
Murray Presbyterian Messenger

February 2023



Murray Presbyterian Church

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

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

Featured This Month: Lenten Journey Begins



Ash Wednesday Service (February 22)

Wednesday Evening Soup Suppers and Bible Study

Take the Lenten Challenge (Gospel of John reading plan)

(See all the details on page 5)

Murray Presbyterian Church, Murray, NE
(402)235-2754
www.murraypresbyterian.org



Upcoming Events

Sundays

9:00 am: Adult Sunday School

10:00 am: Morning Worship

Feb. 22 7:00 pm: Ash Wed.
Service

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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Autobiographies are perennial bestsellers and that's reflected in the current rankings. Right now, half the top ten books on the New York Times nonfiction bestsellers list are autobiographical. In first

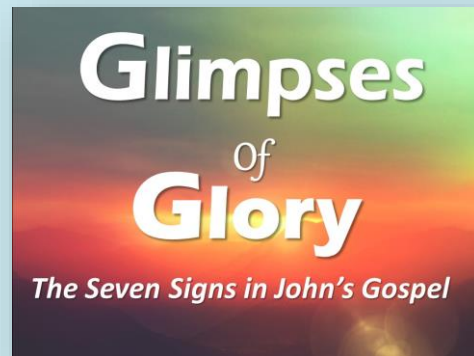
place is Prince Harry's *Spare*, on track to become one of the best-selling memoirs of all time. Other top sellers in the category include personal histories by Michelle Obama, Pamela Anderson, and Mike Pompeo.

Such writings may have value and offer unique personal insights—but I won't be reading any of them! As a matter of fact, I don't think it's a good idea for any of us to rely on unfiltered personal accounts for our understanding of historical events. That realization hit me several years ago after I had read a few political memoirs in which certain episodes stuck out and helped form my impressions of different figures. Not surprisingly, the first-person narrators recounted those events in ways that cast them in a very positive light and reflected negatively on others. Only much later did I read more neutral, third person accounts that showed the original writer had mischaracterized things somewhat or left out important mitigating factors. That tends to be a pattern in autobiographical writings. Notwithstanding their popularity, they're often little more than exercises in self-promotion and score-settling.

Of course, what's true of published writers is true of all of us. From time to time, I've thought about how I would respond if I were to be diagnosed with some terminal illness and how I would spend my remaining days on this earth. My one inclination would be to write up my life story so that my children (who have only witnessed less than a third of my life) and potentially future grandchildren might have some idea of what this old man was all about. Even though such a composition would only circulate privately, it would be susceptible to all the limitations and skewed perspectives of any *New York Times* best-seller. I'd be putting my spin on my life story, touting whatever good I've done and trying to make allowances for any missteps.

One psychological theory says that all of us have "three selves." There's the "self-self," the way we see ourselves. There's the "perceived self," the way others see or perceive us. And then, there's the "actual self," the reality of who we are. As people of faith, we might say the "actual self" is the self as God sees us.

Upcoming
Worship Opportunities
Sermon Series for Sundays
After Epiphany

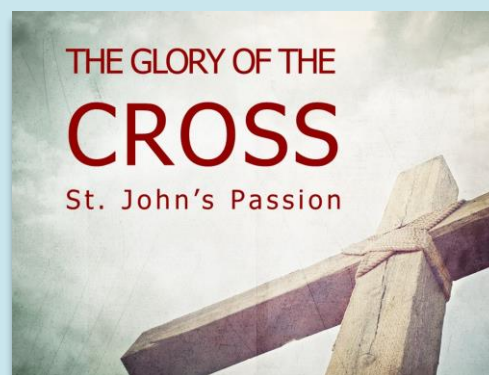


February 5: "The Sign of Lasting Satisfaction"
(John 6:1-14, 27-35)

February 12: "The Sign of Spiritual Perception"
(John 9:1-7, 35-38)

February 19: "The Sign of Resurrection Life" (John 11: 18-44)

Sermon Series for Sundays
in Lent



Our focus on John's gospel continues during the Lenten season with a series using passages from the second half of the book (chapters 13-20), sometimes called "the Book of Glory."

That's what the writer of Psalm 139 seems to be recognizing. It's in many ways a pretty scary text and it ends with a rather bold request. The psalmist acknowledges that God basically knows him inside and out. God knows him better than he knows himself. God can anticipate the words that come out of his mouth before he has uttered them. His days were numbered by God before he drew his first breath. Then, in light of that exhaustive knowledge of his inmost being, the psalmist says in the second to last verse (as it's paraphrased by the Passion Translation): "God, I invite your searching gaze into my heart. Examine me through and through; find out everything that may be hidden within me. Put me to the test and sift through all my anxious cares." He's asking God to shine his omniscient spotlight on the deepest recesses of his soul.

