
Murray Presbyterian Messenger



November 2023



Murray Presbyterian Church

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

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

Featured This Month: Fall Outreach Event

Bingo, Books, and Soup
A FREE
Fall Community Outreach Event
Sunday, November 12
4:00 - 5:00 pm Soup Dinner
5:00 - 6:30 pm: Bingo! (with book prizes)

Invite Friends and Neighbors!

Sign up to bring soup!

Donate used books!

Come to the Event and Welcome Guests!

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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Like so many of you, I woke up on the morning of October 7 to the devastating news of the Hamas attack on Israel and the outbreak of war. It's the latest round in an endless cycle of bloody conflict that has continued throughout Israel's history. And, unfortunately, those of us with a strong religious mindset are often not well-suited to grapple with the complexities of an issue like this one. As people of faith, we're naturally prone to see things in absolutist terms, as a stark contrast between good versus evil. We want to know who the 'good guys' and 'bad guys' are so we can be on the right side.

For a lot of conservative evangelical folks—whose view of the Bible is often shaped by the theology of dispensationalism (popularized in end-times scenarios like the Left Behind series)—it's all quite simple. The Jews are God's chosen people. God promises to bless those who show favor to them (Genesis 12:3)—and that's interpreted to mean giving uncritical support to the modern nation-state of Israel. God has given the entire land of historic Palestine to the Jewish people and so everyone else should just get out!

At the same time, mainline Protestant denominations (like the PCUSA) tend to track very closely with the socio-political agenda of the secular left and to be influenced by a Marxist-inspired brand of 'liberationist' theology. So, every issue gets filtered through the prism of the oppressed and the oppressors. In the case of Israel, the Zionists are considered neo-colonial oppressors, the Palestinian Arabs are the oppressed people group. That means that our denomination takes a fairly pro-Palestinian stance. Our own presbytery has periodically sponsored forums that dish out one-sided, misleading information from this perspective.

Neither approach, in my estimation, represents a responsible Christian position. There's a reason even some of leading luminaries of American diplomacy—Henry Kissinger, Jimmy Carter, James Baker, and others—have been unable to resolve the conflict in the Middle East. The issues seem to be intractable. There are competing claims and counterclaims, and a long litany of mutual grievances, provocations, recriminations, and missed opportunities.

There's no question that Palestinian Arabs have experienced mistreatment—by Israelis and residents of their settlements as well as by fellow Arabs. Conditions in Gaza, especially, are deplorable. The Gaza strip has almost the exact same number of square miles as the city of Omaha. Yet it has a population of over two million. If you think Omaha is a densely populated city, imagine more than *quadrupling* the number of people living there. It would be like the entire population of Nebraska—and then some—being packed into the Omaha city limits. Add to that the blockade, high rates of unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity, and it makes for intolerable conditions—a situation, it's important to point out, for which Israel is not entirely to blame.

Upcoming Worship Opportunities Fall Sermon Series



This month, we conclude a series looking at stories of creation and the origins of the human race in Genesis 1-3. We're exploring God's original design for humanity and laying out the basic outlines of a "biblical worldview"—the overall understanding of God, humanity, the world around us.

- 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)
- Nov. 26:** Rev. Bob Keefer

But none of this in any way justifies the horrific atrocities carried out by Hamas: gunning down young revelers at a dance festival in the desert, torturing kibbutz residents and burning them alive, kidnapping people, including little children and the elderly. People cheering on actions like these or attempting to excuse them are morally repugnant. Hamas is a terrorist group whose charter calls for the creation of an Islamic state encompassing the whole of Israel/Palestine. No nation-state in Israel's position could refrain from eliminating a threat like this.

The important thing to bear in mind is that it's possible—indeed, in this case, morally obligatory—to hold competing considerations in tension. We should share in the outrage and horror of Israeli citizens and understand their quest to protect their security interests. We should also grieve over the plight of innocent Palestinian Arabs living in Gaza—through no choice of their own—who are now bearing the heavy brunt of the Israeli response. Some of them (a shrinking minority) are Christian brothers and sisters. Although I can't always accept their analysis of the socio-political realities, I try to be attentive to what fellow believers in institutions like Bethlehem Bible College (on the occupied West Bank) are saying and I understand their pain. It's especially distressing to hear them express their sense of abandonment by fellow evangelicals in the US who are so unrestrained in their support for Israel. Within the past few weeks, an Israeli airstrike caused the collapse of an annex building at Gaza's Greek Orthodox Church of St. Porphyrius, said to be the third oldest church in the world. People taking shelter in the sacred precincts of their church building lost their lives. One parishioner told a reporter: "We were baptized here, and we will die here." Former Rep. Justin Amash (R-Mich) shared photos of his family members killed at the site, and he pointed out that they were devout Christians, in no way affiliated with terrorism.

