

Murray Presbyterian Messenger



September 2023



Murray Presbyterian Church

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

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

Featured This Month: Nicaragua Sunday

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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Sunday, September 10 10:00 am
Special Guest Preacher: Harold Blandon
(Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua)
See p. 5 for more information

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As you've probably noticed, a lot of the battles ripping apart the fabric of our society are rooted in different origin stories. When I was an elementary school student--many, many eons ago--we learned that our nation (and, more specifically, my native commonwealth of Pennsylvania) was founded by god-fearing people fleeing religious persecution in Europe and looking for a place to practice their faith freely. But to hear proponents of the 1619 Project tell the story, our nation was founded to be a bastion of white supremacy, inextricably enmeshed in the practice of chattel slavery. What about Christopher Columbus? Was he a daring adventurer who discovered a New World—or a bloodthirsty villain who enslaved native peoples? How we tell our tale of origins reflects how we see ourselves.

That's why genealogical research is so popular. It doesn't just satisfy an element of curiosity (although that's involved). It also tells us who we are. It helps form our identity. As a young adult making my way into the Presbyterian Church, I was rather tickled to learn that two of my four grandparents came from a long line of Scots Irish Presbyterians—probably extending all the way back to John Knox. On my mother's side, I'm descended from a long line of Irwins, who worshiped at the Loughgall Presbyterian Church, a congregation that continues to be a solid pillar of Reformed evangelical orthodoxy in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. So, I feel as though I am carrying on the legacy of my ancestors. Our family origins help explain who we are.

It's been the same way going all the way back to ancient times. According to the prevailing view among modern biblical scholars, our Old Testament book of Genesis



was taking shape during the Jewish exile in Babylon. (And, it should be noted, even commentators who adhere to the traditional view of Mosaic authorship still emphasize the way in which the text addresses the condition of the exiles.) If this scholarly consensus is correct, then the Genesis stories were being formulated against the backdrop of the most traumatic upheaval imaginable. People had been uprooted from their homeland, ripped away from everything

familiar and deposited in the middle of a pagan environment antithetical to all their beliefs and values.

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 1-4. 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 Creation"
(Genesis 1:3-2:3)

How do you maintain your separate identity in the midst of such a hostile culture? How do you pass along your traditions and keep your offspring from assimilating? Among other things, you do it by establishing your own origin stories and using them to reinforce a sense of who you are. The Babylonians had their creation myth, and it very much reflected the values of their civilization. The Hebrew creation epic found in the first chapter of Genesis contains similar images and terminology. But that is not because the biblical writers plagiarized parts of the Babylonian story. It's because the biblical text was deliberately designed to be a polemic against the Babylonian belief system! Similar terminology was used in order to debunk the values of the surrounding pagan culture.

Notwithstanding important differences, it's fair to say that Christian believers in the West today increasingly find themselves in a situation not unlike that of the ancient Hebrew exiles. Our culture retains vestiges of a Christian heritage, but those elements are being eclipsed by modern secular values (often reflecting the ideas of scientific materialism and classical paganism). That's what makes it so imperative for us to go back and recover our biblical story of origins and show how it forms the basis for a distinctive worldview.

The late Christian philosopher David K. Naugle stated that "*Conceiving of Christianity as a 'worldview' has been one of the most significant events in the church in the last 150 years.*" Generations of students (and other serious readers) were introduced to the idea of a Christian worldview through the writing and speaking ministry of Jim Sire, longtime editor of InterVarsity Press and author of *The Universe Next Door: A Basic World View Catalog*. (I met Jim when Drew University's InterVarsity chapter hosted him for a campus event.) As he explained the concept in an opening chapter to his book, a worldview will answer seven basic questions: (1) What is prime reality—the really real? (2) What is the nature of external reality, that is, the world around us? (3) What is a human being? (4) What happens to a person at death? (5) Why is it possible to know anything at all? (6) How do we know what is right and what is wrong? (7) What is the meaning of human history?

Obviously, addressing all these topics in a comprehensive way would be an ambitious undertaking. But anyone familiar with the Bible would recognize that the early chapters of Genesis lay the foundation for a biblical response to those worldview questions. So, during the next few months, we're going to be embarking on an overview of Genesis 1-4, identifying some elements of a biblical worldview, and hopefully demonstrating why it's important for us today. I hope you'll join us for this important series!

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

Rally Day



A new year of Sunday School kicks off on **September 17!** Activities for the day will be based on the Stellar VBS theme and include some of the favorite songs from that week. Following worship there will be a hot dog cook-out for the fellowship hour. Students are dismissed for Sunday School near the beginning of the 10 am worship service.

Friday Nite Bites



With the start of another school year, Friday Nite Bites is back! After every home football game at Cougar Stadium, high school aged players and fans are invited to gather at the church building and enjoy refreshments together. The first event on August 25 attracted 55 or more students.



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

Nicaragua Sunday



Be sure to join us on **September 10** as we celebrate our presbytery's partnership with a group of churches in La Concepción, Nicaragua and welcome **Harold Blandón** as our guest preacher. Harold is visiting our area with Denis and Violeta, a husband-and-wife ministry team from La Concepción.

Since 2007, Harold has served on the staff of CEPAD (the Council of Protestant Churches of Nicaragua). As the Assistant Development Director, he is responsible for coordinating delegations to and from the United States and overseeing partnerships like the one our presbytery participates in. He is married to Jackeline Diaz Hernandez, and they have a 3 year old daughter, Isabella Blandón Diaz.

Over the past several years, the Nicaragua partnership has become an important mission cause for our congregation. Ann Wieringa and Dana Stahl serve on the presbytery working group for this relationship, and we have held fund-raisers to benefit the school uniform project. We were honored to be one of three churches in our presbytery selected to host guest preachers from the visiting delegation on this Sunday. So we want to come out and extend an enthusiastic welcome to Harold, demonstrate our on-going support of this partnership, and receive a blessing from what he has to share with us.

Also, on Tuesday, September 12, Denis and Violeta will be making a presentation about the ministry in La Concepción at Hope Presbyterian Church in Omaha. The program begins with a meal at 5:30 pm.

World Communion Sunday

Looking ahead to next month, we are honored to have the **Rev. Deena Candler** coming to fill our pulpit on **October 1**, World Communion Sunday. Rev. Candler is someone with a strong connection to the global church. She has been a part of ten different trips with the Outreach Foundation visiting partner churches in the Holy Land, Egypt, Mexico, and Cuba. For the past three years, she has been on the Foundation's Board of Trustees. She recently retired after 39 years of ordained ministry in the Presbyterian Church, the last 22 of which were spent on the pastoral staff of West Hills Church in Omaha. So, this promises to be a very special World Communion Sunday celebration that you won't want to miss!



Keep Filling the SENCA Cart



Thank you to everyone who has been contributing non-perishable food items to the grocery cart in the rear of the sanctuary. An entire cart-load of food was delivered to the SENCA food pantry in August! This month's theme is pasta. You're encouraged to donate boxes of pasta—or any non-perishable items—as we continue helping to serve community members in need.