
Murray Presbyterian Messenger

June 2024 

Murray Presbyterian Church

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

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

Featured This Month: Community Picnic



Come enjoy a time of food, fellowship, and fun!

**Help us reach out and build relationships with
neighbors in our community!**

Additional details are on page 4

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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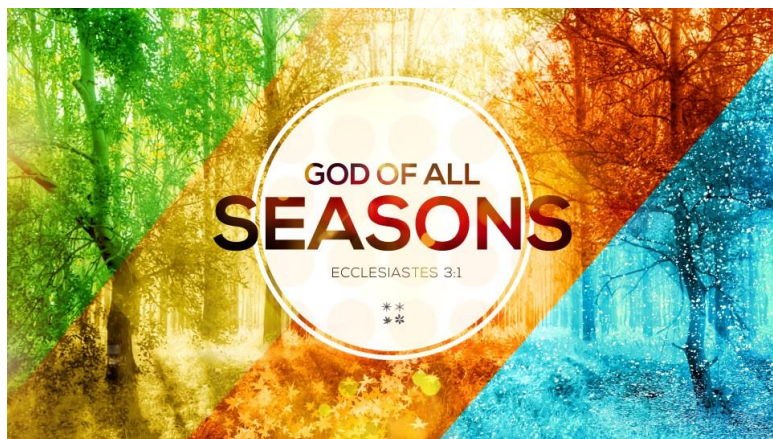
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To (slightly) paraphrase one commentator, if it takes someone who has suffered to appreciate Job, and if only a restored rebel can appreciate Jonah, then perhaps only people who have turned away from the world in disillusionment and despair can truly appreciate Ecclesiastes. And that, in a nutshell, might explain the diverse reactions to this book of the Bible. By some accounts, the ancient Jewish rabbis debated its inclusion in the biblical canon, seeing it as offensive and threatening to the faith. Modern biblical readers, encountering it for the first time, are apt to wonder why such a writing is even in the Bible.

But alongside the naysayers, **Ecclesiastes also has its share of admirers**, who perhaps see in Qoheleth (the moniker adopted by the writer) a kindred spirit and fellow “gentle cynic.” In his classic American novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*, Thomas Wolfe writes: “I am not given to dogmatic judgments in the matter of literary creation but if I had to make one, I could only say that Ecclesiastes is the greatest single piece of writing I have ever known, and the wisdom expressed in it the most lasting and profound.” Boston College philosopher Peter Kreeft says that “When you have read all the books in all the libraries of the world, when you have accompanied all the world's sages on all their journeys into wisdom, you will not have found three more profound books than Ecclesiastes, Job, and Song of Songs.” With regard to Ecclesiastes, specifically, he dubs it “the greatest of all books of philosophy” and says it was his encounter with it, at age 15, that propelled him in the direction of his chosen field of study.

What is it that makes this biblical book so timely, relevant, and appealing?

First, **Ecclesiastes is a book that eschews simple, pat answers** and welcomes an attitude of wrestling with the questions of life. Just like many of the psalms vent anger and impatience with God and call down invectives on enemies (all honest human emotions), the Teacher of Ecclesiastes expresses honest doubts and struggles. As Phil Ryken puts it: “Ecclesiastes is for people who have their doubts about God but can't stop thinking about Him.” Kreeft is

Upcoming
 Worship Opportunities
 Summer Sermon Series

A LIFE THAT MATTERS:



AND PATHS TO FULFILLMENT

As seasons change and Spring gives way to summer, we spend some time with the book of the Bible that, better than any other, celebrates the seasons of life. Ecclesiastes is a book that asks hard questions about life and invites us onto a quest to discover life's ultimate purpose and meaning. Along the way, the Quester stumbles onto some dead-end roads, but also finds some more promising pathways.

- June 2:** The Endless Quest (Ecclesiastes 1:1-14)
- June 9:** The Dead-End Road of Pleasure (Eccles. 2:1-11)
- June 16:** The Dead-End Road of Success (Eccles. 2:12-23)
- June 23:** The Dead-End Road of Leading a Good Life (Eccles. 9:1-12)
- June 30:** The Path of Grateful Satisfaction (Eccles. 5:18-20)
- July 7:** The Path of Accepting Life's Rhythms (Eccles. 3:1-14)
- July 14:** The Path of Risky Service to Others (Eccles. 11:1-10)

right: whatever ancient rabbinic sages decided to place Ecclesiastes within the canon of sacred Scripture were both wise and courageous.

Second, **Ecclesiastes is not afraid to recognize the ambiguities, paradoxes, and contradictions of life.** One puzzling feature of the book is the way it espouses seemingly contradictory claims. That was, in fact, one of the concerns of those who doubted its place within the canon. Some modern scholars have attributed these disparities to the work of different editors. A book with a wholly pessimistic outlook on life was supposedly revised by a “wisdom writer” and a “pious interpolator” both of whom interjected countervailing ideas into the text. Personally, I don’t have any *theological* objection to theories about the composition of biblical books that involve multiple authors (or sources).

