

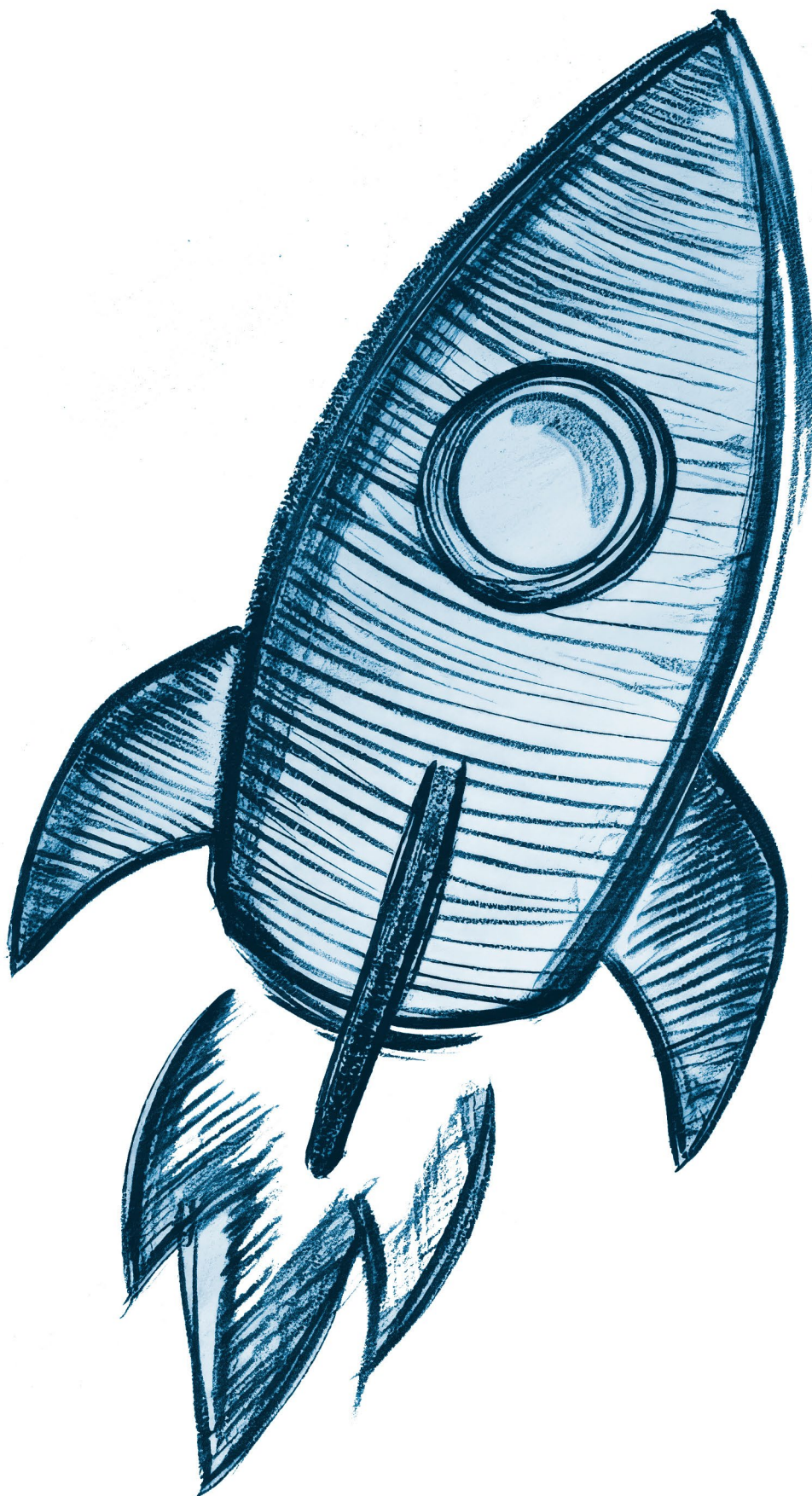


Summer
IN THE **City** WITH ATLANTA FIRST
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

WONDER

SEEING THE *extraordinary*

Weekday Devotional Guide



Welcome!