That's just a hair's breadth away from an additional step: seeking greater self-awareness. One of my true spiritual mentors, Tony Campolo, puts it this way in a book he wrote (with Mary Darling) on spirituality and justice: "We need to regularly ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and help us to become more aware of our attitudes, actions, and reactions, as well as the reasons and motives behind them. Then, with the Holy Spirit's guidance, we can change what needs to be changed so that we can live more fully in and for Christ."

And that's what the Lenten season is all about! It's about being more intentional in our spiritual practices, devoting time and energy to the process of examining the state of our spiritual lives, and asking God to show us areas where we need to grow. But it's not just for the sake of morbid introspection, navel gazing, or virtue signaling. Rather, we seek that heightened level of self-awareness in order to spur us to repentance and renewal and to move us toward greater holiness (or wholeness). As Saint Augustine prayed: "Grant, Lord, that I may know myself that I may know thee." We'll never see ourselves entirely as well as God sees us or even as others see us (which, again, is why we're not good autobiographers). But that's the journey we're on.

I look forward to seeing you in worship and in study times as we embark on this Lenten journey together. And may all of us find ways to prepare ourselves for a glorious Easter celebration.

Leadership

Session

Moderator

Rev. William McConnell

Clerk of Session

Debra South

Class of 2023

Denise Ayers

Melanie Honaker

Class of 2024

Kenny Drake

Dave Friedli

Class of 2025

Sharlyn Deterding

Debra South

Deacons

Class of 2023

Delaney Deterding

Dana Stahl

Ann Wieringa

Class of 2024

Kathy Friedli

Sherrill Konfrst

Julie Nickels

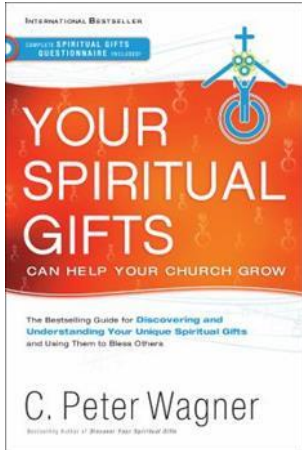
Facebook Live Services

Recently, a letter (along with a thoughtful contribution) arrived at the church from someone in West Virginia who has been watching our services online. The letter said (in part):

"I am writing to let you know how much I enjoy seeing you on Facebook [Live]. . . I have tuned in quite often either on Sunday morning "live" or on a day later in the week. . . . I was delighted with your recent Advent series taking a deeper look into contemporary Christmas movie classics. . . . Please extend my gratitude to the Murray Church leaders for placing a priority on internet /Facebook ministries. Having access to your ministry has gotten me through some tough times as I continue to transition to life in West Virginia, far from friends and family."

Praise the Lord that through the medium of technology, the ministry of Murray Presbyterian Church is extending well beyond our village and area of Nebraska and reaching people around the country and even in other parts of the world!

Adult Sunday School



The adult Sunday School class continues looking at the important topic of spiritual gifts. What gift (or gifts) have you been given to build up the body of Christ—and how can you use them most effectively? Using resources from renowned missiologist C. Peter Wagner, participants in this study have the opportunity to use an assessment tool to discover their own gifts and are exploring the 28 ministry gifts mentioned in the New Testament. The class meets in the downstairs youth room Sunday mornings at 9:00 am

Confirmation & Adult Inquirers Class



A **confirmation class** is getting underway in the next few weeks. Any high school aged young person interested in participating should talk to Rev. McConnell right away.

At the same time, an adult **Inquirer's Class** will be meeting Sunday mornings at 9:00 am.

This class will prepare people interested in joining the church by profession or reaffirmation of faith. But it is open to anyone interested in exploring basics of the Christian life, what the church is about, and what it means to be a Presbyterian. Speak with the pastor if you might be interested in participating.

Mission&Outreach Melanie Honaker, Team Leader

SENCA Food Pantry



A whole shopping cart full of non-perishable food items was just delivered to the SENCA food pantry in Plattsmouth. Thank you to everyone who has contributed! For the month of February, our theme is **pasta and sauce**. (You may want to think red tomato sauce for Valentine's Day). Than you for your support, and keep filling the cart!



