

Bold Blessing

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. — John 3:16

Twenty-seven words. That's all John uses to tell us about this life of faith. It's short, sweet and powerful. So much so that German Reformer Martin Luther labeled the 27 words "the heart of the Bible, the Gospel in miniature."

But could it really be that simple?

I asked that question once when I found myself singing a Vacation Bible School song about John 3:16 in front of 20 sugared-up children. As I belted out the biblical truth about God loving the world — complete with the choral refrain "he is the truth, the way, the life" — I wondered what those words would mean someday to the little voices that joined me off key.

Would remembering God's limitless love for them be the very thing that would save them? And how many would go beyond the way-too commercialized Gospel soundbite of John 3:16 to grapple alongside Nicodemus, the educated Pharisee who was told by Jesus that "no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above?"

While it would be wonderful for 27 words to be the Gospel in miniature, we know there's more to this life of faith. There are dark nights of the soul as well as glorious epiphanies.

Through it all, we question God's love more often than we like to admit, and we find it down right frightening to surrender to the Spirit. As Jesus explained to Nicodemus it is the second birth of the Spirit, not flesh, that will help us see a bit better the reign of God. But the Spirit, Jesus says, will blow where it chooses.

And that is okay. Really. Read my words again. It is okay to allow the Spirit to blow you in the God direction. Go to the unknown and unwelcomed places knowing that as you are guided by the Spirit. God's bold blessing is forever with you. That is the blessing of a love so strong and steadfast that no harm will ever come to you.

Now that's the song I wish I belted out for those children at Vacation Bible School — a song of being born in the Spirit and of living unafraid of life's twisting and changing paths, for there's always an abundance of God's redemptive love for them — and for you.

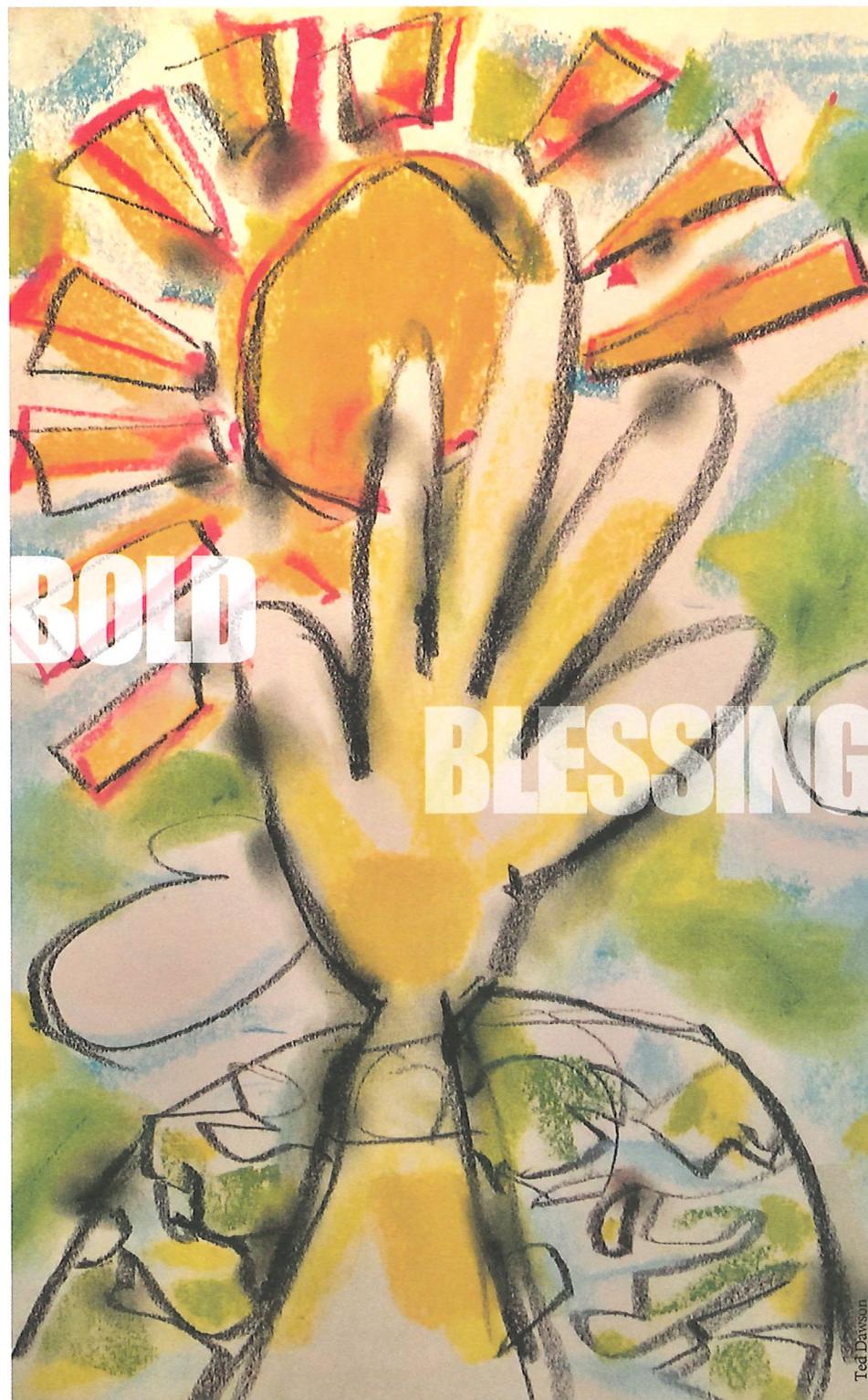
Loving and merciful God, on this second Sunday in Lent may we feel the Spirit winds whipping in our lives, leading us to be born again into new creations that are awakened to the never-ending God opportunities. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