What changes when we learn to see every person as a bearer of God's image? In the latter half of August, you are invited to join us for *Wonder – Seeing the Extraordinary*. This three-week series, inspired by the film *Wonder* and grounded in Genesis, Isaiah, and Romans, explores sacred worth, courage in the face of fear, and genuine love as a way of life. Each week offers worship, practical tools for households and groups, and one concrete way to practice belonging in Atlanta. You do not need to have seen the film.

How To Use This Guide

Each weekday includes:

- A scripture for reflection
- A journal question
- An activity to practice Wonder in daily life
- A closing prayer

Saturday and Sunday are an intentional invitation to Sabbath, worship, and rest. Learn more about Sabbath from Rev. Catherine Boothe Olson's recent sermon: youtu.be/h3STCQJAptA

You will need a Bible (or Bible app), a journal, a writing tool, and maybe a candle or some way to help your brain, body and soul know that it is time "to be still and know that God is God."

Bring this Guide with you to the Worship Service on Sunday mornings to take notes for the week ahead.

Weekday Devotional Guide Index

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WEEK 1 - *Created Wonderful*

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 2026

Before achievement, appearance, or approval, God names humanity as image-bearers. This week we will explore dignity as gifts and ask what changes when the church expects every person to bring needed gifts.

READ - GENESIS 1:26-28^A

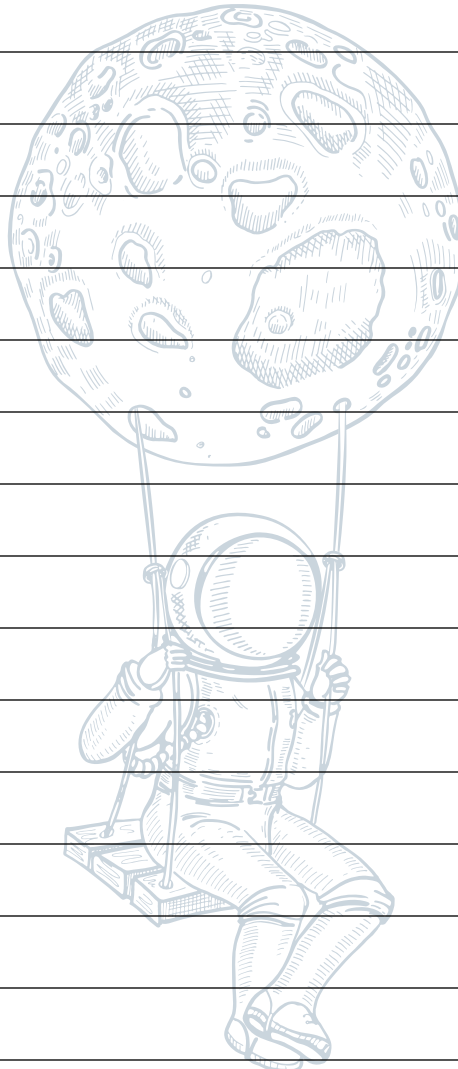
²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

²⁷ So God created human beings in his own image.

In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ Then God blessed them.

SERMON NOTES



Beloved Before Achievement

MONDAY, AUGUST 17, 2026

Before humanity accomplishes anything, God speaks identity and blessing. Notice how quickly you measure yourself by output. Grace begins elsewhere: you are creature, image-bearer, and recipient before you are producer.

READ - GENESIS 1:26-27

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

²⁷ So God created human beings in his own image.
In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

JOURNAL

Where am I trying to earn what God gives as grace?

WONDER PRACTICE

Receive one minute of silence without proving anything.

PRAYER

God of grace, open my eyes, steady my heart, and make love visible through me today. Amen.

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2026

READ - GENESIS 1:27

JOURNAL

WONDER PRACTICE

PRAYER

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

A Converted Gaze

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19, 2026

Jesus asks Bartimaeus what he wants rather than assuming. Dignity includes agency. Compassion listens before acting and receives a person as a participant in their own story.