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



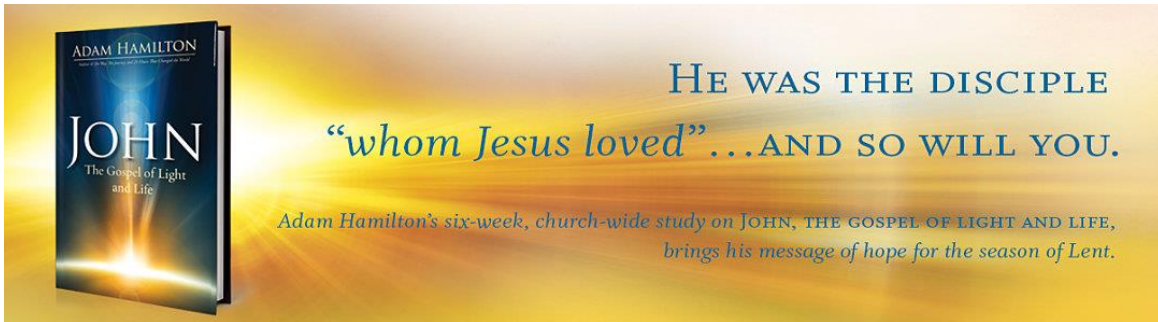
Join the Lenten Journey

Ash Wednesday



Join us on Ash Wednesday (February 22) at 7:00 pm for a worship service ushering in the season of Lent, the 40-day period of preparation leading up to Easter. There will be an opportunity to receive the mark of ashes (a traditional symbol of repentance), but this is optional. The service will also include the first part of the video-based series on the Gospel of John featuring Adam Hamilton (see below).

Wednesdays in Lent: Soup Supper & Bible Study



Our Sunday morning messages from Epiphany through Easter this year are focused on the Gospel of John. Now, during Wednesday evenings in Lent, there's an opportunity to come and explore the gospel in a little more depth and in an interactive format. Each session will begin with a short video segment, featuring best-selling author and influential pastor Adam Hamilton (United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, Kansas). Pastor Bill will then lend additional insights and lead a discussion. Come at 6:30 pm for a light meal of soup and bread. The Bible study will begin at 7:00 pm.

Take the Lenten Challenge!

To go along with the focus on John's gospel, why not take up the challenge of reading through this New Testament book during the Lenten season? There is a reading plan on the next page (also available in a pamphlet on the back table of the sanctuary). You can use your own Bible, or you are welcome to take a copy of John in the modern-language New Living Translation (also available in the back of the sanctuary). A study guide is available at: https://mbbc.org/uploads/images/project119_gospel_of_john. Other resources are being posted on the church's website (<https://www.murraypresbyterian.org/lenten-challenge/>).



Support the One Great Hour of Sharing



This year's One Great Hour of Sharing campaign kicks off at the beginning of Lent. An annual tradition in the Presbyterian Church for over 70 years now, proceeds from this special offering are divided between the Presbyterian Hunger Program (36%), Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (32%) and Self-Development of People (32%). From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, these programs all work together to help individuals and communities in need.

Take the Lenten Challenge: Gospel of John Reading Plan

Week 1

Wednesday, February 22 | John 1:1-28

Thursday, February 23 | John 1:29-51

Friday, February 24 | John 2:1-25

Week 2

Monday, February 27 | John 3:1-36

Tuesday, February 28 | John 4:1-26

Wednesday, March 1 | John 4:27-54

Thursday, March 2 | John 5:1-29

Friday, March 3 | John 5:30-47

Week 3

Monday, March 6 | John 6:1-24

Tuesday, March 7 | John 6:25-71

Wednesday, March 8 | John 7:1-53

Thursday, March 9 | John 8:1-30

Friday, March 10 | John 8:31-59

Week 4

Monday, March 13 | John 9:1-41

Tuesday, March 14 | John 10:1-42

Wednesday, March 15 | John 11:1-57

Thursday, March 16 | John 12:1-19

Friday, March 17 | John 12:20-50

Week 5

Monday, March 20 | John 13:1-20

Tuesday, March 21 | John 13:21-38

Wednesday, March 22 | John 14:1-31

Thursday, March 23 | John 15:1-17

Friday, March 24 | John 15:18-27

Week 6

Monday, March 27 | John 16:1-15

Tuesday, March 28 | John 16:16-33

Wednesday, March 29 | John 17:1-19

Thursday, March 30 | John 17:20-26

Friday, March 31 | John 18:1-40

Week 7

Monday, April 3 | John 19:1-16

Tuesday, April 4 | John 19:17-42

Wednesday, April 5 | John 20:1-18

Thursday, April 6 | John 20:19-31

Friday, April 7 | John 21:1-25

Study Guide:

https://mbbc.org/uploads/images/project119_gospel_of_john

