who, no matter what

No matter where you are on the journey of life;

You're welcome, welcome in this place.

Accepted and welcomed by God's grace.

*CALL TO WORSHIP & OPENING PRAYER

One: Jeremiah said, "I am only a boy."

All: Moses said, "Who am I to do this work?"

One: Mary said, "How can this be?"

All: We often say, "But God, I am afraid."

One: Even when we are afraid, God invites us closer.

All: So may we trust the inviter.

One: May we heed God's invitation.

All: May we summon our courage and sing God's praise.

*HYMN

O Come, Take Heart

Insert

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:26-39

ADVENT WREATH: JOY

Simmers Family

One: In a world full of fear, where do you see glimmers of joy?

All: We see glimmers of joy in birthday candles and homemade cards. We see joy in the laughter of children and the delight of grandparents. We see joy in meals around the table and in the singing of Christmas songs.

TIME WITH CHILDREN

There is no Sunday School today. Children are invited to remain in worship. Today is the Christmas Pageant and Sunday School resumes next week on Dec. 21.

OFFERING

*DOXOLOGY

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Praise God above, our heavenly host;

Creator, Savior, Holy Ghost. Amen.

CHRISTMAS LIGHT SHOW

ACT 1: Tangled Up

HYMN

Arise, Your Light is Come

NCH 164

ACT 2: Unprepared

CHOIR ANTHEM

Advent Noel

ACT 3: Light Up the Night

ACT 4: A Star is Born

CHILDREN'S ANTHEM

Twinkle, Twinkle Christmas Star

ACT 5: The True Light of Christmas

ACT 6: Take the Light

HYMN

Away in a Manger

NCH 124 v. 1

HYMN

Joy to the World

NCH 132

*CARRY GOD'S LOVE

Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE, License #732302-A.

Christmas Pageant adapted from Nevan Hooker & John Bayer | SundaySchool.Store | 2023.

Liturgy adapted from prayers by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org



Thank You for Worshiping with Us!

Your offerings are essential for the ongoing ministry of this congregation. Donations can be made using this QR code, online at www.uccbismarck.org/donate, mailed to the church, or placed in the offering box.

Sponsor a Sunday

Most of December is available and the 2026 calendar will be up soon. If you would like to sponsor a future Sunday, contact the church office at 223-2915 or visit uccbismarck.org/donate. Sponsorships are \$500.

Share the Warmth this Winter

We're collecting winter coats, hats, and gloves to bring comfort to individuals served by the Youth and Women's Correctional Facility and Ministry on the Margins. Please place items in the marked bin in the welcome area—every gift makes a difference.



Tree of Hope

The gifts have been delivered to the Dream Center. Thank you to all who have purchased gifts and put them back under the tree. There are still tags for gas cards that will be used through-out the year.



Women's Christmas Luncheon: Dec. 16 at 12pm

Calling all women of the church to join for a Christmas luncheon. Lunch will be provided. This will be a great opportunity to visit and get to know each other better.

Community Longest Night Service: Dec. 21 at 4pm

A sacred worship for those who are grieving or struggling this holiday season. Co-led at Faith Lutheran (1402 E Ave C).

Christmas Eve Worship: Dec 24 at 5:30

Invite your family and friends to worship with you at Bismarck UCC on Christmas Eve, December 24 at 5:30pm. Our service will include lessons, carols, and candlelight.



THIS WEEK'S OPPORTUNITIES: December 14 - 21

- Sunday:** 11 AM Fellowship
12 Noon [Online](#) Fellowship
- Tuesday:** 12 PM Women's Christmas Luncheon
1 PM Quilting/Knitting
5:30 PM Trustees (in-person & [online](#))
- Wednesday:** 6 PM Christmas Sing-a-long at Hay Creek Lodge
6 PM Youth Group Christmas Party
7 PM Choir Practice
- Thursday:** 6 PM Find Your Balance (in-person & [online](#))
- Friday:** 8:30 AM Bible Study (in-person & [online](#))
- Sunday:** 10 AM Worship
10:20 AM Sunday School
11 AM Fellowship
11:30 AM Council (in-person & [online](#))
12 Noon [Online](#) Fellowship
4 PM Community Longest Night Service
(Faith Lutheran, 1402 E Ave. C)

Christmas Funds: Special Offering Dec. 21



For over one hundred years, **The Christmas Fund** has provided direct financial assistance to the healers in all our lives: retired and active UCC ministers, church workers, and their families. This is one of our five special offerings collected in UCC churches all around the United States. Historically, this fund has assisted a number of clergy who served rural North Dakota churches.