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



8 1/2" x 11" UCC SUNDAY BULLETIN SERVICE

Bulletin artwork and backpage stories copyright © 2026 United Church of Christ



Bismarck-Mandan Area
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



1200 E Highland Acres Rd, Bismarck, ND 58501

701-223-2915 www.uccbismarck.org

March 1, 2026 at 10 AM Worship

Second Sunday in Lent

Pastor: Rev. Gretchen Deeg | Liturgist: Tamara Waters-Wheeler

Music: Boram Chern | 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 WORSHIP

All: We walk in mystery.

*OPENING PRAYER

*HYMN Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness

NCH 286

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 121

TIME WITH CHILDREN

There is no Sunday School today. Children are invited to remain in worship.

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 CONFESSION

God of Mystery, you are the one who watches over us, who keeps our feet from slipping, and who guards our lives. Remind us that we are in your care. Where we have left your ways, call us back. Where we have fallen into judgmental certainty, humble us. Where we have abandoned mystery, ignite everlasting hope. Forgive us for clinging to false idols of safety and control. Forgive us and uplift us with the wild winds of the Spirit and the waters of creation. In Christ's name we pray. 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

Romans 4:1-17 & John 3:1-17

SERMON

HYMN

Empty Jar

Sing! 92

COMMUNION

Let Us Break Bread Together

NCH 330

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Almighty God, we give thanks for the fruits of the vine and the grains of the earth which sustain us. May this meal we have shared nourish and strengthen us to grow in communion with you and one another. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

*HYMN

There's a Wild Hope in the Wind

Insert

*CARRY GOD'S LOVE

Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from [ONE LICENSE](https://www.onelicense.com), License #732302-A.



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 March is available. If you would like to sponsor a future Sunday, contact the church office at 223-2915 or visit uccbismarck.org/donate. Sponsorships are \$500.