READ - MARK 10:46-52

⁴⁶ Then they reached Jericho, and as Jesus and his disciples left town, a large crowd followed him. A blind beggar named Bartimaeus (son of Timaeus) was sitting beside the road. ⁴⁷ When Bartimaeus heard that Jesus of Nazareth was nearby, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁸ "Be quiet!" many of the people yelled at him.

But he only shouted louder, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

⁴⁹ When Jesus heard him, he stopped and said, "Tell him to come here."

So they called the blind man. "Cheer up," they said. "Come on, he's calling you!" ⁵⁰ Bartimaeus threw aside his coat, jumped up, and came to Jesus.

⁵¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked.

"My Rabbi," the blind man said, "I want to see!"

⁵² And Jesus said to him, "Go, for your faith has healed you." Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus down the road.

JOURNAL

When do I substitute assumption for curiosity?

WONDER PRACTICE

Ask, "What would be helpful?" and honor the answer.

PRAYER

God of grace, open my eyes, steady my heart, and make love visible through me today. Amen.

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2026

The body cannot say to a member, "I have no need of you." Access is not an optional kindness; it is how the body receives the gifts it needs. Barriers impoverish everyone.

READ - 1 CORINTHIANS 12:21-26

²¹ The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."

²² In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. ²³ And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, ²⁴ while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. ²⁵ This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

JOURNAL

What church practice assumes only one kind of body or mind?

WONDER PRACTICE

Identify one barrier and share a concrete remedy.

PRAYER

God of grace, open my eyes, steady my heart, and make love visible through me today. Amen.

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21, 2026

Blessing precedes assignment. God's pattern releases us from conditional belonging and sends us to help life flourish. Receive blessing, then let it become responsibility.

Then God blessed them.

How could my influence help another person participate?

Learn a name and the gifts connected to it.

God of grace, open my eyes, steady my heart, and make love visible through me today. Amen.

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WEEK 2 - *Dismantling Dismay*

SUNDAY, AUGUST 23, 2026

God does not shame our fear; God meets us with presence. We will consider how fear creates distance and how courageous, consent-aware accompaniment can interrupt isolation and harm.

READ - ISAIAH 41:1-10

¹ "Listen in silence before me, you lands beyond the sea. Bring your strongest arguments. Come now and speak. The court is ready for your case.

² "Who has stirred up this king from the east, rightly calling him to God's service? Who gives this man victory over many nations and permits him to trample their kings underfoot? With his sword, he reduces armies to dust. With his bow, he scatters them like chaff before the wind. ³ He chases them away and goes on safely, though he is walking over unfamiliar ground. ⁴ Who has done such mighty deeds, summoning each new generation from the beginning of time? It is I, the Lord, the First and the Last. I alone am he."

⁵ The lands beyond the sea watch in fear. Remote lands tremble and mobilize for war. ⁶ The idol makers encourage one another, saying to each other, "Be strong!" ⁷ The carver encourages the goldsmith, and the molder helps at the anvil. "Good," they say. "It's coming along fine." Carefully they join the parts together, then fasten the thing in place so it won't fall over.

⁸ "But as for you, Israel my servant, Jacob my chosen one, descended from Abraham my friend, ⁹ I have called you back from the ends of the earth, saying, 'You are my servant.' For I have chosen you and will not throw you away. ¹⁰ Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.

SERMON NOTES



MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2026

READ - ISAIAH 41:10

JOURNAL

WONDER PRACTICE

PRAYER

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

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TUESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2026

READ - PSALM 56:3-4

JOURNAL

WONDER PRACTICE

PRAYER

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

Sitting Near

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2026

Before Job's friends explain, they sit with him. Presence becomes harmful when it rushes to control another's pain. Sometimes love speaks; sometimes love stays.

READ - JOB 2:11-13

¹¹ When three of Job's friends heard of the tragedy he had suffered, they got together and traveled from their homes to comfort and console him. Their names were Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. ¹² When they saw Job from a distance, they scarcely recognized him. Wailing loudly, they tore their robes and threw dust into the air over their heads to show their grief. ¹³ Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights. No one said a word to Job, for they saw that his suffering was too great for words.

