

Second Sunday after Christmas

January 4, 2026

United Church of Christ - Neillsville

Pastor Julie Ruegsegger

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PRELUDE

Chorale Fantasia on 'Wie Schön leuchtet der Morgenstern'

Dietrich Buxtehude Karen Mohr

RINGING OF THE CARILLON

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

Arise, shine, for your light has come!

The glory of the Lord has risen upon us!

Like sages from afar, come and behold your Christ!

**Let us fall on our knees in his honor! Let us lift our
voices in praise of his name!**

OPENING PRAYER

Lord of yesterday, today and tomorrow, we gather here this first Sunday of the New Year, in a mixture of hope, anticipation, fear, excitement, and expectation. We do not know what the year holds for us. There are things we are afraid of: worries about health and family, job security and finances. There is much to look forward to –weddings or anniversaries or baptisms, holidays to enjoy, friends to laugh with.

God who holds all Days and Time, the coming year is full of uncertainty and hope. Whatever the year holds for us, though, we trust You, and we place every day of this year in your care knowing that, as in the past, You are with us, caring for us with constant love.

And so Lord, we place ourselves into your keeping and dedicate our lives to your service through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Savior. Amen.

HYMN "Gather Us In"

#649 W&R (vs. 1-3) Marty Haugen

**1 Here in this place new light is streaming,
shadows of doubt are vanished away.**

**See in this space our fears and our dreamings
brought here to you in the light of this day.**

**Gather us in, the lost and forsaken
gather us in; our spirits inflame.**

**Call to us now and we shall awaken;
we shall arise at the sound of our name.**

**2 We are the young, our lives are a mystery;
we are the old who yearn for your face.**

**We have been sung throughout all of history,
called to be light to the whole human race.**

**Gather us in, the rich and the haughty;
gather us in, the proud and the strong;
give us a heart so meek and so lowly;
give us the courage to enter the song.**

**3 Here we receive new life in the waters;
here we receive the bread of new birth;
here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
call us anew to be salt for the earth.**

**Give us to drink the wine of compassion;
give us to eat the bread that is you;
nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
lives that are holy and hearts that are true.**

PRAYER OF TRANSFORMATION

Holy One, a new year invites us to begin again. As we reflect on the future, we ask that your grace would meet us as we strive to be the people you have called us to be. Help us to heal spiritually, emotionally, relationally, materially, physically, and financially. Strengthen us and reorient our expectations of ourselves and one another. Give us courage to be true to our faith and values. Remind us that we carry no burden that you do not share with us. Shine your radiance through us. Amen.

WORDS OF GRACE

PASSING OF THE PEACE

One: The Peace of God be with you.

Many: **And also with you.**

All are invited to greet one another with words such as "*The peace of Christ be with you,*" and the response: "*And also with you*".

RESPONSE: “Gloria”

#756 NCH

**Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia!**

CHILDREN’S TIME

SCRIPTURE READINGS

NEW TESTAMENT Ephesians 1:3-14

³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. ⁴ Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. ⁵ God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. ⁶ So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. ⁷ He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. ⁸ He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

⁹ God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. ¹⁰ And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. ¹¹ Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

¹² God’s purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. ¹³ And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. ¹⁴ The Spirit is God’s guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

NEW TESTAMENT John 1:1-18

¹ In the beginning the Word already existed.

The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

² He existed in the beginning with God.

³ God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.

⁴ The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.

⁵ The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it.

⁶ God sent a man, John the Baptist, ⁷ to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. ⁸ John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. ⁹ The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognize him. ¹¹ He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. ¹² But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.

¹⁴ So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father’s one and only Son.

¹⁵ John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, “This is the one I was talking about when I said, ‘Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.’”

¹⁶ From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, but God’s unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father’s heart. He has revealed God to us.

