
Murray Presbyterian Messenger



December, 2022



Murray Presbyterian Church

P.O. Box 196, Main Street Murray, NE 68409

www.murraypresbyterian.org Tel: (402)235-2754

Featured This Month: Christmas Services

December 24 5:30 pm Service of Lessons and Carols
December 25 10:00 am "The Christmas Angel" dramatic reading
January 1 10:00 am "The Twelve Days of Christmas"

Be sure to make worshipping the new-born king an important part of your Christmas celebration!

See page 2 for a schedule of the new Advent sermon series.

See page 5 for information about Christmas worship opportunities at Murray Presbyterian Church.

Upcoming Events

Dec. 4 Advent Dinner, 11:30 am

Dec. 10 Salvation Army bell-ringing

Dec. 14 Womens' Bible Study, 1pm

Dec. 18 Angel Tree gift deadline

Dec. 24: Christmas Eve 5:30pm

Thank you for your ongoing financial support of Murray Presbyterian! Contributions may be deposited in the offering plates during worship services, mailed to the church at P. O. Box 196, Murray NE 68409 or made online at www.murraypresbyterian.org. Click on the "Give Now" button at the bottom of the homepage.

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Near the end of November, my OneDrive account sent a collection of photos from something that had happened exactly ten years earlier. It was the day when our daughter, Abriana, hosted her first Thanksgiving dinner at the big, beautiful home of church members for whom she was "housesitting." That was also the year that an important family tradition got started. After the meal, we went to the living room to watch *The Polar Express*. And for many years thereafter—all the way up through our time in Nebraska—no Thanksgiving would be complete without sitting down to watch this holiday movie classic. No doubt for many of us, favorite holiday films like this are a highlight of the season that we're now entering.

Of course, for the theological purists among us (and may their tribe increase!), such forays into secular holiday traditions are a sacrilege. All the Santa Claus lore is, at best, a distraction from the *real* meaning of Christmas. At worst, it's a counterfeit belief system that's the very antithesis of the gospel. The omniscient Santa ("he sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake, etc.) is a substitute deity, who operates on the basis of works righteousness. Good children are rewarded with presents and naughty children get coal. Not much grace in that system!

People responding that way are part of a longstanding Christian tradition of rejecting the trappings of secular culture. For many of the earliest Christians, the world of pagan antiquity was filled with nothing but superstition and falsehood. "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" the church father Tertullian famously inquired. The implicit answer: nothing. Christians don't need to have anything to do with the world of classical learning, philosophical inquiry, and pagan mythology.

But there is another alternative. Call it the Mars Hill approach. In his famous discourse delivered to the Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill (the Areopagus), the Apostle Paul used the words of pagan poets to build a bridge to his unbelieving audience. Fraught with error though they were, they grasped fragments of the truth and expressed universal human longings that are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus.

That's how J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis looked at the folklore and mythology of cultures around the world. Though rife with error, they still preserve fragments of God's eternal truths. They contain memory traces of divine realities buried in our collective consciousness. In the Christ-event, 'myth became fact' (as the title of a 1944 essay by Lewis put it). What had been vaguely hinted at in the world's myths and legends became a concrete historical reality in Jesus.

Upcoming
Worship Opportunities

Advent Sermon Series
Christmas at the Movies



Join us this month as we consider how some of our old-time favorite holiday movie classics capture elements of the biblical Christmas story.



December 4

The Polar Express:
Believe

(Luke 1:5-20)

December 11

It's a Wonderful Life:
Give

(Luke 2:1-7)



December 18

How the Grinch Stole Christmas:
Change

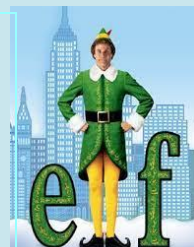
(Luke 2:8-14)



**December 24
Christmas Eve**

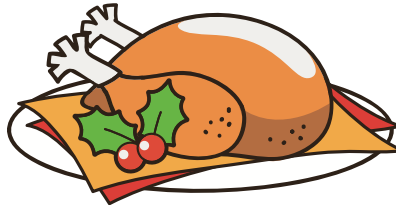
Elf: Love

(John 1:1-14)



Advent Dinner

Our traditional Advent dinner, featuring turkey with all the trimmings, takes place immediately following worship on **Sunday, December 4**. We are glad to be able to resume this practice (after a hiatus during the pandemic) and hope everyone will come out that Sunday and celebrate with us! Please bring a side dish to share.



Angel Tree



As it is every year at this time, the Angel tree is set up on the back table of the sanctuary. This year, our congregation has adopted two families. You can take a tag with gift requests from the tree. (If there are multiple suggestions, you do not have to purchase all the items.) Return your presents by **December 18** (adult presents wrapped, children's presents unwrapped). Also attach the tag you took so the gifts go to the correct family. Thank you for helping a local family in need this Christmas!

