
Murray Presbyterian Messenger

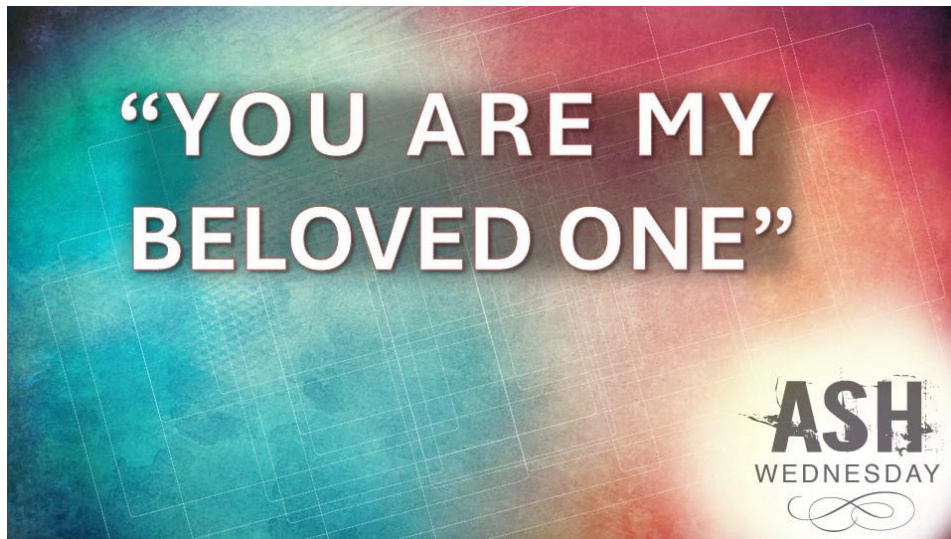
February 2024 

Murray Presbyterian Church

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

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

Featured This Month: **Ash Wednesday**



Ash Wednesday Service
February 14 7:00 pm
See page 4 for more details

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



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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Thanks to a new PBS Passport membership (a Christmas gift from Stacey), I've recently been watching Ken Burns' documentary on Ben Franklin, revered figure in my old hometown of Philadelphia and the founding father described by one of his biographers as "the first American." One revealing episode from his early life was his plan for

achieving moral perfection. After identifying thirteen desirable virtues, he designed a chart and began carefully tracking his progress in achieving them. The project was a failure! Franklin may be a hometown hero to Philadelphians, but even his greatest admirers have to admit he was a deeply flawed person. Among other things, he was a pretty lousy husband and father. While he was meticulously tracking his progress toward perfection, he had slaves working in his print shop.

Franklin's whole endeavor was a secularized version of the Puritan faith practiced by his family of origin back in Boston. But he missed some key elements in the Puritan belief system, like the intransigence of sin and the necessity of grace. Maybe Will Willimon had people like Franklin in mind (along with the rest of us who may entertain similar illusions of perfectibility), when he wrote: "We thought we were good people until we met Jesus. Jesus became for us not only a window into the heart of God, but also a mirror held up to show us the hard truth about ourselves." As a result, he says, "It is of the prophetic ministry of the church to teach people that we are sinners. Think of church as a lifelong learning in how to be a sinner."

If that's one of the things the church is supposed to do, Lent might be a crash course on the subject! In the early church, Lent started as a preparation period for new converts seeking to be baptized on Easter. It came to include lapsed Christians performing penitential acts to re-enter the church. Eventually, it became a time of repentance and renewal for all the faithful.

Spanning 40 days, the Lenten season is patterned after the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness (which, in turn, was patterned after Israel's 40 years in the wilderness). Both for Israel as well as for Jesus, the wilderness experience marked a time of testing and a time when evil reared its ugly head in particularly potent ways.

