

March 1, 2026

John 3:1-17

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.

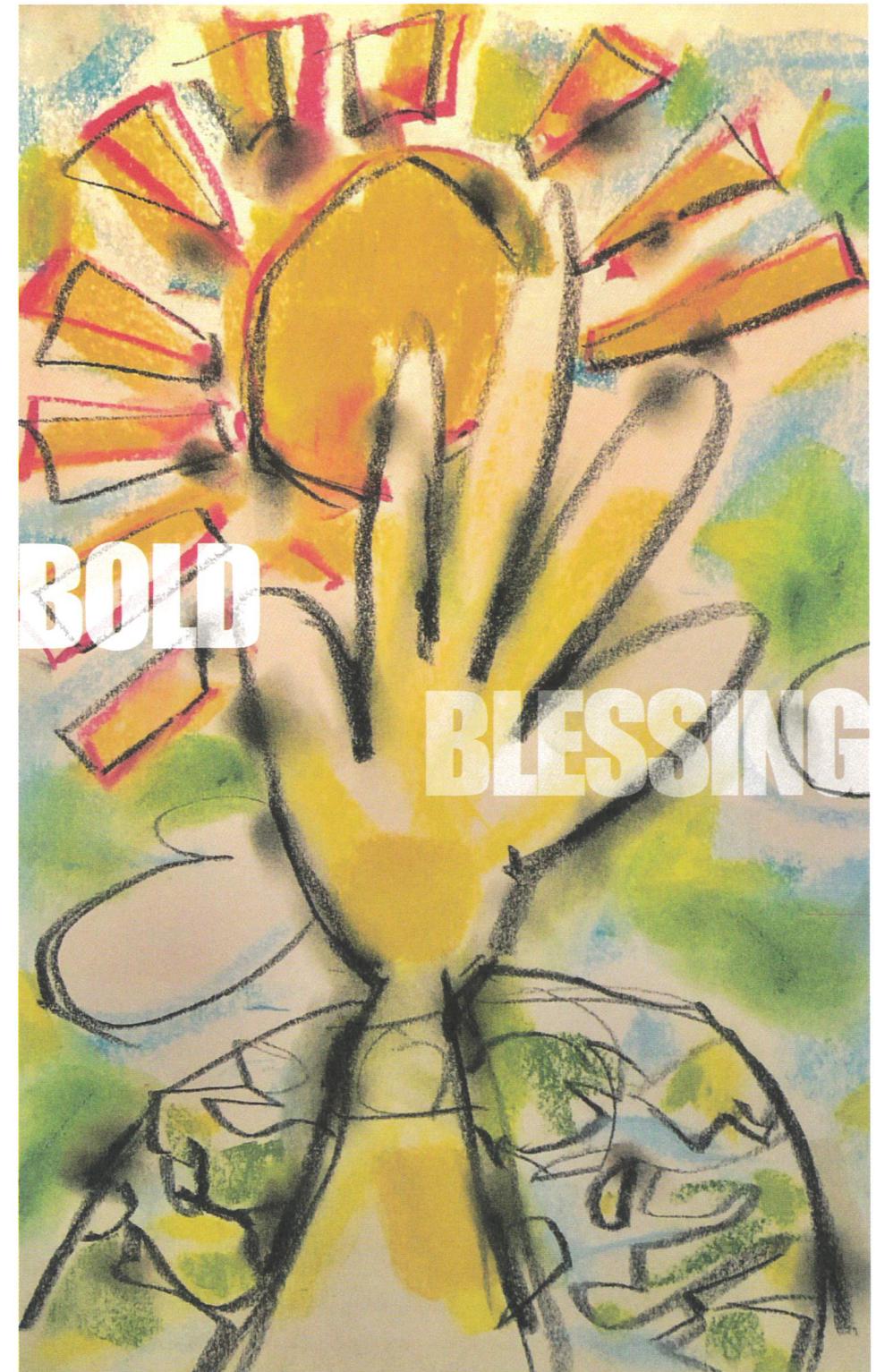
Loving and merciful God, on this second Sunday in Lent may we feel the Spirit winds whipping in our lives, leading us to be born again into new creations that are awakened to the never-ending God opportunities. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

(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 14" UCC SUNDAY BULLETIN SERVICE

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St. John's United Church of Christ
Second Sunday of Lent
 March 1, 2026



WELCOME, ANNOUNCEMENTS, GREET ONE ANOTHER (be seated)

PRELUDE

CHURCH BELL (the bell invites us to worship)

GOD CALLS US TO WORSHIP (responsively)

With Jesus by my side, the righteous path I take.