Christian Education Denise Ayers, team leader



During worship on November 20, we laid hands on the 40 shoeboxes that had been packed by our Sunday School students and prayed over them. They will now be shipped around the world by the Christian

relief organization, Samaritan's Purse, as part of Operation Christmas Child.



Leadership Teams

Worship and Family Life

Linnea Hill, Team Leader
Amanda Anderson
Jeff Anderson
Adam Gillaspie
Rebecca Gillaspie
Sherrill Konfrst
Laraine Young

Mission and Outreach

Melanie Honaker, Team Leader
George Collins
Sydney Honaker
John McConnell
Stacey McConnell
Deanne Slaffer
Dana Stahl
Ann Wieringa

Christian Education

Denise Ayers, Team Leader.
Sharlyn Deterding
Kathy Friedli
Julie Nickels
Linnea Hill

Properties and Finance

Kenny Drake, Team Leader
Dave Friedli, *Session Rep.*
Michael Stahl, *Session Rep.*
Sharlyn Deterding
Norm Koester
Gary Reike
Jerry Slaffer

Christmas Worship

**Christmas Eve (December 24, 5:30 pm)**

As always, Christmas Eve worship includes carols, lessons from Old and New Testament texts about the birth of our Lord, and singing "Silent Night" by candlelight. This year, there will also be a final message in our series on Christmas at the Movies. Make this special and meaningful service a part of your Christmas observance this year.

Christmas Morning (December 25, 10:00 am)

This year, the celebration of Jesus' birth continues with a service on Christmas morning. There will be more Christmas music, plus a dramatic presentation of Henry van Dyke's classic work, "The Christmas Angel." Listen as the angels contemplate humanity's plight and how to make things right—and discover the true meaning of Christmas.

First Sunday After Christmas (January 1, 2023)

January 1 is New Year's Day in the civil calendar. In the calendar of the Christian church, it is the eighth out of twelve days of Christmas. What are the twelve days of Christmas and what special observances are included within this period of the church year? Join us for a service where we will be walking through the Twelve Days of Christmas in song and spoken word.

Papillion Community Carol Concert



Members of our congregation will be singing with the choir of Trinity Lutheran Church (Papillion) at the 39th Annual Tri-City Community Christmas Carol Concert. If you would like to join them, see **Karla Remmers**, who will be directing this combined choir. The concert takes place on **Sunday, December 11 at 7:00 pm** at St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 324 Jackson Street, Papillion. Along with performances by area vocal and bell choirs, there will be carol singing by the congregation, accompanied by a brass ensemble. As the grand finale, everyone is invited to join in singing the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's Messiah.

Mission & Outreach

Melanie Honaker, team leader

Reverse Advent Calendar



Thank you to everyone who participated in the "Reverse Advent Calendar," donating food items for each day in the Advent season. All the suggested donations were received, and a box full of non-perishable food items will be given to the Conestoga Back Pack program.

Salvation Army Bell-Ringing



Our congregation will be supplying bell-ringers for the Salvation Army kettle at the Plattsmouth HyVee on **Saturday, December 10** from 10 am to 6 pm. You can sign up for a shift on the back table in the sanctuary. 90% of the proceeds stay here in Cass County and are channeled to local families in need through SENCA.

Property & Finance

Kenny Drake, team leader

From this:



To this:



Thank you to everyone who participated in the work day on November 19! Materials in the downstairs storage area were sorted and neatly organized into totes. The appearance of the room is vastly improved!

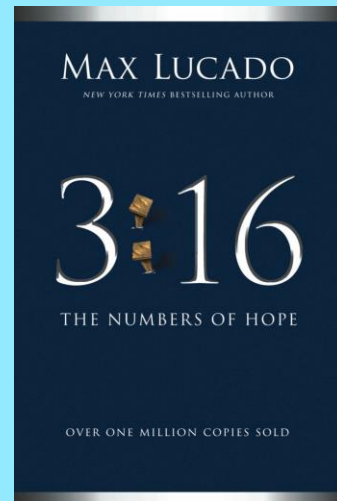
Stewardship Campaign

The session received a very encouraging report on the status of pledges so far in the annual stewardship campaign. Thank you to everyone who has responded so generously, especially in difficult economic times. We are also thankful to the Lord for blessing our congregation in this way. If you have not returned your pledge card, please do so as soon as possible (by mail, in the collection plate or by email at murraypc.bookkeeper@gmail.com).

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Adult Class



"Sometimes," a description of this series states, "life appears to fall to pieces and can seem irreparable. . . But for every challenge there is a breathtaking promise: It's going to be okay. How can we know? Because God so loved the world."

This month, you're invited to join the Adult Sunday school class for a video series featuring best-selling author and teacher Max Lucado unpacking what he considers to be the 'Hope Diamond' of the Bible: John 3:16. "If you know nothing of the Bible," Max says, "start here. If you know everything in the Bible, return here."

The class meets in the downstairs youth room Sunday mornings at 9:00 am.