
Murray Presbyterian Messenger

March 2024 

Murray Presbyterian Church

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

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

Featured This Month: Holy Week 2024



March 23 Palm Sunday
March 28 Maundy Thursday
March 31 Easter Sunday
(See page 5 for Worship Information)

Murray Presbyterian Church, Murray, NE
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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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I was well into adulthood when I finally came to a startling realization. Growing up in Philadelphia, I was surrounded by Revolutionary War-era sites. And whenever the subject of that conflict came up, I always automatically and instinctively identified with the American colonies. To me, it was "We declared our independence on July 4, 1776. We spent the bitter winter of 1777 at Valley Forge. We defeated the British at Yorktown." Only within the past few decades did it suddenly dawn on me that none of my actual physical ancestors (so far as I know) were here in the colonies at the time of the Revolution. They were all in Ireland, Scotland, or Wales at the time, so if any of them did fight in the war, they would have been redcoats!

But it's natural, when we have been assimilated into some new community of people to lay claim to that group's history as though it were our own. And that's a principle that has profound spiritual implications. That's what the Jewish understanding of Passover is all about. It's not just about rehearsing the story of something that happened thousands of years ago to one's distant ancestors. It's about rekindling the sense that I was one of the ones who came out of Egypt and entered into a covenant with God.

So, it's highly significant that one of the very last things Jesus did before his arrest and crucifixion was to participate in that experience of reliving the Exodus through an observance of Passover. All four gospels are in agreement that Jesus came to Jerusalem for the Passover celebration.

Depending on how it's interpreted, John's gospel may imply that the Passover observance was about to take place in the evening of the day on which Jesus was crucified (18:28, 19:14). There are alternative explanations, but it's possible that the gospel writer has altered the chronology in the interests of theological symbolism. Having introduced Jesus at the beginning of his gospel as "the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29), John has Jesus dying at the precise moment (between 2 and 3 pm) when the Passover lambs were being slaughtered in the temple.

The other gospel writers explicitly identify the "last supper" Jesus shared with his disciples in the Upper Room as the Passover meal (Matt. 26:2, 17-19, Mark 14:12-14, Luke 22:7-15), otherwise known as a seder. And that identification is supported by a host of seemingly incidental little details that they mention without calling attention to their significance. The renowned 20th century New Testament scholar Joachim Jeremias lists fourteen such details, including:

- In keeping with the Passover requirements, the **meal took place in Jerusalem**, a break with Jesus' usual practice that week of returning to Bethany each evening.
- The **meal was held at night**, something that generally was only done for Passover (since the main meal of the day was ordinarily taken in the afternoon).

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 Love
- Mar. 25 (Palm Sunday)** Overcoming Anger with Self-Surrender
- Mar. 31 (Easter)** Overcoming Pride with Humility

- The participants were said to be **reclining at the table**, again something that was only done at Passover or other major celebrations. (In fact, one of the questions a boy traditionally asks during the seder is why everyone is reclining, whereas they usually eat sitting upright.)
- In keeping with the Passover practice, Jesus **broke bread during the meal**, rather than at the beginning, as was customary. The meal also included **wine**, usually only consumed at Passover.
- The words Jesus spoke over the bread and cup fits with the way the **symbolic significance of foods** was explained in the Passover.
- The meal concluded with the **singing of “a hymn”**— probably the greater Hallel of the Passover ritual.

As Christians, we believe that Jesus embraced the Passover tradition, fulfilled it, and transformed it into the meal we now know as the Last Supper. For that reason, participating in a Passover seder can be highly instructive for us. In fact, you can't fully understand the Last Supper or the Lord's Supper without that background.

Through Jesus, we also believe that we are entitled to lay claim to the biblical heritage that Passover represents. This is, admittedly, a point of great sensitivity with our Jewish friends, since many of them regard it as a case of “cultural appropriation.” But it is simply a basic New Testament belief that Gentile believers in Jesus have been grafted into the people of Israel (Romans 11:17-21) and become spiritual children of Abraham (Galatians 3:7). Just like immigrants lay claim to our nation's historical heritage, Gentile believers lay claim to Israel's spiritual heritage. That's why (for example), some versions of the Great Thanksgiving prayer at communion say things like: “You promised yourself in covenant with Abraham and Sarah, told us your purpose in commandments through Moses. . . , “you delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets,” and so forth. We, too, believe we were there when the Exodus took place, the law was given, and the prophets spoke.

