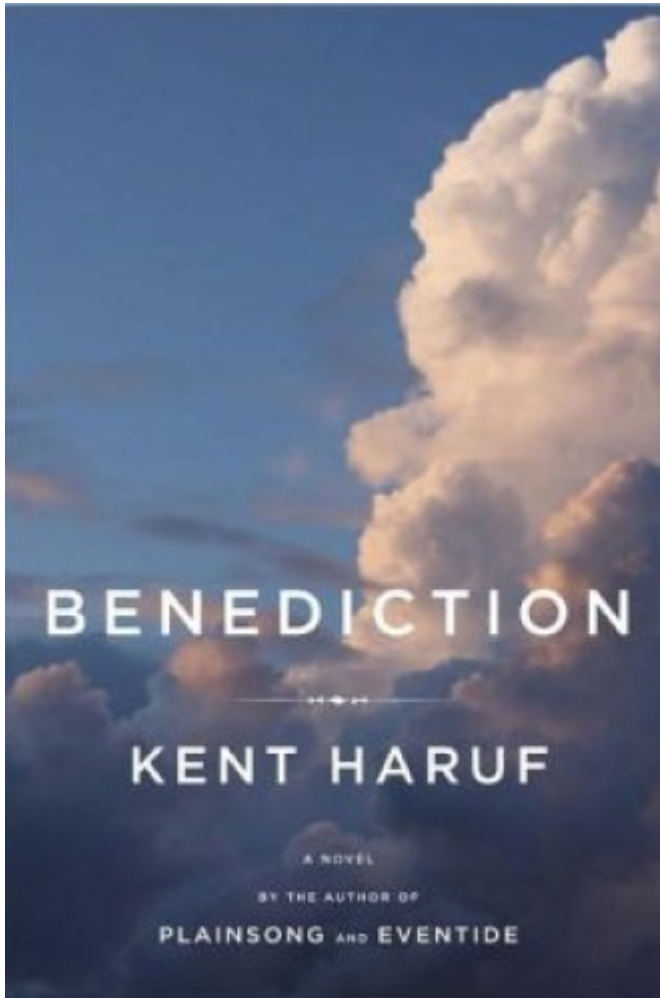


Everyday blessings

By [Amy Frykholm](#)

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## In Review



### **Benediction**

By Kent Haruf

Knopf

Novelist Kent Haruf has often drawn on his upbringing on the sparse eastern plains of Colorado. But in his latest novel, [Benediction](#), Haruf inches closer to his roots than

he ever has. One of his central characters is a minister in a small town church that's much like the ones that Haruf grew up in as the son of a Methodist minister.

Haruf's character, Reverend Lyle, is in trouble. He has already been thrown out of one church for supporting a fellow clergy member who is gay. His marriage is threatened by the instability that his acts have generated, his teenage son (named John Wesley) is troubled, and his new church would prefer that he not make waves. But Lyle, a man of principle if not a good student of everyday life, cannot help but speak his mind. As a result, he stands to lose everything.

The novel hinges on a concept that Haruf has been developing for a long time in his fiction: the "precious ordinary," those graces in everyday life and relationships that are our lives' most beautiful threads. As Rev. Lyle wanders through the town one night looking into people's windows, he tells a police officer what he has seen:

The precious ordinary . . . I thought I'd see people being hurtful. Cruel. A man hitting his wife. But I haven't seen that . . . What I've seen is the sweet kindness of one person to another. Just time passing on a summer's night. This ordinary life.

The "benediction" of the novel's title is not so much, then, the blessing of the supernatural, but the blessing of the everyday.