

January 4, 2026

John 1:(1-9), 10-18

Another Road

There's nothing more inviting than a candle's warm glow on a cold winter's night. The flickering flame dances as if being led by some divine melody. It's a light that calls to mind the opening of John's Gospel that speaks of a light in which no darkness can overcome.

Since the discovery of fire, a candle burning in the pitch black has always held symbolic hope. Back in the day, placing a candle in the window announced there was a birth in the house. It was also a sign of someone's passing or a remembrance of a loved one. During the persecution of Catholic priests in Ireland, a candle in the window let a priest know that the home was a place of refuge.

We all need a candle burning in the window guiding us to our place of refuge, for we all seem to be groping in the dark these days, wandering for far too long on uncertain roads. Where is that spark of hope leading us to a place of belonging?

Long after the Christmas season of light is over, I continue to embrace every opportunity I have to light candles. With a strike of a match, darkened nooks in my home magically come to life. I also find a soothing calmness wash over me while watching a candle burn. The limited reach of its flame is my reminder to stop trying to see so far ahead. Rather, trust what the light is revealing, no matter how narrow or short the path it illuminates is. It's then I realize I don't need search lights to be found. All I need is the Christ light shining on me.

There's a poem by Howard Thurman who writes about lighting candles all year long. In it he encourages us all to light "candles of joy, despite the sadness; candles of hope where despair keeps watch; candles of peace for tempest-tossed days; candles of grace to ease heavy burdens; and candles of love to inspire all my living."

There's a light to be found in the world — one that the darkness will not overcome. May we do our part in keeping the light of Christ burning brightly in 2026.

Loving God, help us be the ones who light the candles of joy, hope, peace, grace and love this year, illuminating the darkness for those who are lost and shining a beacon of welcome to those who are lonely. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

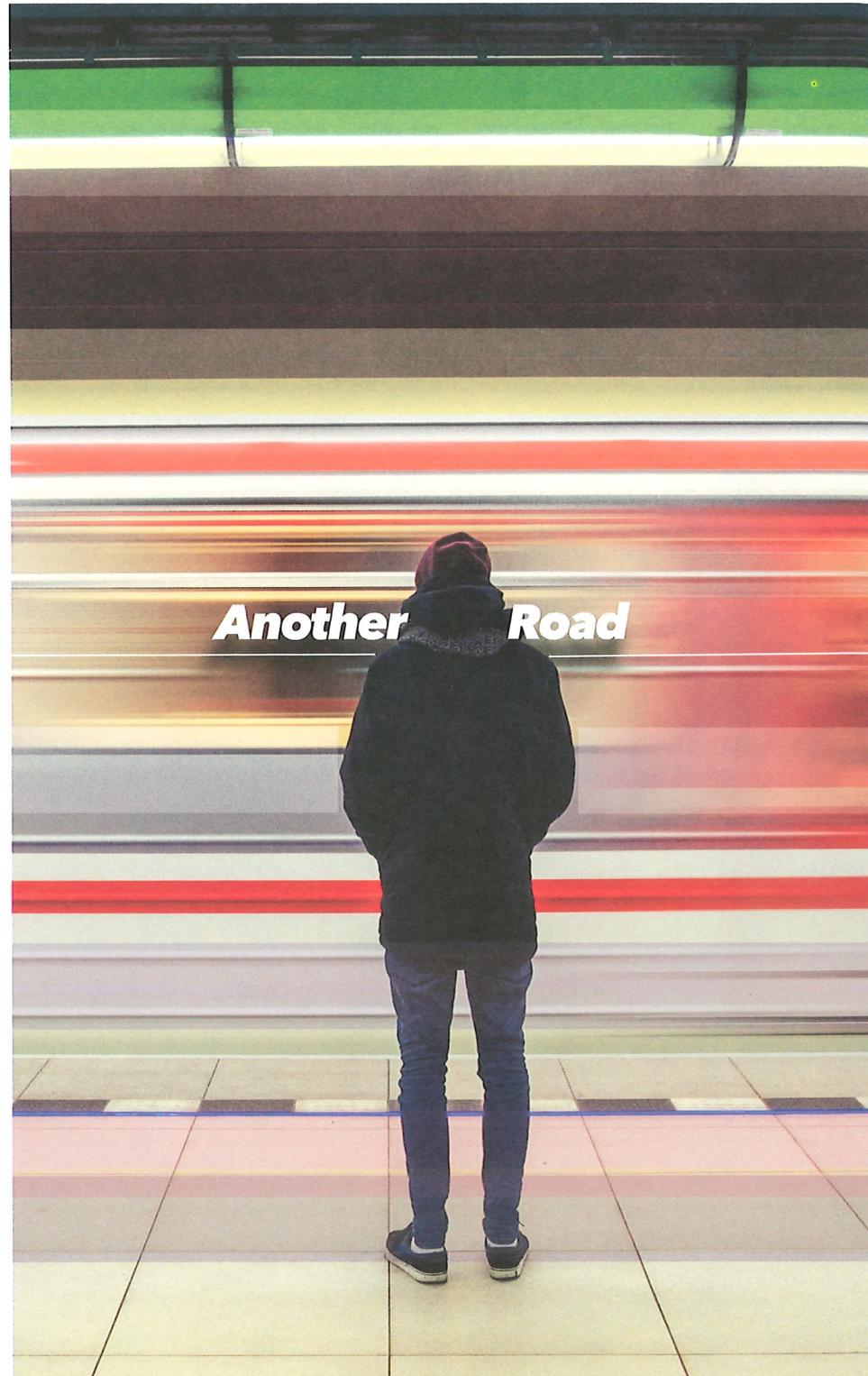
(Rev. Donna Frischknecht Jackson is a communications specialist for the United Church of Christ and author of today's Sunday Bulletin.)