In this case, however, there’s a much better explanation. In his ground-breaking treatment of Ecclesiastes, *A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up*, Rabbi Michael V. Fox argues that these seemingly contradictory statements are, in fact, the key to interpreting the book. A single author *intentionally* inserted them into the text because. . . well, life itself is messy and paradoxical! As Fox puts it: “Qohelet is not so much contradicting himself as *observing* contradictions in the world.”

A basic area of tension is between the observations that are made from an earth-bound vantage point (life “under the sun”) and statements that reflect a faith-perspective (sometimes framed as, “things look like this, but I know this is true”). It’s almost as if the writer is carrying on a debate within himself. (For example: “Although a wicked person who commits a hundred crimes may live a long time, I know that it will go better with those who fear God, who are reverent before him. Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.” [8:12-13, emphasis added])

Third, and most importantly, **Ecclesiastes is relevant because it establishes a basis for everything else in the biblical canon and ultimately it points us to Jesus.** Some have suggested that Ecclesiastes is a like a prolegomenon to the rest of the Bible: it raises the problem the rest of the Bible addresses. It has almost an apologetical purpose. Michael Eaton sums up the book’s theme this way: “**It defends the life of faith in a generous God by pointing to the grimness of the alternative.**” It is Jesus who eventually came to deliver us from that predicament. So we can affirm with Kreeft that “**Ecclesiastes is the question to which Christ is the answer.**”

It is with all these considerations in mind that we will be spending a little time this summer exploring Ecclesiastes, what it says about various “dead-end” strategies for finding fulfillment in life and the more promising path it points us towards. I hope you might spend some time reflecting on this portion of the Bible this summer (just don’t let it get you too depressed!). And join us in worship, when you are able, as together we consider “A Life That Matters.”

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

Community Picnic in the Park (June 9)



Come on out to Tyson Park (middle of Murray) on **Sunday, June 9, 4-6 pm**, as the summertime tradition of community picnics, hosted by our church, returns. As always, there will be games and grilled meat provided by the church. Anyone who attends should

bring a side dish to share and a lawn chair to sit on. This is intended to be a community outreach event, so you are encouraged to spread the word and to invite neighbors in our area!

Keep Filling the SENCA Cart!

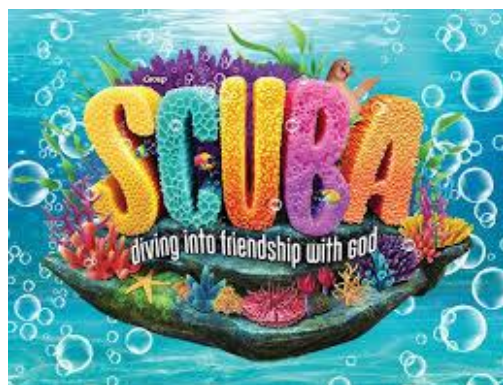


With children out of school, the SENCA theme for the summer once again is "Kids Cook." As you make donations to the SENCA cart in the back of the sanctuary, you are especially encouraged to consider non-perishable items that kids can easily prepare for themselves, such as ramen noodles, canned soup and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

Christian Education

Denise Ayers, Team Lead

Vacation Bible School



Registration is now open for this year's Daily Vacation Bible School. The theme is **SCUBA** and children from pre-school through 6th grade will be going on an underseas adventure and diving into a friendship with God! It all takes place at the **Murray Christian Church**

July 15-18 (Sunday through Thursday). Families are invited to eat supper with their children starting at 5:45 pm. The program begins at 6:15 and continues until 8 pm. Children can be registered at <https://www.myvbs.org/Murray2024VBS>. Volunteers are needed and you can sign up to help on this same website.



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

Graduate Recognition Sunday (May 12)



On May 12, we recognized international exchange student **Amandine Jegou** as she completes her time at Conestoga Jr. / Sr. High School and prepares to return home to Tahiti. Along with her host family (**Michael and Dana Stahl**), the celebration included Amandine's parents and brother. At the same time, **John McConnell** (son of Bill and Stacey) was honored on his graduation from Conestoga. John will be attending University of Richmond in the fall to study political science with the intention of going on to law school.

Dear Murray Presbyterian Church Family,

Thank you very much for the scholarship you gave and for allowing me the use of [the Fellowship Hall] for my graduation party. Additionally, thank you for the warm welcome I received upon arriving in Nebraska and the years of encouragement and support from this congregation that it preceded. It has been such a pleasure to be a part of this church and I'll always remember the ways in which so many members of this community have helped nurture me as a person and as a Christian. I'll be sure to stop in whenever I'm back from college. Thank you again for all the support over the years!

John McConnell

New Members



At our Pentecost worship celebration, we had the delightful privilege of welcoming into the membership of our congregation **Isaac and Erin Dritt** (shown here with Ian, Elliott, and Abigail). They have been worshipping with us faithfully for over a year now, so we were excited to have Isaac and Erin reaffirm their faith in Jesus Christ and unite with our congregation in an official way.