
Murray Presbyterian Messenger

October 2023



Murray Presbyterian Church

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

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

Featured This Month: World Communion Sunday



World Communion Sunday
October 1, 2023

Special Guest Preacher
Rev. Deena Candler,
West Hills Church (retired) and
the Outreach Foundation
See page 6 for more information

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



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

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The year was 1933. America was in the throes of the Great Depression. Franklin Roosevelt had just been sworn in as president and the New Deal was getting underway. At the same time, Hitler was coming to power in Germany and laying the groundwork for his genocidal campaign.

And on October 1—exactly 90 years ago this coming Sunday—Rev. Dr. Hugh Thompson Kerr stood behind the communion table at the Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh and instituted the tradition now known as World Communion Sunday. (When we lived in Western Pennsylvania, our family sometimes worshipped at Shadyside, and I have stood on that spot in the chancel area, now marked by a plaque [shown below].)

Dr. Kerr had recently served as Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly (1930-31) and through his extensive travels that year he sensed a need to bring the church together. According to Shadyside's church historian, he also "was concerned about totalitarianism and the need for the church worldwide to take a stand against it."

So, working with the congregation's Division of Stewardship, Dr. Kerr came up with the idea of inviting other churches to observe communion concurrently on the first Sunday in October as a demonstration of their unity in Christ. At first, the participating churches were neighboring ones in that part of Pittsburgh. By 1936, the practice had been endorsed by the Presbyterian General Assembly. And in 1940, the Department of Evangelism of the Federal Council of Church (now called the National Council of Churches) started promoting the idea of extending the celebration to churches around the world.

The concept spread slowly at first. But according to Dr. Kerr's son (who also became a Presbyterian minister): "It was during the second world war that the spirit caught hold, because we were trying to hold the world together. World Wide Communion symbolized the effort to hold things together in a spiritual sense."



Upcoming Worship Opportunities Fall Sermon Series



This fall, we go back to the beginning of everything. We'll be looking at stories of creation and the origins of the human race in Genesis 1-3. We'll be exploring God's original design for humanity, how the fall interrupted that design, and what God started doing to restore our broken world. And along the way, we'll also be discovering the basic outlines of a "biblical worldview"—the overall understanding of God, humanity, the world around us, and the meaning of life that is laid out in the Bible.

Sept 17: "The Starting Point for Everything"
(Genesis 1:1-5)

Sept 24: "From Chaos to Cosmos"
(Genesis 1:3-2:3)

Oct 1: Rev. Deena Candler

Oct. 8: "Gloriously Human"
(Genesis 1:26-27)

Oct. 15: "The Cultural Mandate"
(Genesis 1:28-31)

Oct. 22: "The Whole Person"
(Genesis 2:1-7)

Oct. 29: "Work and Worship"
(Genesis 2:8-17)

Nov. 5: "The Meaning of Marriage"
(Genesis 2:18-25)

Nov. 12: "Flawed Humanity"
(Genesis 3:1-7)

Nov. 19: "Paradise Lost"
(Genesis 3: 16-24)

Needless to say, that symbolism is every bit as important today as it was ninety years ago. If anything, the church in our country is even *more* divided than it was in 1933. Our brothers and sisters in the fast-growing segment of independent “start-up” churches have often pioneered innovative ministry strategies that help the church reach new people. But such churches don’t always nurture a sense of connection and accountability beyond themselves. Not surprising, they mostly won’t be celebrating World Communion Sunday! We’re also hearing a lot these days about the rise of “Christian nationalism,” a movement that (at least in some forms) conflates Christian faith with jingoistic attitudes about America. How we need the reminder that Christians are part of a world-wide community of faith that transcends the claims and interests of any nation-state!

Whether we’re aware of it or not, Christianity is rapidly extending its global reach. At the beginning of the twentieth century (not long before World Communion Sunday was introduced), 82% of the world’s Christians lived in Europe and North America. Today, that figure is 33%, with the other 67% of Christians living in the global South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America). Africa is now the continent with the largest number of Christians.

What does that mean for us as we gather around the Lord’s Table, heeding the Apostle Paul’s warning against failing to “discern the body” of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:29)? Prof. Tom Wright says: “The ‘body’ which is to be recognized is *both* the presence of the Lord in the eucharistic elements *and* the unity of the church that shares the bread. The two belong together.”

Recognizing that we share one bread and one cup with brothers and sisters around the world involves “weeping with those who weep” as well as “rejoicing with those who rejoice” (Romans 12:15). It means that, on some level, we should share the pain of our Christian brothers and sisters facing repression in Nicaragua. And as we do so, we should own up to the reality that our country’s interference in that country’s internal affairs is at least one factor contributing to the suffering there. We enter into the suffering of our South Sudanese Presbyterian brothers and sisters in refugee camps, and with suffering Christians everywhere.

