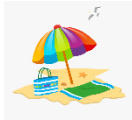

Murray Presbyterian Messenger



June 2023



Murray Presbyterian Church

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

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

Featured This Month: Picnic in the Park



Sunday, June 25, 4:00 – 6:00 pm at Tyson Park
Potluck Picnic (Hot Dogs/ Brats provided)
Come Enjoy the Fellowship and Meet Our Neighbors
See page 4 for Details

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. Click on the "Give Now" button at the bottom of the homepage.

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I have to admit, I laughed the first time I ever saw the Presbyterian Church's "Brief Statement of Faith." I knew a process had been underway to produce such a document. It all started 40 years ago this summer with the merger (on June 10, 1983) of the northern and southern branches of Presbyterianism to form today's Presbyterian Church (USA). The "Plan of Union" called for the creation of a committee representing diverse viewpoints within the reunited church to prepare a "Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith" for possible inclusion in our Book of Confessions.

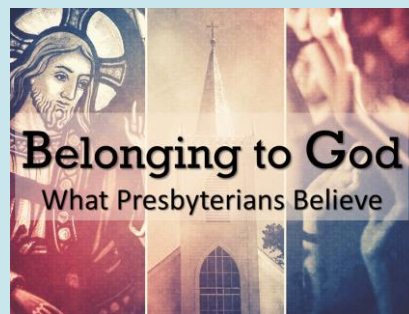
This committee was appointed by the moderator of the first General Assembly following the merger, and it spent five years holding hearings, gathering input, and formulating a draft document.

Finally, in 1990, it was ready to be presented to the General Assembly for approval. At the time, I belonged to a large suburban congregation in northern New Jersey, and I chaired the Denominational Affairs Committee. Since it was a congregation with a strongly evangelical character, folks tended to be skeptical of *anything* coming out of the higher governing bodies of our denomination. And although I wasn't quite as cynical as most of my fellow parishioners, I couldn't resist the impulse to poke fun at what I saw as yet *another* indication of our denomination's growing theological vacuity.

I pointed out that the Westminster Confession of Faith, for centuries the definitive expression of Presbyterian belief, takes up fifty pages in our Book of Confessions (125 pages, with the catechisms and proof texts). The Confession of 1967, which until then had been the most recent addition to the Book of Confessions, boiled our beliefs down to 10 pages. With the Brief Statement, I chortled, it dropped to two pages—and *it's a poem!* Pretty soon, I continued, you'll be able to fit everything Presbyterians believe onto a scrap of paper the size of a postage stamp!

I now realize ***I was flat-out wrong! Mea culpa!*** The first thing I misunderstood at the time was that the "Brief Statement" *supplemented but did not replace* our existing confessional standards. The Westminster Confession and the Confession of 1967 are still there, and they still serve as authoritative expressions of what we are to believe and to do.

Upcoming
Worship Opportunities
Summer Sermon Series



Join us this summer as delve into the all-important subject of what we believe—as Christians, and, more specifically, as Presbyterians within the Reformed tradition. We'll be using as our framework for this series the newest document in our Presbyterian Book of Confessions, the "Brief Statement of Faith," adopted in 1991.

- May 28:** "In Life and in Death We Belong to God"
- June 4:** "We Trust in the One Triune God"
- June 11:** Guest Preacher
- June 18:** Guest Preacher
- June 25:** "We Trust in Jesus Christ, Fully Human, Fully God"
- July 2:** "Jesus Proclaimed the Reign of God"
- July 9:** "Giving His Life"
- July 16:** "Vindicating. . . Breaking. . . Delivering"
- July 23:** "Abba, Father"
- July 30:** "But We Rebel"
- Aug. 6:** "Yet God. . ."
- Aug. 13:** "The Holy Spirit, Everywhere the Giver and Renewer of Life"
- Aug. 20:** "The Spirit. . . Sets Us Free"
- Aug. 27:** "The Spirit. . . Rules Our Faith and Life"
- Sept. 3:** "The Spirit Gives Us Courage in a Broken and Fallen World"

As Presbyterians, we have a nuanced understanding of doctrinal statements. We refer to them as “subordinate standards,” subject to the authority of Christ and of God’s written word, the Bible. We recognize that all of them have been conditioned by the historical context in which they were written, and that they invariably reflect the issues and controversies that were prevalent at the time. However (in the words of our Book of Order), “they are, nonetheless, standards.” “They are not lightly drawn up. . . nor may they be ignored or dismissed.” All of us who are ordained officeholders (teaching elders, ruling elders, and deacons) have affirmed that we “sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in [our] confessions” and we have promised to “be instructed and led by those confessions as [we] lead the people of God.”

Our Book of Confessions now contains twelve doctrinal statements, starting with the creeds of the early church, continuing through the Reformation-era confessions, and also including a handful of twentieth century pronouncements. All of them have their own distinguishing features. We appreciate the Apostles Creed and Nicene Creed for their catholicity (i.e., universal acceptance and use.) The Westminster Standards are unsurpassed for their precision and exactitude. The Heidelberg Catechism has a warm, personal feel to it. The Confession of ‘67 speaks powerfully to the social issues of the modern age—including racism, poverty, sexual anarchy, and religious pluralism.