JOURNAL

Who needs accompaniment rather than advice?

WONDER PRACTICE

Offer company without demanding conversation.

PRAYER

God of grace, open my eyes, steady my heart, and make love visible through me today. Amen.

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2026

READ - PROVERBS 31:8-9

JOURNAL

WONDER PRACTICE

PRAYER

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

[illegible]

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 2026

READ - ISAIAH 41:13

JOURNAL

WONDER PRACTICE

PRAYER

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

[illegible]

WEEK 3 - "You Are a Wonder!"

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30, 2026

Genuine love is more than friendliness. It honors, welcomes, tells the truth, shares joy and sorrow, rejects revenge, and overcomes evil with good. Come imagine beloved community as a practiced way of life.

READ - ROMANS 12:9-21

⁹ Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰ Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. ¹¹ Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. ¹² Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. ¹³ When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. ¹⁵ Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

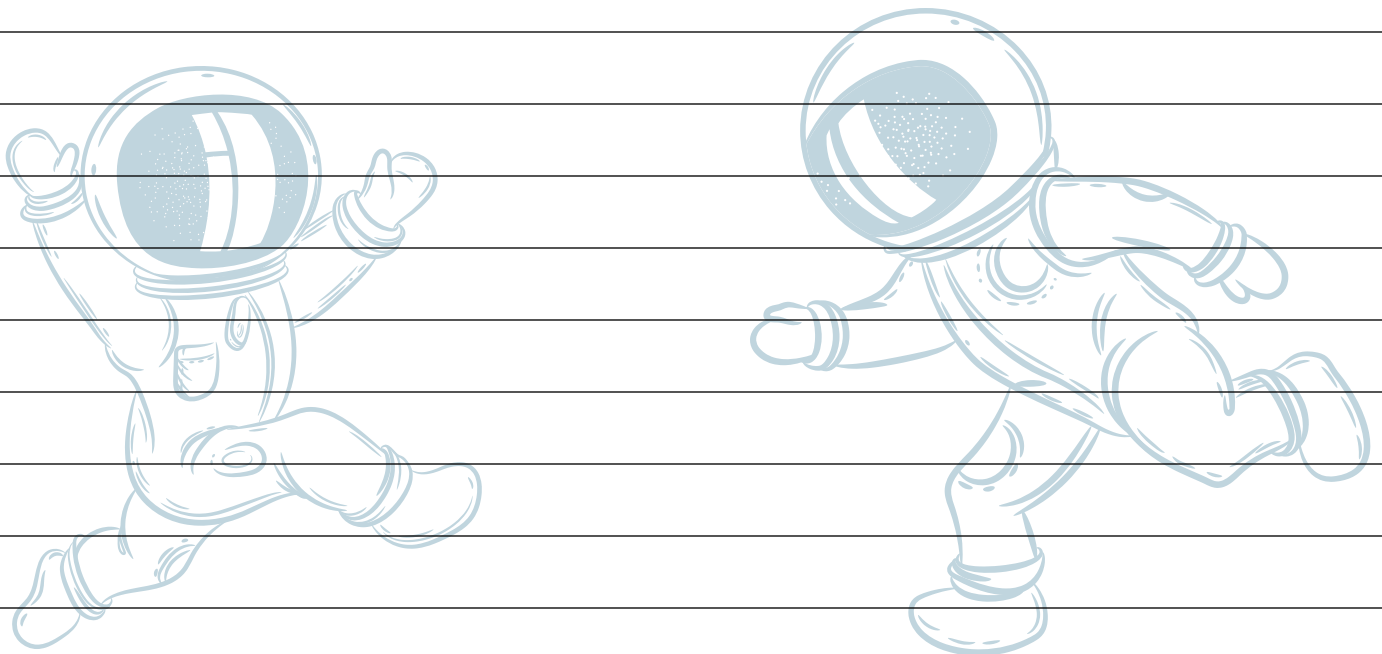
¹⁷ Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. ¹⁸ Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

¹⁹ Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the Lord.