SERMON “The Light Shines in the Darkness”

Pastor Julie

HYMN “*Arise, Your Light Is Come*”

#164 NCH

Ruth Duck

**1 Arise, your light is come!
The Spirit’s call obey;
Show forth the glory of your God
which shines on you today!**

**2 Arise, your light is come!
Fling wide the prison door;
Proclaim the captive’s liberty,
good tidings to the poor.**

**3 Arise, your light is come!
All you in sorrow born,
Bind up the brokenhearted ones
and comfort those who mourn.**

**4 Arise, your light is come!
The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing;
God's power will make us strong.**

MORNING PRAYERS

PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

THE OFFERING SERVICE

Invitation to Generosity

Offertory *"Twas in the Moon of Wintertime"*
Paul Manz

Doxology *Tune: Old 100th*

**To God, all glorious heavenly light;
To Christ, revealed in earthly night;
To God, the Spirit now we raise;
Our joyful songs of thankful praise. Amen.**

Prayer of Dedication

God, Creator, Son and Holy Spirit: We give you thanks and praise and we dedicate to you our offering. In this we also dedicate the workings of our hands, the thinking of our minds, and the loving of our hearts. May each be used for the glory of your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

Prayer at the Table

Breaking Bread and Pouring Wine

Sharing The Elements

*All are welcome to partake in the Feast of our Lord.
The table is open to all.*

Prayer Of Thanksgiving

Bread of heaven, let us not be unchanged by this meal. Let us observe the star in wonder; let us leave the table filled and satisfied. Dwell in our hearts, and shine in our lives, that we might know your deep, deep peace, and share it with the world. Fill us with your love, that we might walk hand in hand with you all our days. We pray in the holy name of the Christ-child, born for us all. Amen.

HYMN *"Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness"*

#93 W&R (vs. 1-2) Rusty Edwards

**1 Praise the One who breaks the darkness
With a liberating light.
Praise the One who frees the prisoners,
Turning blindness into sight.
Praise the One who preached the gospel,
Healing every dread disease,
Calming storms and feeding thousands
With the very bread of peace.**

**2 Praise the One who blessed the children
With a strong yet gentle word.
Praise the One who drove out demons
With a piercing two-edged sword.
Praise the One who brings cool water
To the desert's burning sand.
From this well comes living water
Quenching thirst in every land.**

BLESSING

SHARING OUR BLESSINGS AND BURDENS

As we are gathered together as children of God, we are called to share our blessings and joys and our concerns, our deepest fears, sadnesses, griefs and needs so that we may bear one another up and support each other in prayer and Christian love.

HYMN

"Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness"

#93W&R (vs. 3)

**3 Praise the One true love incarnate:
Christ, who suffered in our place.
Jesus died and rose for many
That we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness,
Seeing what our God has done.
Praise the One redeeming glory;
Praise the One who makes us one.**

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE Karen Mohr

RADIO BROADCAST

**11 AM Sunday radio broadcast
on WCCN 98.5FM and 1370AM**

This week's radio broadcast is given
anonymously by "a faithful listener".

WELCOME

We welcome you to our service of worship!
We are glad that you have joined us on site,
through the internet or on the radio.
We pray that you will hear God's call,
seek to follow Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit.

YouTube link for Sunday, January 4, 2026
<https://youtube.com/live/AFLeLziGDcY>



ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Sunday, January 4th

- 9:30 AM Worship

Deacon – Wayne Voss

Greeters – Lydia Schumacher, Karen Northup

Ushers – Craig Heck, Max Heck

Power Point – Janice Miller

FYI - (for those who are scheduled for PowerPoint it is suggested that you arrive 30 minutes prior to the church service to get the laptop turned on, allow for any updates, get screen down and start running the announcements).

Following Sunday, January 11th

Deacon – Byrl Buddenhagen

Greeters – Pat Acheson, Herman Seebandt

Ushers – Don Quicker, Jerry Quicker

Power Point – Bonnie Weyer

Monday, January 5th

- 9:00 AM Card Making

Tuesday, January 6th

- 1:00 PM Bible Study

4:00 PM Ad Hoc Future Connections Meeting

Wednesday, January 7th

- 3:30 PM Confirmation meets at UCC

5:00 PM JAM meets at Calvary

Thursday, January 8th

- 1:30 PM Circle of Friends Meeting

Coffee fellowship after worship -

Sign up on back bulletin board

Jan 4 – Voss'

Jan 11 –

Jan 18 – *Annual Congregational Meeting*

Jan 25 –

Feb 1 -

We need people to sign up