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# Murray Presbyterian Messenger

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**May 2024**



**Murray Presbyterian Church**

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

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

**Featured This Month: Pentecost**

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**Wear Red and Be Sure to Join Us  
For a Very Special Pentecost Celebration!  
Special Music by Nationally-Known  
Singer / Songwriter Bob Bennett  
More Information on page 5**

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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](http://www.murraypresbyterian.org). Click on the "Give Now" button at the bottom of the homepage.**

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The sprawling 60-acre campus of Nashville's First Presbyterian Church was the setting for this year's National Gathering of **The Fellowship Community** held last month. Thanks to the provision made for continuing education in my terms of call, I've had the opportunity to attend these Fellowship gatherings for the past seven years (except when it was cancelled during the pandemic). So, I thought it would be good to share a little bit about the experience.

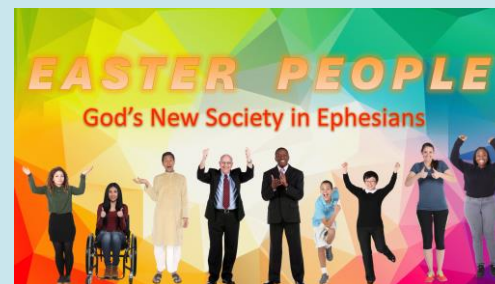
The Fellowship Community is a network of congregations and church leaders seeking to spread the gospel and uphold biblical standards within the framework of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Throughout the year, there are various local gatherings and online sessions. Once a year, there is a national gathering that brings together church leaders who share The Fellowship Community's ministry vision for several days of worship, study, and fellowship.

This year, a record number of attendees filled the spacious sanctuary of First Presbyterian, and the times of worship were awe-inspiring. Music for the initial round of services was led by Nashville-based singer-songwriter and recording artist **Raquel Warchol (Cole)**, who is the church's contemporary music director. At the closing service, we were treated to the music of the church's choir and magnificent 74-rank organ. But the highlight of the worship experience came on the last day when the identity of a "mystery guest" (who had been promised throughout the week) was finally revealed. **Keith Getty**, best known as the composer (with his wife, Kristyn) of the contemporary hymn "In Christ Alone" was interviewed by our host pastor and then led us in time of worship music.

The overall conference theme was "**In But Not Of the World: Engaging Culture and Thriving in Faith**," and a trio of speakers offered various perspectives on the juxtaposition of Christian faith and contemporary culture. Luther Seminary professor **Andy Root** traced the various stages through which Western culture became secularized, moving from what he called "secular one" (when beliefs become private) to "secular three" (when all belief systems are tentative, contested, and fragile). Yet, he pointed out, this "fragilization" works both ways. Erstwhile believers may "take a break" from faith, but secular people experience moments of transcendence that cause them to doubt their doubts (a phenomenon he illustrated with lyrics from popular music). Fuller Seminary dean **Dwight Radcliff** reminded us of how all theological reflection and formulations of the faith are enculturated—even if we pretend otherwise! (As an African-American scholar, he bristles at the notion that James Cone's 'black liberation' theology is a



Upcoming  
 Worship Opportunities  
**Easter Sermon Series**



The Easter season is a great time to think about what it means to be a community of people who embody the hope of the Resurrection. That's what we'll be doing this year as we consider some of the key qualities of the church—the universal body of Christ—that are described in the New Testament book of Ephesians.

What are the identifying marks of Easter people?

- Apr. 7** Easter People Are Chosen (Eph. 1:1-14)
- Apr. 14** Easter People Are Empowered (Eph. 1:15-23)
- Apr. 21** Easter People Are Raised Up (Eph. 2:1-10)
- Apr. 28** Easter People Are Unified (Eph. 2:11-22)
- May 5** Easter People Are Changed (Eph. 4:17-24)
- May 12** Easter People Are Equipped (Eph. 4:7-13)
- May 19 (Pentecost)**  
 Easter People Are Spirit-Filled (Eph. 5:18-21)
- May 26 (Trinity Sunday / Memorial Day)**  
 "Easter People Are Battle-Ready" (Eph. 6:10-20)

is a contextualized form of theology, whereas Karl Barth's dogmatics are just standard, boilerplate systematic theology). Apologetics expert **Alycia Wood** offered her take on the question "Why I Am a Christian," critiquing the New Atheism and underscoring the need for religious belief as a basis for morality.

Obviously, a lot of heady stuff (often over my head!) But equally enriching are the times of fellowship and interaction.

Attendees include pastors of some of our denomination's tall-steeple, flagship churches, as well as a plethora of small church leaders (who attend at no cost). I've been able to reconnect with churches and colleagues from every stage of my life: from Philadelphia, through New Jersey, Western Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Some erstwhile PCUSA churches that played an important role in my life (like the one in which I was ordained) have now departed from our ranks. But there are still thriving churches doing vital mission and ministry work within the framework of our denomination. For that we can be grateful! As we celebrate Pentecost, know that the Spirit is alive and at work, even among those of us who have sometimes been called the "frozen chosen."

Thank you for your support of and interest in these endeavors outside our congregation. They've been spiritually refreshing!



