

Open Table

I have a friend who pastors a neighboring congregation who was hoping to use a generous gift left by a saint of the church to reconfigure the sanctuary seating.

She wanted to remove the wooden pews and buy moveable chairs, thus, opening space to set up banquet tables and invite the hungry in the community to an extravagant sit down dinner.

That didn't happen. The money went instead to repaving the church parking lot.

She asked the committee who made this decision if that was the best way to show hospitality to others? The committee thought so. And perhaps it was.

But if we explore the ancient meaning of hospitality, perhaps removable chairs allowing room to feed the hungry was a better choice than a coat of asphalt.

The word "hospitality," in the original Greek, is *philoxenos*, which means, "to love the stranger." In Middle Eastern culture it was considered a sacred duty to take responsibility for the stranger — to give them food and shelter. So true hospitality is more than opening church doors or paving a parking lot but opening our hearts to seeing the needs of others.

Jesus didn't see hospitality on display when he went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee. What he saw was guests clamoring for the good seats — the places of honor. And he called them out, telling them to be humble, adding, too, that around the table should be the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind.

In the book, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, Brennan Manning said that in the Near East, the shared table symbolizes the shared life. "Sadly," Manning writes, "the meaning of meal sharing is largely lost in the Christian community today."

What does hospitality look like in your life? Are the doors to your heart opened to the stranger who is hungry, cold and lonely?

My friend who failed in getting removable chairs in the sanctuary to create a banquet hall for the hungry in her community is now looking for another church to serve.

The one she served has a great parking lot, not a pothole to be found, but there are no longer cars parked there on a Sunday. The doors closed for good a few months ago.

God, we hear Jesus' words that the first will be last and the last will be first, yet still we put our desire for recognition, prestige and comfort ahead of Your children who are pushed aside and overlooked. Open the doors to our hearts, so that true hospitality is lived in our communities. 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.)



Bismarck-Mandan Area UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



1200 E Highland Acres Rd, Bismarck, ND 58501

701-223-2915 www.uccbismarck.org

August 31, 2025 at 10 AM Worship

Pastor: Rev. Gretchen Deeg | Guest Preacher: Darla Schafer

Music: Darcy Avery | Liturgist: Camille Grothier

Video: Kirby Kruger

*Rise in body or in spirit.

WELCOME TO WORSHIP!

*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 WORSHIP¹ & OPENING PRAYER

One: God invites you to think of life as a great dinner.

All: What takes place at this great meal?

One: God sets the table with possibilities of love, peace, grace, freedom, dignity, justice, and abundance.

All: How do we say, "Yes," to this invitation?

One: We participate with God in things that bring forth love, peace, grace, freedom, dignity, justice and abundance into the world around us.

All: We enter into this time of worship as a way of saying, "Yes." We offer who we are, and what we have, and what we can do in the service of helping life become a great banquet for us and for all.

*HYMN Take My Gifts NCH 562

SCRIPTURE Psalm 112

TIME WITH CHILDREN

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.

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION²

Merciful God, we know that you love us and that you call us to fullness of life at your banquet table, but around us and within us we see the brokenness of the world and our ways. Our successes leave us empty; our progress does not satisfy. Our prosperous land is not the promised land of our longing. Forgive our willful neglect of your word, our insensitivity to the needs of other and our failure to feed the spirit that is within us; through Jesus Christ our redeemer. Amen

*GLORIA

Glory be to the Creator, and to the Christ, and to the Holy Ghost:
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen. Amen

SCRIPTURE Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16 & Luke 14:1, 7-14

SERMON

HYMN Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us With Your Love NCH 498

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

LORD'S PRAYER

*HYMN Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant NCH 539

*CARRY GOD'S LOVE

Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from [ONE LICENSE](#), License #732302-A.
1Adapted from Go & Do the Same, 2Adapted from UCC Service of the Word



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 - Sept. 7 & Oct. Available

Every sponsorship helps make our Sunday worship services possible in-person and online. Please help us fill the 2025 sponsorship calendar. If you would like to sponsor a future Sunday, contact the church office at 223-2915 or visit uccbismarck.org/donate. Sponsorships are \$500.

