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# Murray Presbyterian Messenger

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January 2023



Murray Presbyterian Church

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

[www.murraypresbyterian.org](http://www.murraypresbyterian.org) Tel: (402)235-2754

Featured This Month: [A New Year Begins](#)

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**“All your life, no one will be able to hold out against you. . . I won’t give up on you; I won’t leave you. . . Haven’t I commanded you? Strength! Courage! Don’t be timid; don’t get discouraged. God, your God, is with you every step you take.”**  
(Joshua 1:5, 9 *The Message* paraphrase)

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## Upcoming Events

### Sundays

9:00 am: Adult Sunday School

10:00 am: Morning Worship

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](http://www.murraypresbyterian.org). Click on the "Give Now" button at the bottom of the homepage.

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One of the daily highlights every year at Vacation Bible School is when the students have a chance to share their "God-sightings"—moments when they've caught a glimpse of God in the midst of their day. Maybe it was in an especially beautiful sunset, or a lost puppy that was found, or an exciting family adventure. It's great that we're teaching our youngsters to be attuned to what God is up to in their world. All of should be on the look-out for "God-sightings" this year!

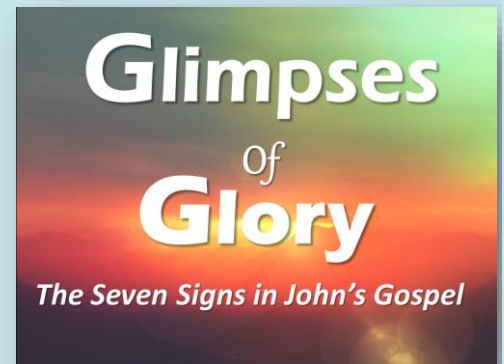
A couple of thousand years ago, folks in ancient Palestine came to believe that they had experienced the most incredible God-sighting of all. Not just a place where God acted in a dramatic way—but God himself breaking into human history to become a visible presence with us. We don't know how this realization dawned on them. In the earliest gospel writings (the so-called Synoptic gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke), there are clear intimations that this figure, Jesus of Nazareth, is in some sense divine. He receives worship and exercises divine prerogatives (like forgiving sins). What was implicit in these earlier gospel accounts becomes a full-blown assertion in John's gospel. In Jesus, this gospel writer claims, the eternally existing Word—the Father's only begotten Son, himself God—took on our humanity ("was made flesh") and took up residence in our world (John 1:14).

As a result, John says, we were able to see, observe, contemplate his glory. There's a whole ton of meaning packed into that little word "glory." In the Old Testament, it refers to God's visible splendor, the radiance of God's character. Exodus is a book that is chock full of references to God's glory. It appears as a thick cloud of fire atop a mountain in the wilderness, inaccessible and remote (Exod. 24:16-17). At one point, Moses asks to see God's glory (Exod. 33:18). All God can do is place him in the cleft of a mountain and pass by, with Moses only able to glimpse God's back (Exod. 33:21-23).

Later, the glory cloud descends from the mountain and takes up residency in the tabernacle, the tent where Israel worshiped in the wilderness (Exod. 40:34-35). When the Temple was built in Jerusalem, the same glory cloud descended and took up residence in the inner sanctuary (2 Chron. 7:1-3). Just before the city fell and the Temple was destroyed, Ezekiel saw a vision of the glory departing (Ezek. 10:3-5, 18-19). Interestingly, though the Temple was rebuilt by the returning exiles, there is no record of a glory cloud re-inhabiting it. It's almost as if God had a different plan: *the glory would be enfleshed in a person!*

That's what John says happened when Jesus appeared. In lieu of actually seeing God's glory, Moses only heard God's character verbally described: "The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and filled with gracious love and truth" (Exod. 34:6, Int'l Standard

### Upcoming Worship Opportunities Sermon Series for Sundays After Epiphany



**January 8:** "The Sign of Joy"  
(John 2:1-11)

**January 15:** "The Sign of Costly Zeal"  
(John 2:13-25)

**January 22:** "The Sign of Genuine  
Faith" (John 4:46-54)

**January 29:** "The Sign of  
Confrontation" (John 5:1-18)

**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)

Version). In the person of Jesus, *that Word became flesh*, i.e., the character of God which had been conveyed in speech came to be expressed in the form of a human life. The glory that was displayed through Jesus was, John says, “full of grace and truth,” a phrase that (according to New Testament scholar Richard Bauckham) is essentially a Greek rendering of the phrase “filled with gracious love (*he sed*) and truth (*ē met*)” found in the Hebrew text of Exodus 34:6.

In Jesus, that glory came in the form of a human life and “made his dwelling” or “took up residence” among us. The Greek is *eskēnōsen*, literally meaning to pitch a *skēnē*, a tent, which is the word customarily used for that Old Testament tabernacle. You could legitimately translate it as he “*tabernacled* among us” (the reading that’s actually found in a few translations, like the Tree of Life Version or Young’s Literal Translation). The glory cloud that resided in the Old Testament tabernacle came and was made visible in a human person.