But we also rejoice with those who are rejoicing. As we look around at empty pews in our sanctuaries and bemoan our declining numbers and influence, we rejoice at the way the Lord is swelling the ranks of churches in the developing world. We rejoice with our brothers and sisters in Malawi, where out of a population of 18 million, two or three million are Presbyterians (a lot more than there are in the United States). Each of the three synods there is planting (on average) seven new churches a year and churches routinely have a thousand or more members. As members of one body, we share the joy of these exciting developments.

I hope you’ll be in worship for this year’s very special observance of World Communion Sunday! And I hope you will connect with other opportunities for worship and service taking place in coming weeks.

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

Vacation

Rev. McConnell will be on vacation from September 30 to October 6.

Any pastoral care needs during this time should be directed to Elder Denise Ayers, the session member on call.

Friday Nite Bites



Friday Nite Bites continued in September, with a record-high attendance after the Homecoming Game. Murray Presbyterian provides a safe environment for students to gather after home football games and serves complimentary refreshments. This ministry has been made possible by generous donations and dedicated volunteers.

See You At the Pole



As they do every year on the fourth Wednesday in September, students at Conestoga High School gathered around the flagpole to pray for their school, fellow students, and staff. Volunteers from Murray Presbyterian and One Life Church served donuts and hot chocolate.



Leadership Teams

Worship and Family Life

Sharlyn Deterding, *Team Leader*
Deb South, *Session Rep.*
Linnea Hill
Sherrill Konfrst
Laraine Young

Mission and Outreach

Melanie Honaker, *Team Leader*
George Collins
Sydney Honaker
John McConnell
Stacey McConnell
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*
Sharlyn Deterding, *Session Rep.*
Dave Friedli
Norm Koester
Gary Reike

Nicaragua Partners Visit



For seven days in September, representatives of our presbytery's partner churches in La Concepción, Nicaragua were visiting our area. Activities one day included picking apples at Dana and Michael Stahl's house and making apple pie in the church kitchen (above, lower left). On September 10, we were honored to have **Harold Blandón**, staff member at the Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua (CEPAD), preach in our Sunday morning service. Pictures from that service and a video of Harold's sermon are now being disseminated in Nicaragua through CEPAD's Facebook page!

A Reunion



It's been six years since they had a brief encounter at a youth event the last time a Nicaraguan delegation visited our presbytery. But Pastor Denis Castillo and John McConnell remembered one another. Pastor Denis, who practiced law before entering the ministry, enjoyed learning of John's interest in that field. And with an interpreter being available this time, John was *finally* able to thank Denis for stepping in to hold up his arms after they became tired during a 'human sculpture' activity.

Save the Date!



Coming up on **Sunday, November 12**, the Fall outreach event will be **Bingo, Books, and Soup**. There will be a soup supper from 4:00-5:00 pm, followed by Books for Bingo from 5:00-6:30.

Be on the look-out for sign-up sheets for people to bring crock-pots of soup. There will also be a container to receive donations of books (for all ages).

Everyone from our congregation as well as neighbors from our community are encouraged to come out for this free event!

Mission & Outreach (Cont'd)

Other Upcoming Outreach Events

Litter Clean-Up: There will be a litter clean-up of our adopted section of Highway 1 on **Sunday, October 1**. Volunteers should meet at Conestoga High School at noon.

Trunk or Treat: The Mission and Outreach Team will once again be sponsoring a station at Beaver Lake's Trunk or Treat event on **Sunday, October 29**.

Worship & Family Life

Sharlyn Deterding, Team Lead

World Communion Sunday (October 1)



This year promises to be a very special World Communion Sunday celebration as we are led in worship by the **Rev. Deena Candler**. Rev. Candler retired in 2019 after 39 years of ordained ministry in the Presbyterian Church. For the last 22 of those years, she served at West Hills Church in Omaha as Associate Pastor for Caregiving Ministry and, at the end of her tenure, as interim pastor.

There's no better person to come and share insights about the global church on this Sunday of the year! In addition to being a veteran of some 20 domestic mission trips, she has also travelled ten times with groups from the Outreach Foundation to visit partner churches in the Holy Land, Egypt, Mexico, and Cuba. (In the photo at left, she is

preaching at the El Adaima church in Egypt.) For the past three years, she has been a trustee of Outreach Foundation, one of our premier Presbyterian-related mission organizations. For World Communion Sunday, Rev. Candler will be bringing a message from the well-known Lord's Supper passage in 1 Corinthians 11 entitled "You Are Cordially Invited. . ."

Then, be sure to stay following worship for a special fellowship hour, featuring 'breads and spreads' from around the world!

Property & Finance

Kenny Drake, Team Lead



A potential hazard was rectified this past month when a crumbling portion of the sidewalk alongside the parking lot was replaced. Thank you to Kenny for tackling this project! The parking lot has also been sprayed for weeds and re-graded.