OUR PRAYER LIST

Family of Wade Schemmell, Mary Blumhagen, Kathy Rudolph, Ron (Murræ Kramer's brother), Sheyla Munoz (Autum's sister-in-law), Tasha Hausauer (John Sauter's cousin), Hayes & Cooper (Brandon & Tasha Domagala's sons), Family of Linda (Marciana's great-aunt), Diana, Amanda Wilson, Dave Baber, Frank Picard, Carla Christenson (Monica Klein's mother), Pam Crawford, Fredrick Krause (Kerri Kraft's grandfather), Leona Staiger (Helen Lindgren's sister), Matthew Nitschke, Colby (Janice & Gary Sather's son), Wade Rosene (Joyce Rosene's son), Chad Gent (Joyce Rosene's nephew), Robyn Richter (Kyle Eisenbraun's aunt), Doretta Reule, Howard Etson, Camille Grothier, East Timor, Refugees

*Contact the church office to be added to our weekly prayer list.

O Come, Take Heart

VENI IMMANUEL 8.8.8.8 with refrain

Words by Anna Strickland, 2025

Plainsong adapted by Thomas Helmore, 1854



O come, O come though tim - id and un - sure And
O come, O come though you feel un - pre - pared When
O come and join God's kin ——— dom work And



trust that God de - clares your worth Re - mem -
cour - age fails you, do it scared Don't let
be God's hands and feet on earth You're called



ber when you're feel - ing small That ev - ery child of
the fear of ma - king mis - takes Im - pede you from the
ex - act - ly as ——— you are To love the world with



God ——— is called
path you're called to take Take heart, take heart! The One
ev - ery bro - ken part



who calls to you Will give you strength and see you through

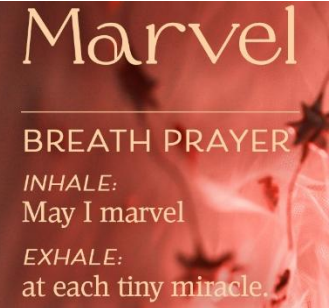
Deck the Halls

Deck the halls with boughs of holly
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la, la, la
'Tis the season to be jolly
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la, la, la

Don we now our gay apparel
Fa-la-la, la-la-la, la, la, la
Troll the ancient Yule-tide carol
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la, la, la

See the blazing Yule before us
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la, la, la
Strike the harp and join the chorus
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la, la, la

Sing we joyous all together
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la, la, la
Heedless of the wind and weather
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la, la, la
Fa-la-la-la-la, la-la, la, la



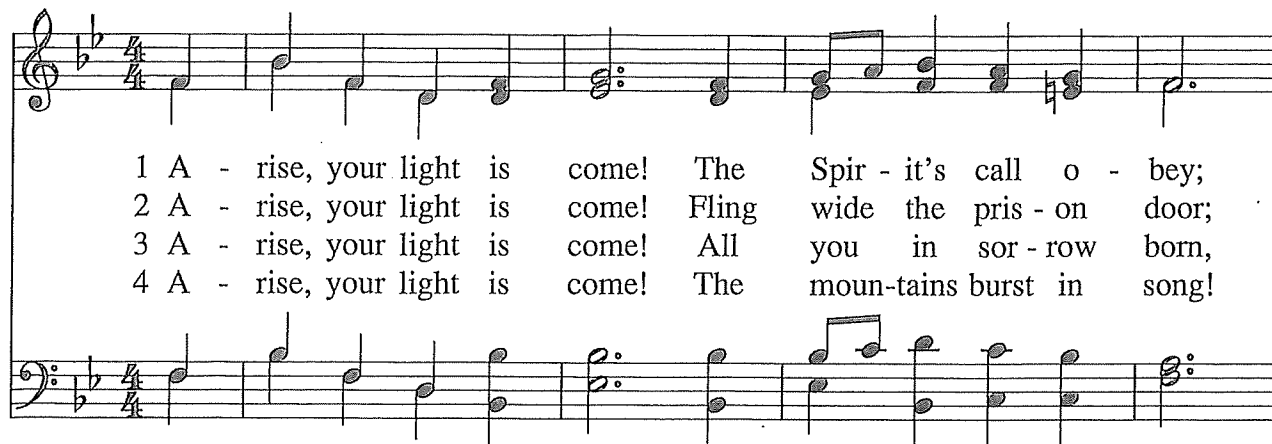
The Third Sunday of Advent | What do you fear?
EVEN IN OUR FEAR, WE ARE CALLED FORWARD