Lenten Worship Schedule

Wed, Feb. 18 thru Mar. 25 – Wednesday Worship

6:30 pm Worship (Soup Supper at 5:30pm)

Wed, Mar. 25 – Taize Worship

6:30 pm Worship (Soup Supper at 5:30pm)

Sun, Mar. 29 – Palm Sunday

10 am Worship

11 am Pancake Breakfast

3 pm Palm Procession (Trinity Lutheran to ND State Capitol)

4 pm Palm Worship (ND State Capitol steps)

Thurs, Apr. 2 – Maundy Thursday

6:30 pm Tenebrae w/ choir & orchestra (Soup Supper at 5:30pm)

Sat, Apr. 4 – Holy Saturday

7 pm Community Easter Vigil at UCC

Sun, Apr. 5 – Easter Sunday

6:30 am Sunrise worship at Hay Creek, 1144 College Dr

10 am Worship at UCC

11:15 am Easter Egg Hunt at UCC



Lay Leadership Celebration - All Are Welcome!

We're celebrating Lay Leadership at Bismarck UCC from April 13 – May 17! No matter what your skillset, you're invited to join a worship leadership team. Join us **TODAY at 11:15am in the church basement**. If you cannot attend today's meeting, but would like to be part of a worship team, please reach out to Pastor Gretchen—your presence and gifts matter.

Volunteers Needed

We need a volunteer to bring soup for our Lenten soup supper on Wednesday, March 18. We also need volunteers to help with Palm Sunday Pancake Breakfast. There are sign-up sheets below the bulletin board. In addition, we are in need of empty paper towel tubes for a Sunday School project on March 15.

THIS WEEK'S OPPORTUNITIES: March 1 - 8

- Sunday:** 11 AM Fellowship & 12 Noon [Online](#) Fellowship
11 AM Lay Leadership Celebration Planning
- Monday:** 6 PM Deacons (in-person & [online](#))
- Tuesday:** 1 PM Quilting/Knitting
- Wednesday:** 2 PM Hay Creek Lodge Ministries
5:30 PM Soup Supper (Taco/Tortilla)
6 PM Youth Group & Confirmation
6:30 PM Lent Worship
7 PM Choir Practice
- Thursday:** 6 PM Bible Study (in-person & [online](#))
- Friday:** 8:30 AM Bible Study (in-person & [online](#))
- Saturday:** 10 AM Men's Breakfast
- Sunday:** 10 AM Worship
10:20 AM Sunday School
11 AM Fellowship & Board Games
11:15 AM Council (in-person & [online](#))
11:15 AM Christian Education (in-person & [online](#))
12 Noon [Online](#) Fellowship

Men's Breakfast - March 7

All men are invited to join the Men's Breakfast on Saturday, March 7 at 10am in the church fellowship hall. This is a casual gathering which is a great opportunity to get to know each other better.

One Great Hour of Sharing

We are agents of grace when we choose to give because we believe in the kingdom of God being built among us. This is the generosity that you are invited to offer through One Great Hour of Sharing. Your offering helps rebuild from disaster, feed the hungry, provide clean water to the thirsty, empower the oppressed, and restore hope. **We will be collecting this special offering on March 15.**

Easter Flowers

Time to order Easter flowers in Memory or Honor of a loved one. Orders are due Sunday, March 8th. There is a signup sheet below the bulletin board. Please pay at time of ordering. Leave your check or cash in the offering box labeled flowers.

Feed the hungry. Care for the sick.
Welcome the stranger. -Matthew 25

29 MARCH PALM SUNDAY PATH

3 PM PROCESSIONAL

from Trinity Lutheran Church (502 N 4th St,
Bismarck) to the ND State Capitol

4 PM WORSHIP

outside on the ND State Capitol Steps



2,000 years ago, Jesus entered into Jerusalem on a donkey - an image reflecting his just, humble leadership and care for those in need. Faith communities from across North Dakota are invited to gather for a time of communal prayer and public witness.