I in his flock abide, e'en for his own names sake.

God cares for me in all my needs, through each dark valley safely leads,

On green pasture richly feeds. Now is the time of worship.

***OPENING HYMN** *Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross* (vs. 1 & 3) #587

*** WE INVITE GOD TO WORSHIP** (unison)

Holy God, we thank you for this season of Lent, during which you invite us to come, to examine, to confess, to be renewed and healed. We have begun this journey eagerly, anticipating that, like Jesus in the wilderness, there are things which need to be lost so that better things may be found. Grant us courage to set aside easy answers and quick fixes in favor of your word that penetrates and transforms us. Enable us to see past the immediate satisfaction of our wants that we may choose instead the eternally fulfilling grace of your presence. Embolden our faith that we may trust you rather than the false and empty promises of our age. Thank you for walking this Lenten journey with us. May we emerge from it prepared to serve you with renewed passion and joy. Amen.

***RESPONSE** *How Great Thou Art* (chorus only) #33

ANTHEM *Come Expecting Jesus*

CHILDREN'S MOMENT *Jesus Loves Me*

OFFERING INVITATION

Let us give back to God with gratitude for all blessings received.

***RESPONSE** *Lord, Jesus, Who through Forty Days* (v. 3) #180

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (unison)

You are the God who creates us, the Christ who redeems us, the Holy Spirit who fills us with hope. May we and our gifts be instruments of your purpose here on earth. Amen.

WE GATHER IN PRAYER

Silent Prayers – Pastoral Prayer-The Lord's Prayer (debts/debtors)

Congregational Response tune: *Go to Dark Gethsemane* #196

SCRIPTURE: Old Testament: Psalm 121

New Testament: John 3:1-17

The Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

MESSAGE: *Daisy*

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

***CLOSING HYMN** *Lift High the Cross* (vs. 1,3,5) #108

***BLESSING** (responsively)

The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the universe. Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their faith.

They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. Amen.

***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE** *God, Dismiss Us* (v.1) #439

*** POSTLUDE**

Announcements

** You may place your offerings in the designated basket or online at myucc.org and click on the *contribution* button. Please prayerfully consider setting up regular online donations to continue our outreach into the community.

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY on Tuesdays beginning February 24th at 11:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. each week. *The Room Where It Happens* is an exciting Lenten course written by Bishop Rose Hudson-Wilkin, inspired by the filmed version of the award-winning stage musical *Hamilton*. The course has been written in the hope that all ages can be involved in the room where it happens for discussions about what the Bible and the experience of Christian faith teach us about some of the big issues faced in the musical by Alexander Hamilton: his responses to injustice, adversity, and temptation, his search for identity, and his realization that he (and all of us) can make a difference in the world. The course has five weekly sessions

- Identity and Belonging
- Ambition and Temptation
- Love and Sacrifice
- Hope and Courage through Adversity
- Forgiveness and Redemption

Each session includes suggestions for inspiring songs from the musical to watch, with relevant Bible passages and discussion questions. Invite your friends and join us.

LENTEN SELF-DENIAL OFFERING Set aside a dish, box, jar, can, basket, whatever and each day toss in the amount listed on the self-denial list as a daily reminder of all the blessings you have received at God's hands. A sheet was included in the February newsletter and copies are available in the back of the sanctuary. Bring your offerings on Easter Sunday as a special Lenten sacrifice.

DINNER & CONVERSATION: This week's dinner will be at Ponderosa at 6:00 pm on Thursday night. Please sign the list in the back of the sanctuary so we can reserve a large enough table.

MESSY CHURCH Our March 4th Messy Church theme is *Marching in the Light of God* and will feature a Science experiment, suncatcher, sunburst craft, lightbulb craft, treasure hunt with glow sticks and MORE! Dinner will be chicken pot pie, salad and ice cream treat. Everyone is welcome!

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING is one of the four denominational offerings we collect each year. This offering supports relief efforts for hunger, poverty, natural disasters, climate change, immigration/migration and refugees. It serves individuals and communities in need providing people with safety, sustenance and hope. This year's offering will be collected during worship on March 15th.

If you would like to donate a Spring Flower in honor of, or in memory of a loved one, please leave them in Memorial Hall by 12:00 noon on Friday, April 3. Don't forget to complete the donor form including the label to attach to your Spring Flower. A list of donors will be included in the May newsletter.