That one verse, John 1:14, establishes the premise for the whole rest of John’s gospel. It’s with good reason that Prof. Bauckham entitled his collection of studies on John’s theology, *The Gospel of Glory*. Glory is the theme that runs throughout the book. And that glory is seen in a couple of key ways. First of all, it was displayed through a series of extraordinary deeds that John characterizes as “signs.” (John 2:11 is the programmatic text, referring to “the signs through which [Jesus] revealed his glory.” Again, the idea comes out of Exodus, where God’s glory was shown through “signs” that Moses performed, e.g., Exod. 10:1,2). But the greatest display of glory was in the Cross and in the Resurrection of Jesus. The Cross, on which Jesus experienced the depths of human degradation, was paradoxically the paramount expression of God’s glory—a visible display of that grace, love, and truth that Moses heard being verbally extolled when God’s glory passed by.

So those themes are going to be our focus for the next three months. During the Sundays after Epiphany (which celebrates Christ’s manifestation to the world) we’ll be looking at the first half of John’s gospel (chapters 2-12, sometimes called the ‘Book of Signs’) and considering how each of the seven signs depicted there reveals to us something about Jesus and about how we should respond to him. Then, during the season of Lent, we’ll be looking at the second part of the gospel (chapters 13-20, sometimes called the ‘Book of Glory’) in a series called “The Glory of the Cross.” Along the way, we’ll be challenging our whole congregation to engage with the Gospel of John and to encounter Jesus in a new way.

John is basically saying to his readers (and to us) if you want to see God, look at Jesus! So may we have lots of “God-sightings” as we explore this portion of God’s Word together!

## Leadership

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### Session

#### Moderator

Rev. William McConnell

#### Clerk of Session

Debra South

#### Class of 2022

Linnea Hill

Michael Stahl

#### Class of 2023

Denise Ayers

Melanie Honaker

#### Class of 2024

Kenny Drake

Dave Friedli

### Deacons

#### Class of 2022

Kari Drake (Treasurer)

Sherrill Konfrst

#### Class of 2023

Delaney Deterding

Dana Stahl (Moderator)

Ann Wieringa (Secretary)

### To our Murray Presbyterian Church friends,

Our family is deeply grateful for the generous gift that was presented to us on Christmas morning. We appreciate not only the gift itself—which we will use for some family getaway—but also the very kind thoughts and sentiments that we know are behind it. We look forward to another year of serving together with you in ministry.

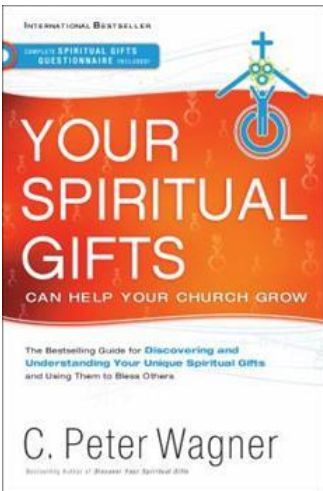
Bill, Stacey, and John

## HoopLA



The tradition of providing a safe gathering place for high schoolers after Friday night games continues with the launch of HoopLA, which takes place following basketball games.

## Adult Sunday School



The adult Sunday School class begins the new year 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 will have the opportunity to use an assessment tool to discover their own gifts and will explore the 28 ministry gifts mentioned in the New Testament. The class meets in the downstairs youth room Sunday mornings at 9:00 am

## Confirmation / New Members Preparation



A confirmation program is getting underway for high school aged young people interested in exploring what it means to profess their faith in Jesus Christ and join the church as an active member. Any young person who would like to participate should speak with the pastor right away.

Any adult who worships with us and has not officially joined the church is also encouraged to consider membership. If you would like to explore that option and take part in a process of new member preparation, please speak with the pastor.



## 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

# Mission & Outreach

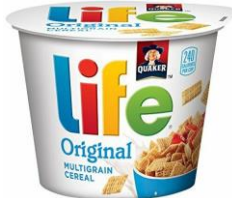
Melanie Honaker, Team Leader

## Salvation Army Bell-Ringing



Shoppers arriving at the Plattsmouth Hy-Vee on **December 10** received Christmas greetings from friendly MPC volunteers ringing bells at the Salvation Army kettle. During one shift, there was even music! Virtually all the contributions stay right here in Cass County and are distributed to families in need throughout the year by SENCA. **Thank you to everyone who volunteered!**

## Keep Filling the (SENCA) Cart!



Start the year off by helping members of some struggling families start their day off with a nutritious breakfast. Breakfast food items (non-perishable and healthy) are the theme for this month's SENCA food drive. All donations can be placed in the shopping cart in the rear of the sanctuary.

## Highway Adoption Project



Thank you to everyone who has participated in litter clean-up efforts along our adopted stretch of Highway 1. The church's commitment to preserving the beauty of this part of the thoroughfare was recently recognized with the installation of signage.

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## Annual Meeting

**Thank you to everyone who returned a pledge card for 2023!** The Lord is blessing our congregation through your generosity and commitment! The number of pledges increased and the total pledged was almost 20% more than last year! Your overwhelming response to the stewardship campaign enabled the session to adopt a budget that is much closer to being balanced than the one adopted last year.

The Session has called the annual congregational meeting for **Sunday, January 22, 2023**, immediately following morning worship in the sanctuary. This meeting is called for the purposes of receiving reports from congregational boards and committees, reviewing the year-end financial report, receiving the budget adopted by the session, considering proposed changes to the pastor's terms of call, and receiving and acting upon the report of the Nominating Committee to elect officers for the coming year. Any leadership team / committee chairperson who has not submitted a written report should do so by (preferably) sending it as a Word document to the office: [murraypresbyterian@windstream.net](mailto:murraypresbyterian@windstream.net)