Game Nights Are Back! - Sept. 4



Join Game Night on Sept. 4 at 7pm. A fun event where church and community members come together. Bring a snack to share and your favorite board game, if you wish. Game Nights are the 1st Thursday of every month at 7pm. If you are interested in hosting one of our upcoming game nights, please contact the church office.

Gathering Sunday & Luncheon - Sept. 7

Join us for Gathering Sunday! This will be the start of Sunday School and Choir. After worship we will have a potato bar luncheon in the fellowship hall. Please fill out a registration form for Sunday School and Youth Group, they are below the bulletin board.

Northern Plains Conference Annual Meeting

The Northern Plains Conference Annual Meeting is Sept. 12-13. We are gathering at Camp of the Cross in Garrison, ND with an online option to explore God's call for ourselves, our churches and our Conference. **Registration deadline is Sept. 2** register online at <https://shorturl.at/RWVay>.

Find Your Balance - September 18, 6pm-7:15pm

Whether you're feeling overwhelmed or simply seeking new ways to care for yourself, *Find Your Balance* offers a welcoming space to learn, share, and grow. This series is open to everyone! Register beneath the bulletin board or contact the church office.



Bowling Tournament - September 21, 1pm-4pm

This year's tournament is sponsored in memory of Vern Frederick who bowled in our first annual UCC Bowling Tournament. Price includes 2 games and shoe rental.

\$15 – Kids & Adults not competing, \$25 – Adults competing
\$50 – Family price (covers single household, not tournament)

All participating kids are eligible for the kid's tournament. Only adults who have entered the tournament are eligible to win prizes.



THIS WEEK'S OPPORTUNITIES: Aug. 31 - Sept. 7

Sunday:	11 AM Fellowship & 12 Noon Online Fellowship
Monday:	Church Office Closed
Tuesday:	1 PM Quilting/Knitting 3:45 PM Liturgical Arts 5:15 Council (in-person & online)
Wednesday:	2 PM Hay Creek Lodge Ministries 6 PM Youth Group & Confirmation 7 PM Stewardship & Mission (in-person & online)
Thursday:	7 PM Game Night
Friday:	8:30 AM Bible Study (in-person & online)
Sunday:	Gathering Sunday 10 AM Worship 11 AM Fellowship & 12 Noon Online Fellowship

Pastor Gretchen will be unavailable from Aug. 25 – Sept. 2. During the week please contact the church office 701-223-2915 on the weekend Darla

Papa's Pumpkin Patch

We are seeking volunteers for Papa's Pumpkin Patch on Saturday, Oct. 4 and for clean-up day on Sunday, Oct. 26. Volunteers must be at least 16 years of age or an adult must be present throughout the volunteer shift. Sign-up sheets are below the bulletin board or you may contact the church office.



Serve the Banquet - Sept. 24

We are seeking volunteers to serve the Banquet. We need 3 more volunteers to prepare the meal from 1-4:30pm. Sign-up below the bulletin board or contact the church office.



OUR PRAYER LIST

Family of Mozelle Sherman (Gayla Sherman's mother), Frank Picard, Carla Christenson (Monica Klein's mother), Family of Clem Weber (Maria Roll-Schlecht's father), Pam Crawford, Fredrick Krause (Kerri Kraft's grandfather), Jennifer Held, Leona Staiger (Helen Lindgren's sister), Fran Mack, Matthew Nitschke, Ashley Seykora (Betty Picard's daughter), Laurie Schreiner, 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