²⁰ Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads."

²¹ Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

SERMON NOTES



READ - ROMANS 12:9

JOURNAL

WONDER PRACTICE

PRAYER

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2026

READ - ROMANS 12:10

JOURNAL

WONDER PRACTICE

PRAYER

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2026

READ - ROMANS 12:13

JOURNAL

WONDER PRACTICE

PRAYER

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2026

READ - ROMANS 12:18

JOURNAL

WONDER PRACTICE

PRAYER

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2026

READ - ROMANS 12:21

JOURNAL

WONDER PRACTICE

PRAYER

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS

Closing Covenant

CHOOSE KINDNESS. PRACTICE BELONGING.

We believe every person bears the image of God.

We will resist every habit and system that reduces a person to appearance, productivity, diagnosis, difference, status, or harm.

We will receive God's presence in fear and become trustworthy companions to one another.

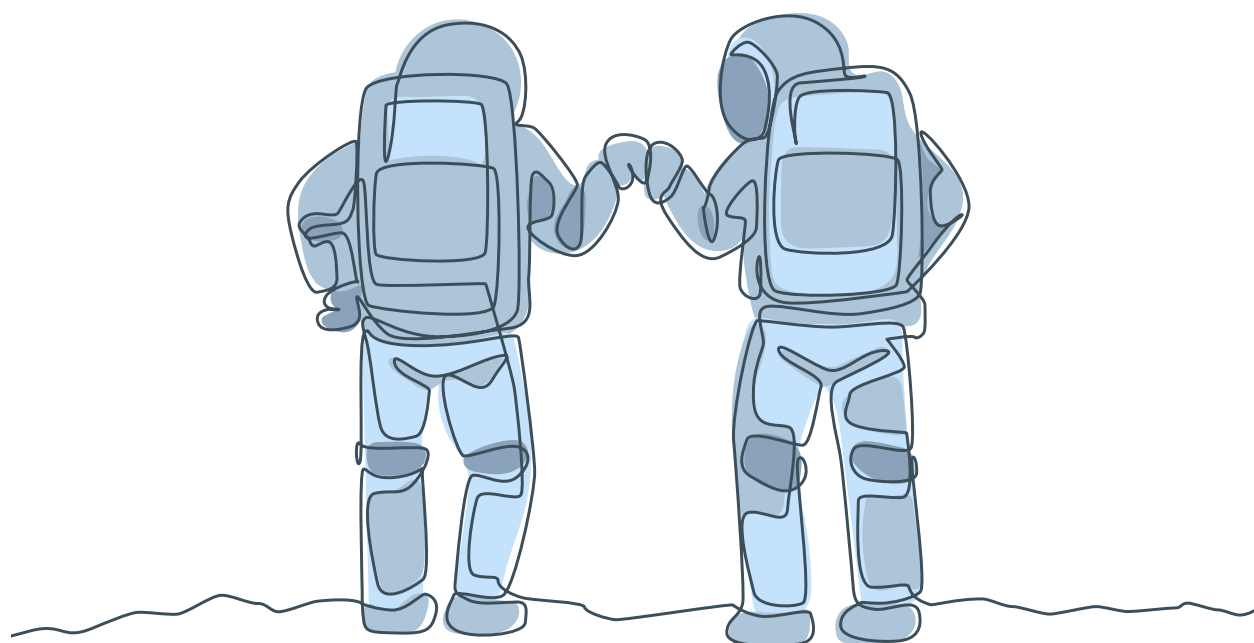
We will practice genuine love: honoring, welcoming, rejoicing, weeping, telling truth, setting wise boundaries, repairing harm, and overcoming evil with good.