The ancient Jewish rabbis came up with a style of commentary on the biblical text called midrash—essentially a pious embellishment of the storyline. One such midrash describes the angels in heaven breaking out in celebration after the Egyptian army was drowned in the Red Sea. Then, they noticed that God was not joining in the celebration. In fact, he was weeping. "Lord," one of the angels said. "Aren't You happy? You saved Your people." The Lord replied, "But did you see how many of My people I had to kill?"

My theology—unlike that of my dispensationalist friends—is not dependent on the continual existence of the Jewish people as an identifiable ethnic group. However, the witness of history leads me to believe that God still has some kind of plan and purpose for his people of the older covenant. If that's the case, it's possible that the modern nation-state of Israel and the steps that are needed to safeguard its existence work into that plan. But I also have to believe that God weeps over the suffering that is coming upon both the citizens of Israel as well as their Palestinian neighbors. We should respond in the same way. Shalom / Salaam

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

Thank You!

Our family is once again both deeply grateful and taken aback by the generosity of your Pastor Appreciation gift. Thank you for such a meaningful expression of affection and support. As always, we will set the gift aside for special family excursions. We are blessed to serve here!

In Christ's Love,

Bill, Stacey, and John

Guest Preacher



Once again, we are honored to have the **Rev. Dr. Bob Keefer** filling our pulpit on **November 26**. Bob retired in 2022 after nine years as pastor of Presbyterian Church of the Master in Omaha. Prior to that, he served congregations in Arizona; Cincinnati, OH; and Clarinda, Iowa. He has also been stated clerk of three presbyteries

(including our own), an adjunct professor at Northwest Missouri State University, and a member of our presbytery's Nicaragua Partnership Working Group. And he has appeared regularly in community theater productions! Bob is an incredibly gifted preacher, so, if at all possible, you will want to be in worship that Sunday to welcome him and receive the word he brings.

Save the Date!

**Scatter Joy
Acres**

Come and Experience the true spirit of Christmas
Drive Thru Live Nativity & Santa's Wonderland
4107 Waverly Rd, Murray, NE 68409
December 16th, 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm
Free Will Donation

Members of our congregation will be meeting at the church to car-pool to this special holiday event. Following the outing, there will be cookies and hot chocolate back at the church building. Sign up on the back table to indicate your interest in attending and whether you would be willing to drive.



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

October Outreach Events

It has been a busy month of community service, as members of our congregation, led by the Mission and Outreach Team:



Prepared and served a lasagna dinner to members of the Murray Volunteer Fire and Rescue Squad



Cleaned up litter along our assigned stretch of Hwy 1



Distributed candy at an MPC station at Beaver Lake's Trunk or Treat event (and invited people to come join us).

Keep Filling the SENCA Cart



Thank you to everyone who consistently fills the shopping cart in the rear of the sanctuary with non-perishable food items, which are then donated to the SENCA food pantry, serving all of Cass County from their office in Plattsmouth. This month's suggested food items are boxed meal fixings. As we return thanks for God's blessings in our lives, and make plans to gather for special holiday meals, let's remember neighbors struggling to make ends meet in this time of rising costs.

Property and Finance

Kenny Drake, team lead

Fall Stewardship Drive



Are you someone who's regularly excited to read in the newsletter about the exciting things God is doing through the ministry of Murray Presbyterian Church? Has the church been a blessing in your life? If so, remember this is the season of the year when our members and friends are challenged to make a financial commitment to the church for the coming year. Letters went out by mail to members and those who have pledged in the past. Extra copies of the mailing are available on the back table. Please return your "plan of giving" card sealed in the small envelope on or before **Stewardship Sunday, November 12**. You can also email your pledge information to our church accountant at murraypc.bookkeeper@gmail.com Thank you for prayerfully considering how you might be a part of this ministry in 2024.