It's in that spirit and for these reasons that we'll be gathering on Maundy Thursday this year (March 28) to remember the Last Supper by participating in a Passover seder. Stacey and I have conducted seders like this, off and on, for almost 20 years now. (I have a picture of a seder in Fremont, OH, where a 7-month-old John is in a highchair at the head table). Congregations we have served in the past have invariably found it to be a very moving and instructive experience. I hope that will be the case here and that it will be part of a very meaningful Holy Week and Easter celebration for us all.

Leadership

Session

Moderator

Rev. William McConnell

Clerk of Session

Debra South

Class of 2024

Kenny Drake

Denise Ayers

Class of 2025

Sharlyn Deterding

Debra South

Class of 2026

Tanner Miner

Kyle Nickels

Deacons

Class of 2024

Kathy Friedli

Sherrill Konfrst

Julie Nickels

Class of 2025

Ryleigh Hill

Stacey McConnell

Karla Remmers

Nicaragua Day



Thank you to everyone who stayed following worship on February 25 for a traditional Nicaraguan-style meal and an opportunity to support the school uniform project in La Concepción. **Over \$700** was raised to provide needy students in our partner churches with uniforms, made by a sewing collective that offers employment to local women.

Thank You From Salud Que Transforma

“Thank you once again for the generous donation of \$500 from Murray Presbyterian for the mission in Guatemala. Dr. Estrada has now reached over 13,000 needy patients in the past year. . . . Please extend our thanks to your members for their outreach.”
Frank Ebetino (Salud Que Transforma, El Cortijo, Guatemala)

Litter Clean-up



The next clean-up of our adopted stretch of Highway 1 will take place on **Saturday, March 16**. Meet at Conestoga High School at **10 am**. Supplies will be provided, but you will want to bring your own work gloves. Following the litter pick-up, there will be a pizza party back at the church building!

Keep Filling the SENCA Cart!



“Healthy snacks” is the donation theme for the month of March. We are asking for donations of non-perishable items like trail mix, granola bars, raisins, and nuts. All items placed in the cart are then donated to the SENCA food pantry in Plattsmouth, which serves all of Cass County.



Leadership Teams

Worship and Family Life

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

Lenten Opportunities

Spanning the 40 days (excluding Sundays) before Easter, Lent is intended to be a time of renewed spiritual focus as we prepare for the celebration of Easter. Traditionally, it has included undertakings such as a more intense study of God's Word, prayer, self-examination, and fasting. Here are some corporate activities at Murray Presbyterian you're encouraged to consider as part of your Lenten observance.

Study



A special study series continues on Wednesday evenings during the Lenten season (February 21-March 20). A simple meal of soup and bread is served at 6:30 pm. At 7:00 pm, there is a time of study and discussion based on C. S. Lewis' spiritual classic, *The Screwtape Letters*. This imaginative and creative work of satire deals with the subject of temptation through the medium of supposed letters from a senior devil to a novice understudy. Along the way, there are extensive insights into spiritual realities and the human psyche. You need not have read the book in order to come and participate.

Worship

March 23 10:00 am: PALM SUNDAY Come relive the story of Jesus' triumphal entry on Palm Sunday, with the traditional hymns of the day and a message about what the clearing of the temple can tell us about proper and improper uses of anger.

March 28 6:00 pm: MAUNDY THURSDAY Join us in the Fellowship Hall for what promises to be a very meaningful and illuminating experience of a traditional Jewish Passover meal (the seder). The main course will consist of a couple of soup options. We will also follow the liturgy that accompanies the meal, partake of the symbolic foods, and see how elements of the seder played a role in the Last Supper Jesus shared with his disciples in the Upper Room. At the appropriate time in the meal, we will be partaking in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

March 31: 10:00 am: EASTER CELEBRATION As always, Easter Sunday worship will celebrate the resurrection with vibrant music and a message of hope, showing how Jesus broke the power of pride and displayed the path of true humility.

Give



Special offering envelopes are in the pew racks that you can use to support the Presbyterian Church's **One Great Hour of Sharing**. The three programs supported by OGHS — Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People —all work in different ways to serve individuals and

communities in need. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, their work fits together to provide people with safety, sustenance, and hope. Received during the season of Lent, each gift to OGHS helps to improve the lives of people in these challenging situations. The Offering provides us a way to share God's love with our neighbors in need.