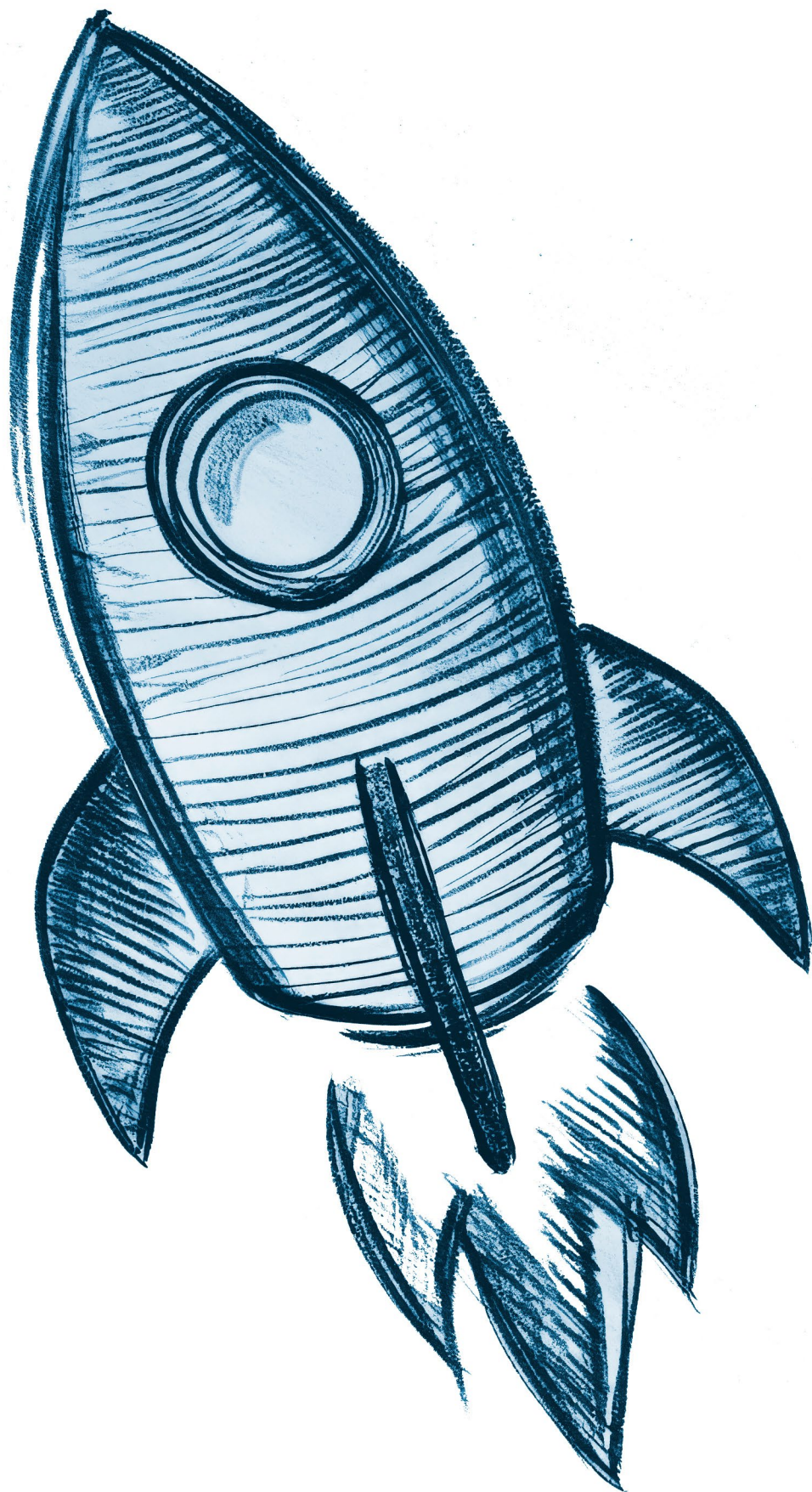
We will treat access as a shared responsibility and every person's agency as sacred.

We will expect gifts from those the world overlooks and share power so those gifts can shape our common life. We will not confuse kindness with passivity or belonging with assimilation.

By the grace of God, we will become a community where people are seen, held, honored, and invited to flourish.

With courage, compassion, and genuine love, we choose kindness and practice belonging.







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