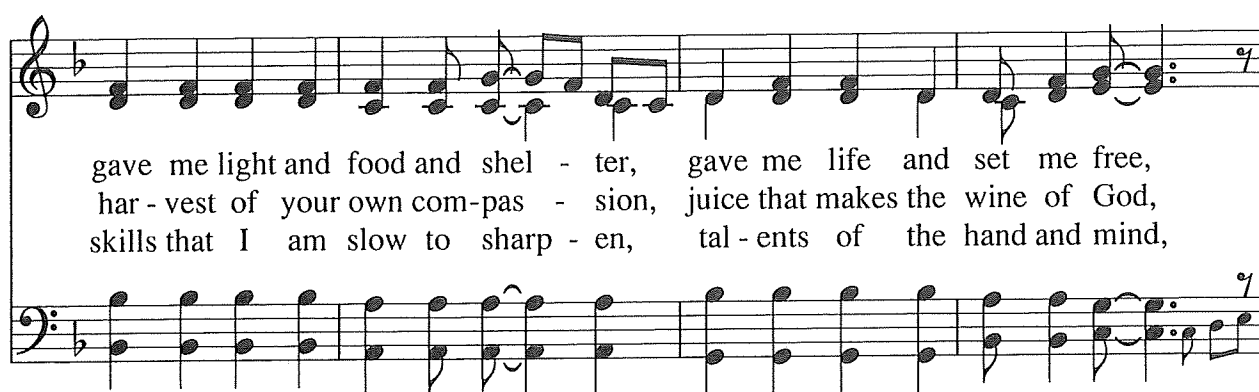
*Contact the church office to be added to our weekly prayer list.

Take My Gifts

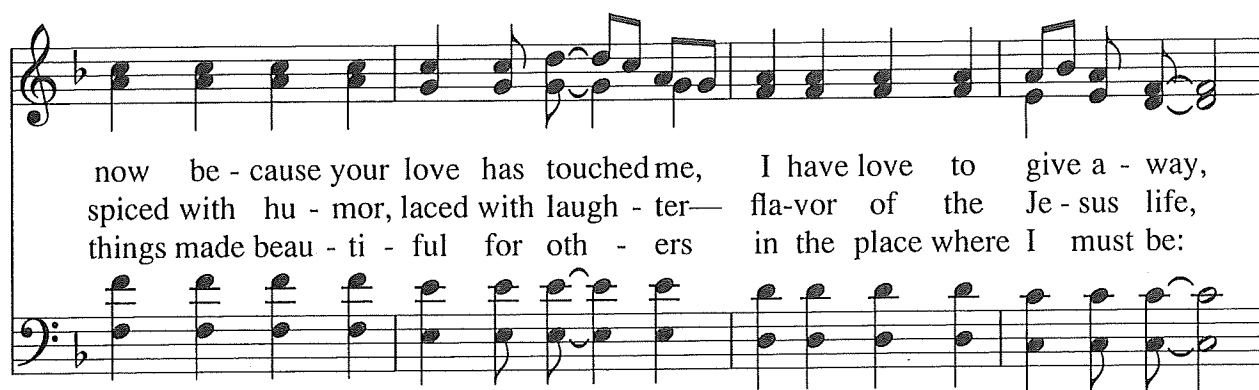
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Shirley Erena Murray, 1991

