
Murray Presbyterian Messenger

December 2023



Murray Presbyterian Church

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

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

Featured This Month: Christmas Services



December 10 (11:30 am): Advent Dinner

December 24 (5:30 pm): Christmas Eve Service

December 31 (10 am): Sunday in Christmastide

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



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Upcoming Events

Sundays

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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Back in the heyday of rail travel, virtually every major city in America had a "Union Station"—often with a magnificent grand concourse and other elaborate architectural features. (Omaha's old Union Station is, of course, now the Durham Museum.) Jointly operated by multiple railroad companies, the Union Station was where all their rail-lines converged, allowing passengers to switch carriers. I well remember the days when I would take Amtrak trains home to Philadelphia, changing over to a commuter rail line at 30th Street Station—essentially Philadelphia's "Union Station."

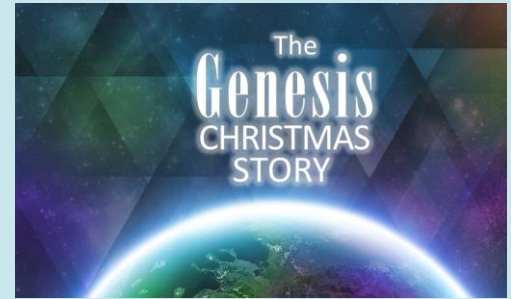
That's an image that, it seems to me, provides an apt metaphor for understanding the coming of Jesus into the world—the event we celebrate this month—and the gospel accounts of his life and ministry. They are basically the Bible's Union Station!

Reading through the Old Testament, you can trace a wide range of different themes and images. There's the theology of creation, Eden, and new creation. There's the concept of the divine image embedded in humanity. There's redemption, the sacrificial lamb, the temple, and priesthood. You also have images of rulership, the ideal Davidic king, and the messianic promise. There's the suffering servant and the model of the righteous sufferer (as in Job).

You can trace a lot of these themes back to Genesis, essentially the seedbed of biblical theology. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, they crop up here and there, receiving varying degrees of emphasis in different books and at different time periods. To some extent, they're like parallel lines of thought, not necessarily correlated with one another or synthesized in any way.

Then, suddenly, with the arrival of Jesus and the way the gospels depict him, it is as if all the themes of the Bible come together and find their fulfillment. He emerges as the great center, the convergence point, of the biblical narrative. After that, the themes radiate outwards again, as various New Testament writers reflect on the significance of Jesus in light of different Old Testament images. In Romans, for example, he's the second Adam. In Ephesians, he's the cornerstone of the new Temple. In Hebrews, he's the great high priest. Finally, the biblical story comes to a close with the book of Revelation, where many biblical themes culminate in the eschatological vision of a new creation.

Upcoming Worship Opportunities Advent Sermon Series



This month, we change the focus of our studies in Genesis to consider how this first book of the Bible sets the stage for the events we celebrate at Christmas. Come discover how the essential Christmas message is expressed in embryonic form all the way back at the dawn of human history.

Dec. 3: "The Primordial Promise"
(Genesis 3:8-15)

Dec 10: "The Perpetual Conflict"
(Genesis 4:1-8, 16-26)
Service with youth
participation

Dec. 17: "The Universal Blessing"
(Genesis 12:1-7)

Dec. 24: "The Coming Ruler"
(Genesis 49:8-12)

Dec. 31: Service of Carols

It's against that backdrop that we'll be spending the Advent season in worship tracing the Genesis Christmas Story. You read that right. The Christmas story can be traced all the way back to the first book of the Bible. And even in the earliest stage of development, we see the kernel of the message that still gives us hope today: that evil has been defeated, that we're blessed to be a blessing, that Jesus is the perfect ruler this world longs for. Join us as you are able during this Advent season.

Just like Jesus is the center—the “Union Station” as it were—of the Bible, he should also be the center of our lives. And he should be at the center of our Christmas celebration. I encourage you to find ways of doing that. Make worship—and special times of worship, like Christmas Eve—a priority. Take up the discipline of reading through this year's Advent devotional booklet. Engage in times of fellowship with our church family. Find ways to serve neighbors in need. Make a special gift to ministries that spread the message of Jesus.