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

8½" 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



January 4, 2026 at 10 AM Worship

Epiphany

Pastor: Rev. Gretchen Deeg | Guest Worship Leader: Hannah Vanorny

Liturgist: Mary Blumhagen | Video: Dana Schaar Jahner

Music: Boram Chern

*Rise in body or in spirit.

*NO MATTER

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.

Sing! 35

*CALL TO WORSHIP¹

One: The Magi waited and watched, knowing something wondrous would be happening.

All: We waited for the birth of Jesus; now something wondrous is about to take root.

One: The darkness that invaded all lives was banished by the light of that star.

All: The darkness that surrounds us is gone!

One: Let us celebrate the bright shining of God's love in our lives.

All: Let us become those who will bring the light of God's love to others.

*OPENING PRAYER

*HYMN As with Gladness Those of Old

NCH 159

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 60:1-6

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION¹

Lord of living light, we hear the story of the Magi and tie it together with our warm Christmas celebration. It feels comfortable to us. Break those bonds of comfort and help us to realize the risk of radical generosity for those who follow your light. Shine brightly in us and through us. Forgive the blindness we so often offer to you. Give us your vision of what you would have us be and do in the Light of Your Love. 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.

TIME WITH CHILDREN

There is no Sunday School today. Children are invited to remain in worship. Sunday School resumes on Jan. 11.

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.

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 72:1-7 & Matthew 2:1-12

SERMON & STAR WORDS²

STAR BLESSING & LORD'S PRAYER

HYMN Arise, Your Light Is Come

NCH 164

*CARRY GOD'S LOVE

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

¹ Adapted from ministrymatters.com ² Liturgy by Rev. Anna Strickland | 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

The 2026 is up with most Sundays still 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.

Bismarck UCC Annual Meeting - Feb. 1 at 11 AM

Annual Reports will be available for pickup and online starting on Jan. 18. We still have one opening on the Christian Education committee, which plans Sunday School events and generates ideas for educational events for all ages.



New Book Study - Start Jan. 8 at 6 PM

Join us beginning Thursday, January 8 at 6pm as we dive into Sarah Ruden's *Paul Among the People*. We'll meet every Thursday at 6pm in the Bismarck UCC library, except the third Thursday of each month (reserved for *Find Your Balance*).



Retirement Celebration - Jan. 10

Celebrate with David Archer for his retirement and 60th birthday on Saturday, January 10 from 2pm to 7pm at Sertoma Community Center (park building near zoo & amusement park).



Fellowship Game Day - Jan. 11

Join us for our first fellowship game day next Sunday, January 11 right after Worship. We have a selection of board games to choose from or if you have a favorite one at home, you are welcome to bring it along.



Men's Breakfast - Jan. 17

All men are invited to meet in the church fellowship hall on January 17 at 10am. Breakfast will be provided.