A few hundred years after Jesus, early Christian monastic communities "withdrew into the desert," as one account puts it, "to face temptation and sin head-on and to cultivate a contemplative spirit through prayer, following the example of Christ in his wilderness temptations." Like Jesus and Israel before them, they found that seeking to draw closer to God in the solitude of the desert meant wrestling with evil. Eventually, these so-called "desert

Upcoming
 Worship Opportunities
Lenten Sermon Series



The Lenten season is designed to be a time of repentance and renewal as we prepare for Easter. In keeping with that focus, our messages during these weeks will use the traditional framework of the Seven Deadly Sins to look at the spiritual pitfalls that can potentially trap us—and how to overcome them.

- Feb. 18** Overcoming Envy with Submission
- Feb. 25** Overcoming Sloth (Acedia) with Commitment
- Mar. 3** Overcoming Greed with Generosity
- Mar. 10** Overcoming Gluttony with Contentment
- Mar. 17** Overcoming Lust with Holiness
- Mar. 25 (Palm Sunday)** Overcoming Anger with Self-Surrender
- Mar. 31 (Easter)** Overcoming Pride with Humility

fathers” began cataloging the specific tendencies that ensnared them. And that list became the basis for what’s popularly known as “The Seven Deadly Sins.”

It’s important to note that this specific set of sins isn’t drawn directly from Scripture—although the Bible does contain various vice lists (such as in 1 Cor. 6:9-11 and Gal. 5:19-21). It’s more of a tradition that reflects the collected wisdom of people who have delved deeply into the Christian spiritual life. And certainly, all the items on the list are things the Bible condemns.

That’s not to say the list is without its critics. Why these *particular seven*, some people ask. If you’re looking for the most common vices, why aren’t lying and drunkenness on the list? And are these really the most *serious* moral challenges facing our world? For the most part, they seem like minor peccadillos. Unattractive habits, to be sure. But hardly the stuff of soul-crushing evil. Does making one too many trips back to the dessert bar at the buffet (the popular image of gluttony) rise to the level of murder and mayhem? Why isn’t torture on the list, or genocide, or racism?

The spiritual masters would tell us is that such objections misunderstand what the category of “deadly sins” is all about. The more accurate (and technical) terminology is “capital vices”—using ‘capital’ to mean “the head” of something. (It’s derived from the Latin *caput*, or head). The “deadly sins” or “capital vices” are the fountainhead, the well-spring, of all the other evils in the world. They may not seem all that egregious in and of themselves, but they are the root causes of all that’s wrong in the world. That’s a scary thought! If it’s true, it means that these all-too-common human vices are the seedbed for the greatest evils in human history. All that’s separating us garden-variety sinners from the Osama bin Ladens and Pol Pots of the world is a matter of degrees.

With all these considerations in mind, we’re going to be spending the Lenten season looking at those traditional “seven deadly sins”—and much more importantly, how to counteract them by growing in our likeness to Jesus. While we are doing that on Sunday mornings, there will be a complementary adult education forum considering C. S. Lewis’ spiritual classic, *The Screwtape Letters*. I hope all of us will take advantage of opportunities to grow in our faith during this Lenten season, and that will be more prepared to celebrate a glorious Easter!

A word about sources:

This article draws heavily on two sources that will be used extensively in the upcoming series:

Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2009)

William H. Willimon, *Sinning Like a Christian: A New Look at the 7 Deadly Sins* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013)