PRESCHOOL OPEN HOUSE and early registration will be held on Sunday, March 15th from 2:00-3:30 pm. Please share with any families with preschoolers. The Caterpillar Class (3 yrs. old) meets Tuesday & Thursday from 9:00-11:30 am with tuition of \$135 monthly for the 2026-27 school year. The Butterfly Class (4 yrs. old) meets from 9:00-3:00 on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays with tuition of \$215 monthly. Flyers will soon be available to put up around town.

MARCH MOVIE NIGHT will be *Hamilton* on March 15th at 4:00 p.m. This movie is over 3 hours long so we are starting early. A light dinner will be served during the intermission. *Hamilton* is a revolutionary Broadway musical by Lin-Manuel Miranda that tells the story of American Founding Father Alexander Hamilton, blending hip-hop, R&B, pop, and traditional show tunes with a diverse cast to reimagine U.S. history. It follows Hamilton's rise from an immigrant to the first Secretary of the Treasury, exploring his political and personal life through his relationships with figures like Aaron Burr, George Washington, and Eliza Hamilton. The show won numerous awards, including 11 Tony Awards, a Grammy, and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Some adult language and content but recommended for high school students and up. Sign up sheet in back of sanctuary.

Prayers Posts

We ask for continuing prayer requests for: Tom Nowaskie, Marilyn Houchins, Tony Riley and Ellen Riggs. Bobby Bahr and Mark Schutter. Prayers for Rhonda Webber (Brenda Fillingim Niece) and Ryan Vieck.

Shut-in Addresses:

Susie Milligan - Colonial Assisted Living, Room 118, 1622 S Hart Street Road, Vincennes, IN 47591
Leona Conway - Aperion Care, C Wing Room C-35, 3801 Old Bruceville Road, Vincennes, IN 47591
Marge Beamon - The Villages at Oak Ridge, Room 303, 1694 Troy Road, Washington, IN 47501

At Home:

Gary Meyer
Mike Lankford

**Prayer requests or updates can now be relayed to the church office during regular office hours and Pastor Debbie during the evening/weekend.
Email: st.johnsuccoffice@gmail.com or call 812-882-2720 M-F, 9 am - 1 pm.**

This Week in the Life of St. John's

Sunday, March 01

Adult SS Class 9:30am
Worship 10:30am
Communion

Tuesday, March 03

Sandy's Pantry 11-12:30pm
Hamilton Bible Study @ 11 & 6:30p
Girl Scouts 4:30-6:30pm

Thursday, March 05

Sandy's Pantry @ 11-12:30PM
Dinner & Conversation
Ponderosa @ 6 pm

Monday, March 02

BABE Store 12-5:30pm
Membership/Evang. @ 5:30p

Wednesday, March 04

Messy Church @5:30-7pm
Choir @ 7pm

Friday, March 06

Pastor Debbie is Off
Phoebe's Mission 4:30-6:00pm
World Day of Prayer

Looking Ahead In March 2026

Sunday, March 08

Daylight Savings Time

Adult SS Class 9:30am
Worship 10:30am
One Great Hour of Sharing

Tuesday, March 10

Hamilton Bible Study @ 11 & 6:30p
Girl Scouts 4:30-6:30pm
Good Samaritan Foundation
Meeting/Dinner in Evansville @ 6pm

Thursday, March 12

Dinner & Conversation
Café Moonlight @ 6 pm
Scarlett's 4th. Birthday

Monday, March 09

BABE Store 12-5:30pm
Membership/Evang. @ 5:30p

Wednesday, March 11

Messy Church @5:30-7pm
Christian Ed @ 6pm
Choir @ 7pm

Friday, March 13

Pastor Debbie is Off



Staff and Volunteers

Pastor:	Rev. Debbie Jo Atkins
Secretary	Kim Butler
Church Board President:	Sandra Lange
Organist:	DeEtta Welte
Music Director, Pianist:	Becky Brockman
Children & Family Ministry Coordinator:	Will Meyer
Nursery Attendant:	Darcie Bahr
Head Usher:	Allison Cummins
Liturgist:	Elaine Workman
Projection:	Jana Vieck
Sound:	Lonny Vieck

Did You Know?

St. John's Sunday Morning Worship Services are streamed **LIVE** on our church's Facebook page, "**St. John's United Church of Christ Vincennes.**"

Or, you can watch the Worship Service at your convenience by going on the church website, "**myucc.org**" and clicking on "Worship Service" for a particular date.

You can also download a copy of each monthly church newsletter from our church website to keep up with all the activities.