May this be a blessed Advent and Christmas season 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

Christmas Services



There's no better place to come and celebrate the true meaning of the Christmas season than in the beautifully adorned sanctuary of Murray Presbyterian Church. Join us for these special times of worship as we retell the story of Jesus' birth and sing the familiar carols of the season. Here's the schedule of services for Christmas:

Deacons

Class of 2023

Delaney Deterding

Dana Stahl

Ann Wieringa

Class of 2024

Kathy Friedli

Sherrill Konfrst

Julie Nickels

Christmas Eve (December 24): Sunday morning worship will take place, as usual, on Christmas Eve day. Then, everyone who is able is encouraged to return at 5:30 pm for our traditional Christmas Eve Service of Lessons and Carols. This year's service will include readings from the Christmas portions of *The Book of God* by master storyteller Walter Wangerin. This dramatization of the biblical text reads like a novel, with vivid scene-setting details, dialogue, and character insights. As always, the readings will be accompanied by carols, capped off with the singing of “Silent Night” by candlelight.

First Sunday in Christmastide (December 31): The Christmas celebration continues on the following Sunday, which falls within the church year season of Christmastide. The service will revolve around the singing of carols, interspersed with carol stories and reflections.

Worship & Family Life Sharlyn Deterding, Team Lead


Advent Dinner



This year's Advent Dinner will be on **Sunday, December 10**, immediately following the morning worship service (and a short congregational meeting). Please bring a side dish to share (even


If you signed up for one of the other items) and join us for this traditional turkey dinner with all the fixings.

Drive Thru Nativity



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 on **December 16**. Following the outing, there will 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.

Board of Deacons Dana Stahl, moderator

Project Angel Tree



The tags on the angel tree have all been taken and presents are starting to appear under the tree in the rear of the sanctuary. Local families in need, identified through Conestoga's Head Start program, will soon receive the gifts to give to their children for Christmas. If you took one of the tags, please bring your unwrapped gifts to the church prior to **December 17**, along with a gift bag or some wrapping materials. (This enables the parents to wrap the gifts for their children). Thank you for supporting this local outreach project!



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

Bingo, Books, and Soup



This year's fall community outreach event on November 12 was a book-lovers delight! Members of our church joined neighbors from our community in a supper featuring different kinds of soup. Then, bingo-caller George Collins added humor to a few spirited rounds of bingo—with winners able to select a book from the ample collection of donated reading materials.



Keep Filling the SENCA Cart



Thank you to everyone who faithfully contributes non-perishable food items to the cart in the back of the sanctuary. The donation theme for the month of December is "Soup Supper." This would include cans of soup and other non-perishable items, like saltines. All items placed in the cart are taken to the SENCA food pantry in Plattsmouth, which serves needy families throughout Cass County.

Nicaragua Partnership Fund-raiser



Our presbytery's Nicaragua Partnership Committee has launched a fund-raiser to support a meal program for children that our partner churches in La Concepción operate in an especially impoverished area of their municipality. Products—including knives, kitchenware and food mixes—are being sold from Rada Cutlery, with 40% of each order going to the Nicaragua project. You can pick up a catalog on the back table in the sanctuary, go this unique shopping link: <https://radafundraising.com/?rfsn=7698487.681a821>, or scan the QR code below:



Any questions can be directed to Ann Wieringa.

Shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child



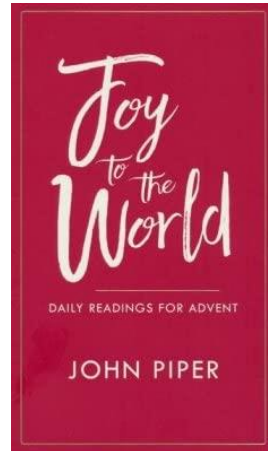
Members of our congregation—young and old—stayed following worship on November 12 to pack shoe boxes for Samaritan's Purse's Operation Christmas Child. The following Sunday, the 29 boxes (four more than our original goal) were dedicated in worship, with prayers for the children overseas who will receive them.

College Care Packages



College students with a connection to our church family received a little reminder of our on-going concern for them this fall. Care packages filled with snacks and goodies donated by members of the congregation were sent out, along with a card expressing our prayers and best wishes.

Advent Devotional Book



This month of the year is filled with preparations for Christmas: buying and wrapping gifts, hanging decorations, sending cards, baking cookies and pies, and so much more. But what about the task of preparing ourselves *spiritually* to celebrate the gift of God's Son? Historically, in the Christian faith, that's what the Advent season was all about. And John Piper's little devotional book, *Joy to the World*, is an excellent tool for doing that. For each day of December (up to Christmas), there is a short Scripture passage and an insightful reflection written by Piper, a Reformed Baptist pastor and theologian. Copies are available, while they last, on the back table of the sanctuary. This is an excellent resource to use individually, or together as a family.