Leadership

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Rev. William McConnell

Clerk of Session

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Denise Ayers

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Sharlyn Deterding

Debra South

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Tanner Miner

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Sherrill Konfrst

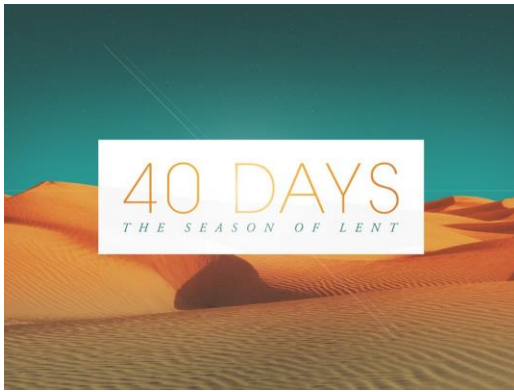
Julie Nickels

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Karla Remmers

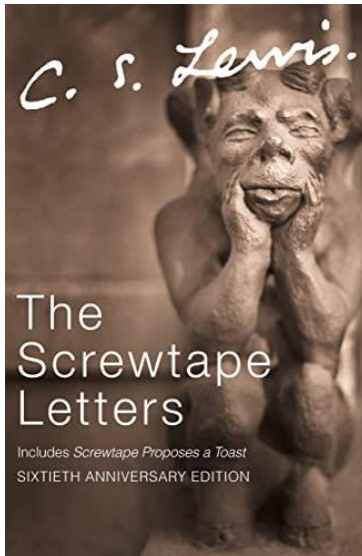


Lenten Worship & Study Opportunities

Ash Wednesday: "You Are My Beloved One"

Join us on **February 14** at **7 pm** as we usher in the Lenten season with a special Ash Wednesday service of worship. Since it is also Valentine's Day, the service will revolve around the theme of "You Are My Beloved One" (based on Mark 1:11) and will include a reaffirmation of our baptismal vows. There will also be an opportunity to receive the sign of ashes, but this is optional.

Lenten Soup and Book Study



"Since its publication in 1942, The Screwtape Letters has sold millions of copies worldwide and is recognized as a milestone in the history of popular theology. A masterpiece of satire, it offers a sly and ironic portrayal of human life and foibles from the vantage point of Screwtape, a highly placed assistant to "Our Father Below." At once wildly comic, deadly serious, and strikingly original, The Screwtape Letters comprises the correspondence of the worldly-wise devil Screwtape and his nephew Wormwood, a novice demon in charge of securing the damnation of an ordinary young man." (Amazon.com description)

Starting **February 21** and continuing throughout the Lenten season, join us on Wednesday evenings as we meet to share insights about the Christian life and the dynamics of temptation based on C. S. Lewis' monumental spiritual classic, *The Screwtape Letters*. *You need not have read the book to participate*, but copies have been made available for anyone who wants to read the chapters in advance. There will be a simple meal of soup and bread at 6:30 pm, followed by the study at 7:00 pm.



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*
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Sydney Honaker
John McConnell
Stacey McConnell
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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 Fellowship Hour Meal



Be sure to stay following worship (or come following worship) on **February 25** for a very special Fellowship Hour. It will feature a traditional Nicaraguan-style meal, consisting of a walking taco bar (with Gallo pinto rice & beans, beef, chicken, guacamole pico salsa, and queso fresco), tropical fruit salad, tres leche cake, and Nicaraguan coffee. A free-will offering will be received to support the school uniform project, a ministry carried out by our partner churches in La Concepción, Nicaragua with funding from Missouri River Valley Presbytery.

Keep Filling the SENCA Cart



Thank you to everyone who regularly contributes non-perishable food items to the shopping cart in the back of the sanctuary. In January, the donations completely filled the cart and spilled over onto the floor around it! During the month of February, the theme is pasta and pasta sauce. Your donations of any non-perishable items are welcomed, and all donations are taken to the SENCA food pantry in Plattsmouth, which serves the Cass County area.

Thank You From Calvin Crest

Dear Friends, Thank you for your donation of \$200. . . . As we look back on another year, we see amazing things that have happened because of your generosity through this place. . . . We also look ahead to the coming year. . . We plan and prepare for the campers who will register and attend summer camp and spend an entire week in Christian community. . . Each of these things is possible because of the generosity of people like you. Your give enables life-changing things to happen at Calvin Crest.



Property and Finance

Snow Removal



Winter weather brought challenges during the month of January, with successive snowfalls and snow drifts. Thank you to the Remmers family and to everyone who worked to clear snow from our lot and sidewalks!