wndpalsundaypath.com

OUR PRAYER LIST

Lacy Peters (Dawn Archer's cousin), Family of Kathy Rudolph, Gayle Klopp, Jody Miller, Kayla Bruning, Bella Bruning, Carol (Lonna Augustadt's friend), Harold Karch, Lynn Bryntesen, Sandy Kirby (Autum's sister), Matthew Nitschke, Nolan Myles McLemore (Amanda Wilson's grandson), Bonnie Frederick, Sheyla Munoz (Autum's sister-in-law), Tasha Hausauer (John Sauter's cousin), Hayes & Cooper (Brandon & Tasha Domagala's sons), Diana, Amanda Wilson, Frank Picard, Carla Christenson (Monica Klein's mother), Pam Crawford, Fredrick Krause (Kerri Kraft's grandfather), Leona Staiger (Helen Lindgren's sister), Colby (Janice & Gary Sather's son), 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.

TLUS 64 There's a wild hope in the wind

J. = 60



1 There's a wild hope in the wind: her
2 There's a wild hope in the skies: her
3 There's a wild hope in the earth: her



whis - per is heard on the breeze. The
gown is the blue of for - ev - er. The
bod - y pro - vides us with nur - ture. The



gale is her shout that is call - ing us out. There's a
pur - ple of night is her heart's pure de - light. There's a
dark un - der - ground is where life can a - bound. There's a



wild hope in the wind. O
wild hope in the skies. O
wild hope in the earth. O



God in the wind, come gath - er us in,
God in the skies, come o - pen our eyes,*
God in the earth, come aid our re - birth,



be our cour-age and prom - ise. The fu - ture is dim, but we



want to live in - to a wild, wild hope.

Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness

Unison, brightly
Refrain

James K. Manley, 1978; alt.

D G A Dsus4 D

Spir - it, spir - it of gen - tle-ness, blow through the

Bm E7 Asus7 A7

wil - der-ness, call - ing and free,

D G A Dsus4 D

Spir - it, spir - it of rest - less-ness, stir me from

Bm G A7 D G D *Last time, end*

plac - id-ness, wind, wind on the sea.

D G A G

1 You moved on the wa - ters, you called to the
 2 You swept through the des - ert, you stung with the
 3 You sang in a sta - ble, you cried from a
 4 You call from to - mor - row, you break an - cient

**Reduced-size notes may be played with organ pedals in lieu of or in combination with the other notes*

HYMNS OF THE SPIRIT

D A7 D Bm

deep, then you coaxed up the moun - tains from the
 sand, and you goad - ed your peo - ple with a
 hill, then you whis - pered in si - lence when the
 schemes, from the bond - age of sor - row the

E7 Asus7 A7 D G A

val - leys of sleep; And o - ver the e - ons you
 law and a land; When they were con - found - ed by their
 whole world was still; And down in the cit - y you
 cap - tives dream dreams; Our wom - en see vi - sions, our

G D A7 D Bm

called to each thing, "A - wake from your slum -
 i - dols and lies, then you spoke through your proph -
 called once a - gain, when you blew through your peo -
 men clear their eyes. With bold new de - ci -

G A7 D G D A7 to Refrain

bers and rise on your wings."
 ets to o - pen their eyes.
 ple on the rush of the wind.
 sions your peo - ple a - rise.

This popular hymn by songwriter James K. Manley grew out of a sabbatical leave at the School of Theology at Claremont,

Tune: SPIRIT Irr.
 James K. Manley, 1978

92

Empty Jar

♩=72

1. Emp - ty jar, _____ clear and clean,
 2. Base shears off on stone be - low,
 3. Liv - ing God, _____ rush - ing free,

dropped in - to _____ moun - tain stream.
 o - pen now to ri - ver flow.
 let your Spir - it flow through me.

Acts 2:42

African-American spiritual



1 Let us break bread to - geth - er on our knees;
 * 2 Let us drink wine to - geth - er on our knees;
 3 Let us praise God to - geth - er on our knees;



let us break bread to - geth - er on our knees.
 let us drink wine to - geth - er on our knees.
 let us praise God to - geth - er on our knees.



When I fall on my knees, with my face to the ris - ing sun,



My God, have mer - cy on me.



1-2 | 3