The Brief Statement is noteworthy for the way it incorporates other contemporary concerns, like gender equality and care for creation. It also is highly suitable for use in public worship. As a pastor / worship leader, I have come to appreciate the poetic form that I initially made fun of. Over the years, I have sometimes tried to use other confessional statements in worship—like one of our catechisms or the Confession of ‘67. It’s doable, but they aren’t really written with the kind of rhythm and cadence that lends itself to unison reading. The Brief Statement was deliberately designed with that purpose in mind. That’s the second thing I misunderstood when I first saw it!

It is, in fact, the very brevity and structure of the Brief Statement that makes it so useful as the basis for a series of sermons. (Our Dutch Reformed friends regularly preach through the Heidelberg Catechism, but it’s generally done in Sunday evening services—and it takes a whole year!) That’s what we’ll be doing this summer. We will be working our way, almost sentence by sentence, through this synopsis of our Reformed faith. And we’ll be affirming our faith in worship, using the corresponding section of the statement. In fact, by the end of the summer (if you’re here regularly), you’ll probably have portions of it memorized!

I hope you’ll join us in worship (whenever you are in town) and at other events mentioned in this newsletter. May this be a season of physical, mental, and spiritual refreshment for all of us!

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

Welcome New Members



Pentecost was a special day of celebration this year as we received folks who have been worshiping with us regularly into the active membership roll of the church.

Tanner Miner and **Meagan Hulsey** joined on profession of faith. For Tanner, it has been a homecoming back to the church where he grew up. For Meagan, the granddaughter of a pastor, it has been a return to her Christian roots. It was also a delight to baptize Tanner and Meagan's children: **Whitley Rae Miner** and **Tanner Lee Miner, Jr.**

Mary Chen joined on reaffirmation of faith, having previously been a member of a Lutheran church in Omaha. Mary and her husband **Mike Luft** recently moved to a property outside Murray and were introduced to our congregation through the Community Picnics at Tyson Park

Upcoming Guest Preachers



June 11: Elder Linda Reffert

A long-time Christian educator in our presbytery, Linda started teaching Sunday School as a newlywed forty years ago—and she is still at it! Along the way, she has taught every age group (children through adults), led confirmation classes, and served as the Christian Education Director for Hope Presbyterian in Omaha and as the Children's Director at First Presbyterian in Bellevue. She's also chaired our presbytery's Faith Education and Leadership Development team. At present, she co-leads the Adult Class at Bellevue First (with the pastor) and co-chairs the Mission Committee. She is also halfway through the course requirements to become a certified ruling elder (lay pastor or preacher).

June 18: Elder and Stated Clerk Pat Shipley

Pat is a life-long member of First Presbyterian Church in Villisca, Iowa, where she serves as a ruling elder. Her professional career was devoted to public education, first as a school teacher and then as public education employee advocate with the Iowa State Education Association. She has chaired our presbytery's Commission on Ministry. In 2018, she was elected stated clerk of the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley, currently the only administrative position on the presbytery staff.

Please make every effort to be in worship on these Sundays, to extend our congregation's customary warm welcome to our distinguished guests, and to receive the word the Lord will deliver through them!



Vacation Bible School



Kids pre-school age to grade 6 will have a chance to go on a cosmic adventure this summer as they explore space and learn how to shine Jesus' light in the world! Stellar VBS (a joint ministry with

Murray Christian Church) takes place in our building Monday July 10 through Thursday July 13. Every evening begins with a light supper at 6:00 pm to which VBS students and their families are invited. The program runs from 6:30 – 8:30 pm. There are volunteer opportunities for kitchen help, Bible story teachers, a games leader, crafts leader and group leaders. To volunteer or to register a child, go to www.myvbs.org/Murray2023VBS.

Mission & Outreach *Melanie Honaker, Team Leader*

Community Picnic in the Park



The tradition of community picnics in Tyson Park continues this summer with an event scheduled for Sunday, **June 25, 4-6 pm**. There will be potluck meal, with hotdogs and brats provided by the church. You should bring a dish to share and a chair to sit on. There will also be an opportunity to donate

non-perishable grocery items to the SENCA food pantry. Plus, enter your name for a free drawing to win a campfire themed basket. Join us for fun and fellowship and an opportunity to meet neighbors in our community.

Nicaragua Partnership



Our presbytery's Nicaragua Partnership Working Group (which includes our own Ann Wieringa) is sponsoring a **spaghetti dinner fundraiser** at Hope Presbyterian (5220 S. 159th Ave., Omaha) on **June 10, 5-7 pm**. The free will offering will help defray the

cost of bringing a delegation from our partner churches to Nebraska this fall. **One of those visiting pastors will be preaching at Murray Presbyterian on September 10!**

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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