THIS WEEK'S OPPORTUNITIES: January 4 - 11

Sunday:	11 AM Fellowship
	12 Noon Online Fellowship
Tuesday:	1 PM Quilting/Knitting
Wednesday:	2 PM Hay Creek Lodge Ministries
	6 PM Deacons (in-person & online)
	6 PM Youth Group & Confirmation
	7 PM Choir Practice
Thursday:	6 PM Bible Study (in-person & online)
Friday:	8:30 AM Bible Study (in-person & online)
Saturday:	2 PM David Archer's Retirement & 60 th Birthday Celebration (Sertoma Park)
Sunday:	10 AM Worship
	11 AM Fellowship Game Day
	12 Noon Online Fellowship

Pastor Gretchen is on vacation December 26 – January 5. For pastoral care, contact Darcy Avery at 701-527-6408.

MLK Event - Jan. 19

This annual event will be held on January 19 at 6pm at Trinity Lutheran Church. Special musicians and guest speaker – Ryan Taylor.



Dine 'n De-stress - Jan. 25

Stressed out about our divisive political climate and unsure of how to respond? Join for conversations and support as we build connections and community. Held at Lucky's 13 (915 S 3rd St, Bis.)

OUR PRAYER LIST

Emerson & Lennon (Wanda & Jeffery Benson's grandsons), Bonnie Frederick, Kathy Rudolph, Ron (Murrae Kramer's brother), 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), 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

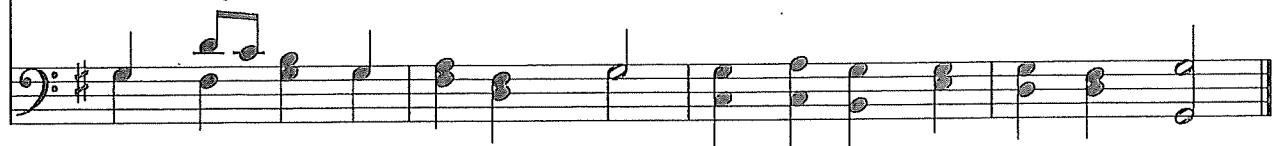
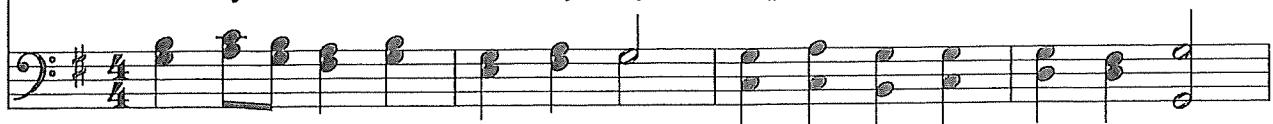
*Contact the church office to be added to our weekly prayer list.

As with Gladness Those of Old

159

William C. Dix, 1861; alt.

Matt. 2:1-12

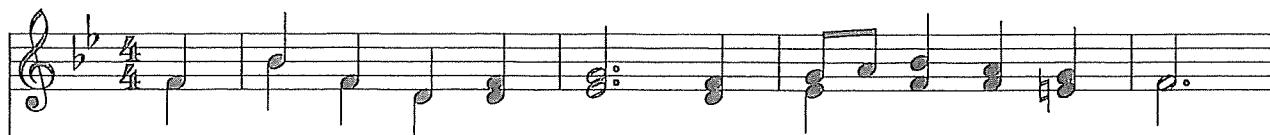


After reading the Epiphany gospel, William C. Dix penned this hymn. Dix, the manager of a marine insurance company, was also a gifted hymnwriter. Among his many fine contributions is "What Child Is This."

Tune: DIX 7.7.7.7.7.
 Conrad Kocher, 1838
 Adapt. William H. Monk, 1861

Isa. 60:1; 61:1-2; Luke 4:14-21

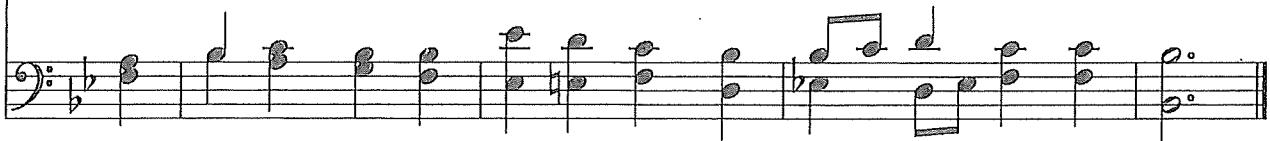
Ruth Duck, 1973



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

Words Copyright © 1992 by G.I.A. Publications, Inc.