
Murray Presbyterian Messenger



April 2023

Murray Presbyterian Church

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

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

Featured This Month: Holy Week



Maundy Thursday Service

Easter Sunrise

10:00 am Easter Service

(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

Apr. 6 7:00 pm: Maundy Thurs.
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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I'll never forget the Easter of 2006. I had started serving the First Presbyterian Church in Fremont, Ohio at the beginning of the year. And during the first half of that year, I conducted funerals for almost a dozen members of our congregation. One of the first was for a mom in her early 40's who had served on the PNC that brought me to Fremont. On Ash Wednesday, I placed the sign of ashes on the forehead of a middle-aged man facing surgery the next day, repeating the traditional words "Greg, remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." Following the service, the elders and I laid hands on him and prayed that the Lord would bring him through the procedure. Twenty-four hours later, I was praying over his lifeless body in a hospital operating room. In one weekend alone, I led three funerals: Saturday morning, Saturday afternoon, and Sunday afternoon.

April rolled around that year, and in the article I wrote for the church newsletter, I started by saying, "*We need Easter more than ever this year.*" As a congregation, we needed to lift up the hope of the resurrection in an especially emphatic way and reclaim the comforting conviction that death and evil do not have the final word.

The circumstances that year were rather unusual, but the statement I made in that article is one that could, with varying degrees of appropriateness, be made every single year. In 2021, some of us expressed the sentiment that Easter was especially welcome because we felt as though we had been going through Lent for all of the preceding year.

This year, we approach the celebration of Easter in the wake of yet another school shooting that took the lives of 9-year old children and a trio of school staff members. Day after day, in recent months, we've witnessed scenes of destruction in communities devastated by a near-record setting wave of deadly tornados. We need Easter as much this year as ever.

The Cross is a powerful symbol that God is never absent in the midst of tragedies and injustices. In Christ, God has borne the pain of human suffering and evil. God is not idly indifferent when terrible things happen. God has fully entered into the human experience and plunged into the depths of our brokenness.

Then, the Empty Tomb demonstrates Christ's victory over death and all that it represents. That means that we personally can have the hope of eternal life. But it means so much more. As Adam Hamilton reminded us in the recently completed video series on John's gospel, it is not any coincidence that this gospel-writer described the setting of Jesus' tomb as a garden (John 19:41) and had Mary Magdalene thinking that the Risen Christ might be the gardener (John 20:15).

Having opened his gospel with an unmistakable allusion to Genesis 1, John wants us to see that the resurrection of Jesus is nothing other than the dawn of God's *new creation*. The long-awaited restoration of Eden (Isa. 51:3, Ezek. 36:35) had begun. And implicit in that promise of the Garden of Eden restored to its pristine state is the idea that all the horrible things besetting human existence in the present world—the loss of loved ones, pandemics, atrocities, natural disasters—won't just be eradicated. They will be undone! Somehow, in God's recreated world, their effect will be reversed.

Perhaps no one has expressed that idea more powerfully than Fyodor Dostoevsky in *The Brothers Karamazov*: "I believe like a child that suffering will be healed and made up for, that all the humiliating absurdity of human contradictions will vanish like a pitiful mirage, like the despicable fabrication of the impotent and infinitely small Euclidean mind of man, that in the world's finale, at the moment of eternal harmony, something so precious will come to pass that it will suffice for all hearts, for the comforting of all resentments, for the atonement of all the crimes of humanity, of all the blood that they've shed; and it will make it not only possible to forgive but to justify what has happened." That is a sweeping, daring assertion—that in history's final denouement, every bad thing that ever happened will be "healed and made up for" as well as justified.

That's the truth that comes to us when we need it—when we need Easter—the most. I look forward to seeing you this week as we journey to the Cross and then celebrate the resurrection victory.

Litter Clean-Up—And an Unexpected Blessing!



A small, but resolute, crew of church members fanned out along our adopted stretch of Hwy. 1 on March 25 and cleaned up litter. And in the process, they helped reunite an area student with a prized possession! One of the more unusual items found that day was a Kindle—still in working condition (above right). Our clean-up coordinator, **Dana Stahl**, posted the find on social media and offered to return the device if someone could verify it belonged to them by providing the password. And, amazingly, the notice generated a response! The Kindle belongs to a special needs student in our area, and she was highly distraught last November when it evidently was left on top of the family vehicle and lost. Her father contacted Dana, provided the right password, and was immensely relieved to be able to retrieve this treasured possession of his daughter. He even insisted on giving the church a small monetary donation as an expression of appreciation. How amazing that this device survived all the weather elements and that it was able to be reunited with its owner!