The First Step

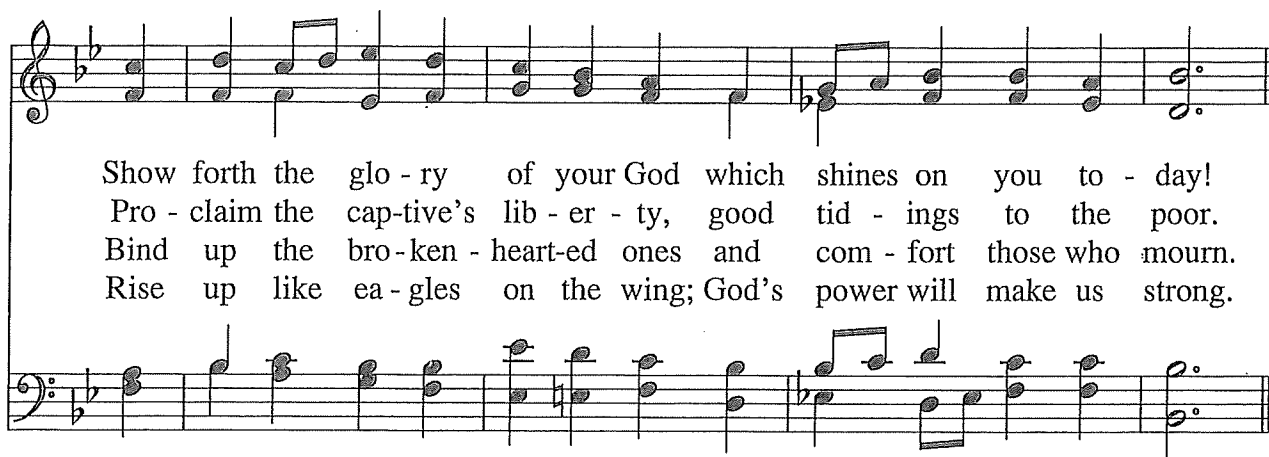
Watch any parent. It starts with the first step.
They kneel down. They smile with anticipation.
They reach for their baby, calling and cooing them forward.
And then before they know it, they're running behind a bike. They're yelling,
"Keep pedaling! You got it! I'm right here!" And they're jumping up and down,
because that little red helmet passed the mailbox.
And then, just like that, they're driving circles in the church parking lot.
They're giving instructions about easing on and off the pedal.
They're having conversations about curfew and heartbreak.
And then, before they know it, they're standing in a hospital room.
Their heart is bursting. And they say, "Put her head right here.
Rock her gently. Do you remember the nursery rhymes?
You were born for this."

The first step is always the hardest,
but you, beloved, were born for this.

Arise, Your Light Is Come

*Isa. 60:1; 61:1-2; Luke 4:14-21**Ruth Duck, 1973*


1 A - rise, your light is come! The Spir - it's call o - bey;
 2 A - rise, your light is come! Fling wide the pris - on door;
 3 A - rise, your light is come! All you in sor - row born,
 4 A - rise, your light is come! The moun-tains burst in song!



Show forth the glo - ry of your God which shines on you to - day!
 Pro - claim the cap-tive's lib - er - ty, good tid - ings to the poor.
 Bind up the bro - ken - heart-ed ones and com - fort those who mourn.
 Rise up like ea - gles on the wing; God's power will make us strong.

This hymn was first published by the Ecumenical Women's Center of Chicago in the 1974 collection of hymn adaptations, Because We Are One People. Ruth Duck later included it in her own collection, Dancing in the Universe.

Tune: FESTAL SONG S.M.
 William Walter, 1872

Away in a Manger

124

Anon., United States, 1885; st. 3, 1892; alt.

Luke 2:7

1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for a bed, the
 2 The cat - tle are low - ing, the poor ba - by wakes, but
 3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask you to stay close

lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down his sweet head. The
 lit - tle Lord Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes. I
 by me for - ev - er and love me, I pray. Bless

stars in the sky looked down where he lay, the
 love you, Lord Je - sus; pro - tect me, I pray, and
 all the dear chil - dren in your ten - der care, and

lit - tle Lord Je - sus, a - sleep on the hay.
 stay by my side un - til night turns to day.
 fit us for heav - en to live with you there.

This anonymous United States carol is often misattributed to Luther. The poem first appeared in a Lutheran hymnal for

Tune: AWAY IN A MANGER 11.11.11.11.
(MÜLLER)

Joy to the World!

132

Isaac Watts, 1719; alt.

Ps. 98:4-9; Luke 2:11-15

1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth its
 2 Joy to the earth! the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their
 3 Christ rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the

prais - es bring; Let ev - ery heart pre - pare Christ room,
 songs em - ploy; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 na - tions prove The glo - ries of God's righ - teous - ness

and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 re - peat the sound-ing joy, re - peat the sound-ing
 and won - ders of God's love, and won - ders of God's

and heaven and na - ture sing, and
 re - peat the sound-ing joy, re -
 and won - ders of God's love, and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound-ing joy.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of God's love.

heaven and na - ture sing,
 peat the sound-ing joy,
 won - ders of God's love,

Stanza 1 may be sung, "Joy to the world! the Sovereign comes: . . ."

Isaac Watts, an English Congregationalist, freely paraphrased

Tune: ANTIOCH C.M.