## 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

### Graduation Party

Thank you for allowing our family to use the church fellowship hall to celebrate John's high school graduation on Saturday, May 18, 4:30 – 8:00 pm. John has extended an open invitation to members and friends of the church to join us in celebrating this milestone.

Bill, Stacey, Abriana & John

Community Picnic in the Park (June 9)



Save the date of **Sunday, June 9, 4-6 pm**, as the summertime tradition of community picnics, hosted by our church in Tyson Park, returns. As always, there will be games and grilled meat provided by the church, with potluck side dishes. More details to come!

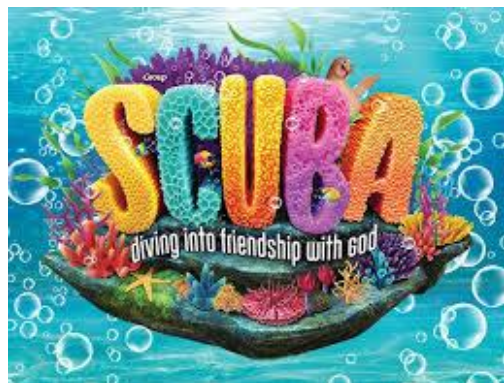
Keep Filling the SENCA Cart!



As the school year is about to end, the SENCA theme for the summer will once again be "Kids Cook." As you make donations to the SENCA cart in the back of the sanctuary, you are especially encouraged to consider non-perishable items that kids can easily prepare for themselves, such as ramen noodles, canned soup and PB&J.

Christian Education

Vacation Bible School



Also save the dates of **July 15-18** for this year's Vacation Bible School with the theme *Scuba: Diving into Friendship with God*. Sessions will be held at the Murray Christian Church, with volunteer help from both congregations. More information will be coming out in future months.

Adult Class

The adult study group that meets Sunday mornings at 9:00 am has been reading over and discussing the Scripture lesson for that week's message in advance of the worship service. If you want to enter worship better prepared to hear and respond to what God is saying to us through the Word proclaimed, you're invited to join them!



Leadership Teams

**Worship and Family Life**  
Sharlyn Deterding, *Team Leader*  
Deb South, *Session Rep.*  
Linnea Hill  
Sherrill Konfrst  
Larcaine Young

**Mission and Outreach**  
Kyle Nickels, *Team Leader*  
George Collins  
Melanie 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

Upcoming Special Worship Opportunities:

Ascension Sunday / Graduate Recognition Sunday / Mother's Day (May 12)



May 12 will be a busy Sunday! We will be bringing the Easter season to a close and celebrating Jesus' Ascension by focusing on the ministry gifts that were his parting gift to the church. We will be lifting up thanks for mothers. Plus, we will be honoring our one high school graduate this year (**John McConnell**) and bidding a fond farewell to our international exchange student (**Amandine Jegou**) as she prepares to return home.

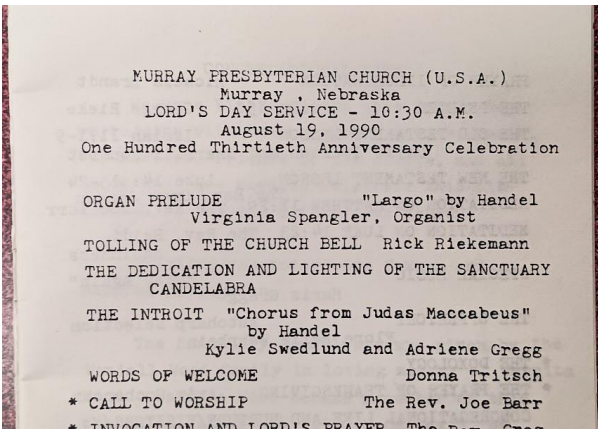
Pentecost Sunday (May 19)



You definitely will not want to miss worship this year on Pentecost! We'll be lifting up thanks for the gift of the Spirit and focusing on what it means to be "Spirit-filled." We plan to receive new members. And topping the service off will be special music provided by **Bob Bennett**, acclaimed Christian song-writer and musician known for his acoustic folk-style repertoire. A product of the Jesus Movement, Bob has engaged in a music ministry spanning over four decades now, during which he has opened for popular Christian performers like

Amy Grant and Michael Card. One of his early releases was named "Album of the Year" by *Contemporary Christian Music Magazine*, ranking it among the top 20 Christian albums of all time. Michael Card says: "Bob Bennett is one of the most gifted songwriters any of us know about. He is able to listen to the parable of his own life and share with us what he hears the Lord saying to him and to us all." We are honored to have Bob lending his gifts to our worship service that day and trust that he will receive a warm and enthusiastic welcome! Bob will also be leading music at the Mens' Retreat that weekend at Calvin Crest and giving a free performance at Dundee Presbyterian in Omaha that Sunday (May 19) at 2:00 pm.

Bell-Ringers



The tolling of the church bell has been calling us to worship at Murray Presbyterian for at least many decades now. (See the bulletin at left.) It never stopped, even during the pandemic, when it the sound of the bell was heard every Sunday at the beginning

of the livestream. And the tradition continues, as some novice bell-ringers (familiar to us all) grabbed the rope and rang us into worship for the very first time during the month of April.