One Great Hour of Sharing



The annual **One Great Hour of Sharing** offering will be collected through Easter. Proceeds are divided between Presbyterian Hunger Program (36%), Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (32%) and Self-Development of People (32%).

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

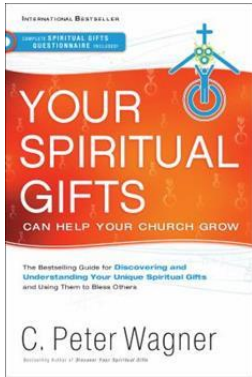
Class of 2023

Delaney Deterding
Dana Stahl
Ann Wieringa

Class of 2024

Kathy Friedli
Sherrill Konfrst
Julie Nickels

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 Sunday mornings at 9:00 am

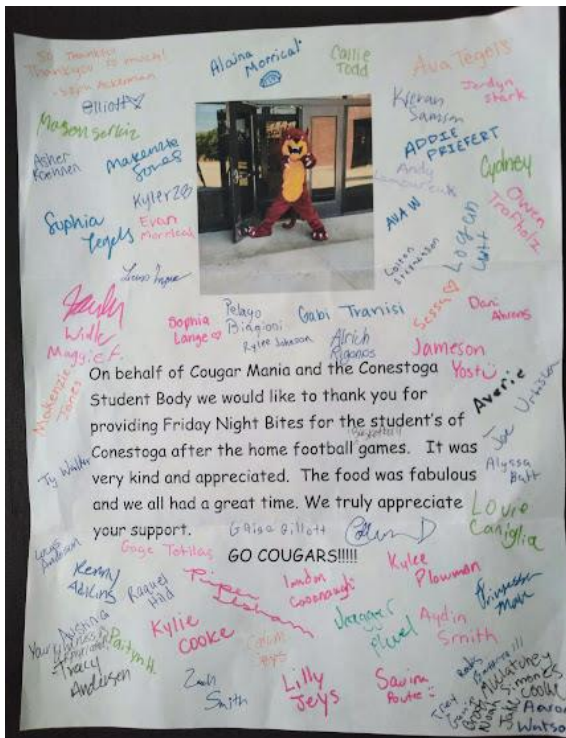
Confirmation & Adult Inquirers Class



A **confirmation class** for high school students is now underway.

An adult **Inquirer's Class** will meet a couple more Sundays to talk about what it means to be a church member, our worship practices, and distinctives of the Presbyterian Church. The class is designed for people interested in joining the church, but anyone is welcome to participate.

Friday Nite Bites / HoopLA



This acknowledgement was recently received by the church from students at Conestoga Jr/Sr High School expressing appreciation for the hospitality provided after football and basketball games played at home. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this effort in any way!



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

Upcoming Special Worship Opportunities

Maundy Thursday



The Upper Room is prepared and ready to receive worshipers **Thursday, April 6, at 7:00 pm**. Entitled “**The Days Between,**” this year’s service will use Scripture, prayers, poetry, and music to trace the steps of Jesus through the last week of his earthly life. As has been done in some previous years, the service will culminate in communion being served around table in a setting reminiscent of the Upper Room in Jerusalem. Please consider making this special and meaningful service a part of your Holy Week observance this year.

Easter Sunday (April 9)

Easter begins with a **6:30 am Sunrise Service** at Lewiston Cemetery. To reach the cemetery, travel two miles south of the Murray corners on Hwy 75, then turn left onto Kenosha Road and go 1 mile. Bring a lawn chair. Hot beverages and baked goods will be served.

Then, be sure to join us at **10:00 am** in the sanctuary for our **Easter Sunday worship celebration**. Our trek through John’s gospel continues with a message from John 20 entitled “The Personal Nature of the Resurrection.” There will be a special fellowship time after the service hosted by the deacons.



Graduate Recognition Sunday (April 30)



Join us for a special worship service on April 30 as we honor high school graduates from families in our congregation. The recognition will continue at a reception following the service. Let’s celebrate this milestone with our graduates and send them onto the next chapter in life with our prayers and blessings!

Special Guest Preacher

Looking ahead to next month, make plans to be in worship on **May 6** as we welcome **Craig Huffman** back to the pulpit of Murray Presbyterian Church. Craig is the Executive Director of Calvin Crest Camp, Conference and Retreat Center in Fremont, Nebraska and a longtime friend of our congregation. Countless generations of young people from Murray Presbyterian have made summer memories and enjoyed spiritual mountaintop experiences at Calvin Crest, our local Presbyterian camp and one of our church’s valued mission partners.