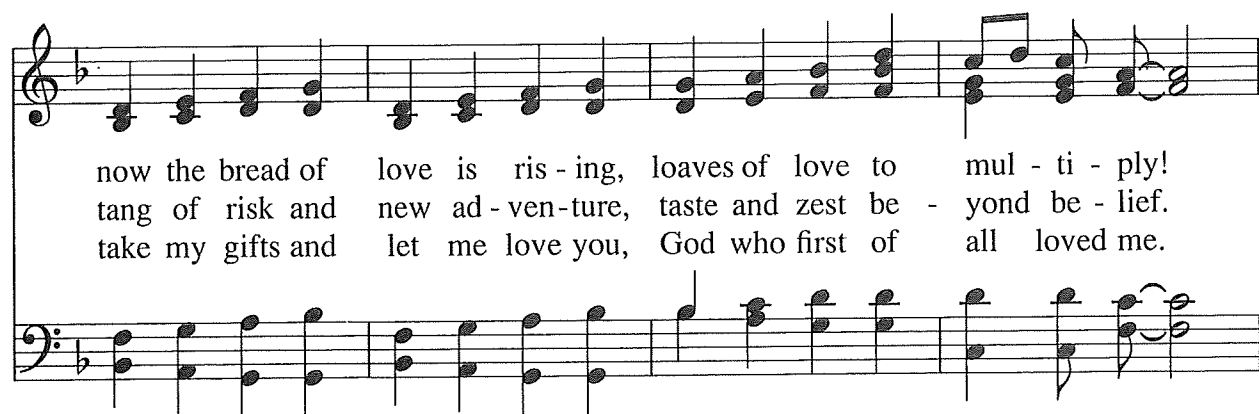

1 Take my gifts and let me love you, God who first of all loved me,
 2 Take the fruit that I have gath - ered from the tree your Spir - it sowed,
 3 Take what-ev - er I can of - fer— gifts that I have yet to find,



gave me light and food and shel - ter, gave me life and set me free,
 har - vest of your own com-pas - sion, juice that makes the wine of God,
 skills that I am slow to sharp - en, tal - ents of the hand and mind,



now be - cause your love has touched me, I have love to give a - way,
 spiced with hu - mor, laced with laugh - ter— fla - vor of the Je - sus life,
 things made beau - ti - ful for oth - ers in the place where I must be:



now the bread of love is ris - ing, loaves of love to mul - ti - ply!
 tang of risk and new ad - ven - ture, taste and zest be - yond be - lief.
 take my gifts and let me love you, God who first of all loved me.

Shirley Erena Murray recounted that Colin Gibson composed this tune for her stewardship text "almost instantaneously." Gibson has served as professor at the University of Otago, as

Tune: TALAVERA TERRACE 8.7.8.7.D.
 Colin Gibson, 1991
 Alternate tune: HOLY MANNA

Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant?

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Richard Gillard, 1977; alt.

Rom. 12:9-18; Col. 1:24-29

1 & 6 Won't you let me be your ser - vant, let me be as Christ to you?
 2 We are pil - grims on a jour - ney, we are trav - elers on the road;
 3 I will hold the Christ-light for you in the shad - ow of your fear;
 4 I will weep when you are weep-ing; when you laugh, I'll laugh with you.
 5 When we sing to God in heav - en we shall find such har - mo - ny,

Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my ser - vant, too.
 We are here to help each oth - er go the mile and bear the load.
 I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.
 I will share your joy and sor-row till we've seen this jour-ney through.
 Born of all we've known to - geth - er of Christ's love and ag - o - ny.

(repeat stanza 1)

Richard Gillard was born in England and later made his home in New Zealand. Largely self-taught, Gillard has described his musical style as "folk." This is the best known of his many songs in the United States.

Tune: SERVANT SONG 8.7.8.7.
 Richard Gillard, 1977
 Arr. Betty Carr Pulkingham, 1977; adapt.

Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love

John 13:1-20; Gal. 5:13-14

Tom Colvin, 1969; rev. 1994

Refrain Unison

Je - su, Je - su, fill us with your love, show

us how to serve the neigh-bors we have from you.

1 Knelt at the feet of his friends, si - lent - ly wash - ing their
 2 Neigh-bors are rich and poor, var - ied in col - or and
 3 These are the ones we should serve, these are the ones we should
 4 Lov - ing puts us on our knees, show - ing our faith by our
 5 Kneel at the feet of our friends, si - lent - ly wash - ing their

feet, Je - su, you act - ed as ser - vant to them.
 race, neigh-bors are near and far a - way.
 love; all these are neigh-bors to us and you.
 deeds, serv - ing the neigh-bors we have from you.
 feet, this is the way we should live with you.

This African folk melody was presented to the Church at Chereponi, Northern Ghana, by Ghanaian musicologist, A. A. Mensah, when United Church of Christ missionaries, Al and Sue Krass were serving there. Like Tom Colvin, a Scottish missionary in neighboring Tamale, Al Krass was encouraging the making of hymns to indigenous melodies. Tom Colvin wrote these words to this adapted form of the melody in dedication to the Church at Chereponi.

Tune: CHEREPONI Irr. with refrain
 Ghanaian folk song; adapt. Tom Colvin, 1969
 Arr. Jane Marshall, 1982