
Murray Presbyterian Messenger

August 2024



Murray Presbyterian Church

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

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

Featured This Month: Summer Guest Preachers



August 18: Rev. Dr. Jeff McDonald

August 25: Elder Linda Reffert

September 1: Rev. Deena Candler

(See page 4 for more 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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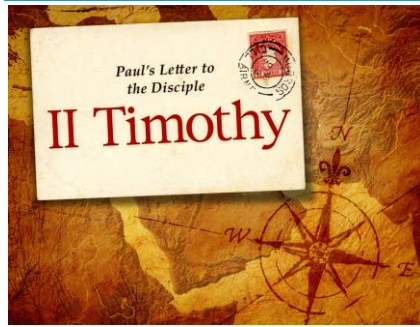
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British essayist Samuel Johnson famously observed that “when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.” A bit crass, perhaps, but the point is well taken. Anyone knowing their days are severely limited will be focused on what really matters in life. Their

words take on greater urgency and carry more meaning.

That’s why there are so many examples of powerful and moving utterances by people nearing the end of their lives. One thinks of Maj. Sullivan Bellou’s last letter to his wife (among the most heartrending scenes in Ken Burns’ *Civil War* series), Ronald Reagan’s farewell letter to the American people (“I now begin the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life. I know that for America there will always be a bright dawn ahead.”) or Randy Pausch’s unforgettable “Last Lecture” at Carnegie Mellon University. In my case, I will be forever grateful for a serendipitous visit with my grandmother as I was headed to Western Pennsylvania to begin serving in my first call. I was in denial, but she suspected it would be our last conversation and what she shared that evening has always carried special meaning for me.

That’s the kind of scenario that forms the backdrop to 2 Timothy, the New Testament epistle we’ve been looking at on Sunday mornings. Rome’s madman emperor Nero had scapegoated Christians for a massive fire that swept through the city (perhaps to deflect blame away from himself) and was seeking to stamp out the fledgling movement. In the midst of this murderous campaign, ancient tradition says the Apostle Paul was seized and confined to a subterranean chamber of horrors known as the Mamertine Prison. There, awaiting his impending execution, he writes one last letter to his young protégé and “son in the faith,” Timothy.

In an online article entitled “Why a goodbye letter is the most important letter you will write,” an author mentions several things that are good to include in such a piece of correspondence: memories of specific events, expressions of gratitude for the relationship, and words of advice (especially if the recipient is a younger person). Interestingly, 2 Timothy checks all the boxes! Memories? Paul recalls the faith of Timothy’s mother and grandmother, his ordination to ministry, and the tears he shed at their last parting. As for gratitude, Paul opens the letter mentioning how he lifts up prayers of thanks for Timothy every day. And the letter is filled with advice and gentle prodding: for Timothy to reclaim his spiritual gifts, to transmit the faith to future generations, and to proclaim God’s word boldly.

Upcoming Worship Opportunities Summer Sermon Series



As the summer draws to a close, we are engaged in a short-term series of messages based on the New Testament book of 2 Timothy. How should we remain faithful in the midst of what 2 Timothy 3:1 calls “perilous times” (KJV)?

July 21: “Preserving the Truth”
(2 Timothy 1:6-14)

July 28: “Passing On the Truth”
(2 Timothy 1:5-7, 2:1-2)

August 4: “Persevering in the Truth”
(2 Timothy 2:3-13)

August 11: “Prevailing in the Truth”
(2 Timothy 3:10-17)

Guest Preachers:

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August 25: Elder Linda Reffert

September 7: Rev. Deena Candler

But this letter does more than just offer a personal charge to Timothy himself. To me, it's reminiscent of that famous speech Gen. Douglas MacArthur gave to the Cadet Corps on his final visit to West Point. The closing words were: "Today marks my final roll call with you. But I want you to know that when I cross the river, my last conscious thoughts will be of the Corps, and the Corps, and the Corps." Paul's final closing thoughts were of the Church, the Church, the Church. Whatever personal references there are in the letter are eclipsed by his overriding concern for the Church of Jesus Christ—for the purity of its doctrine, the integrity of its leadership, and the perpetuation of its witness to future generations. Clearly, Paul's heart was with the Christian communities he had (in many instances) established and shepherded for so many years. That's a wonderful example to be emulated!

At the forefront of his mind was ensuring an orderly succession to a new generation of leaders who would faithfully carry on the apostolic tradition. Not only is this a farewell letter, it fits the stereotypical pattern of what some scholars have called a "letter of succession." On behalf of that apostolic generation that is fading away, Paul is passing the torch to the second generation of leaders. That's become an ongoing process.

What Paul is doing in this New Testament letter is somewhat comparable to what Dr. James Montgomery Boice did the last time he stood in the pulpit of Tenth Presbyterian Church in downtown Philadelphia. For 32 years, he had faithfully proclaimed the Scriptures from that pulpit, becoming a leading statesman for classical Reformation theology. But then, on May 4, 2000, he announced to a grief-stricken congregation that he had been diagnosed with a highly aggressive and terminal form of cancer. He encouraged them to cling to the touchstones of their Reformed faith—that God is both sovereign as well as good. Then, as he slipped out of the chancel area for the last time, he spotted one of the associate pastors there on the platform, overcome with emotion. Gripping the younger man by the arm and looking him in the eye, he said: "Press on, brother. Fight the good fight."

That's what Paul is saying to Timothy—and, down through the ages, to us as well.

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

Vacation / Study Leave

The pastor will be on vacation and study leave from August 11 through September 3. Any pastoral care needs during this time period should be directed to Denise Ayers, the on-call session member at 402-968-2900. (The back-up session member is Kenny Drake.)

Worship & Family Life Sharlyn Deterding, Team Lead

Summer Guest Preachers

If at all possible, be sure to join us for these upcoming services of worship featuring an outstanding line-up of guest preachers.



Aug.18: Rev. Dr. Jeff McDonald

It will be a special delight to welcome Jeff McDonald back to the pulpit of Murray Presbyterian. Pastor Jeff served here from 2007-2015. He was then pastor of Avery Presbyterian in Bellevue from 2015-2022. At present, he's executive director of the Presbyterian Scholars Conference. Jeff will be joined on this return visit by his wife Krista, and children Katie, Meredith, Parker, and Reid.



Aug. 25: Elder Linda Reffert

Linda is one of our presbytery's premier Christian educators, having served as Christian Education Director for Hope Presbyterian in Omaha for 6 years and as Children's Director at First Presbyterian in Bellevue for 8 years. She is currently completing studies to become a Commissioned Ruling Elder (lay pastor) and will be providing short-term pastoral leadership to the Bellevue church when their pastor retires in September.



Aug.18: Rev. Deena Candler

As someone with a heart for the global church, Deena serves on the board of the Outreach Foundation, one of our premier Presbyterian-related mission organizations, and has made 10 trips to visit partner churches in the Holy Land, Egypt, Mexico, and Cuba. Last year, she led an unforgettable World Communion Sunday observance here at Murray Presbyterian. She retired in 2019 as Associate Pastor for Caregiving Ministry at West Hills Presbyterian Church in Omaha, capping off 39 years of ordained ministry in the Presbyterian Church.



Leadership Teams

Worship and Family Life

Sharlyn Deterding, *Team Leader*
Deb South, *Session Rep.*
Christina Dolvin
Linnea Hill
Julie Nickels
Sherrill Konfrst
Laraine 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
Linnea Hill
Norm Koester
Gary Reike
Michael Stahl

Mission & Outreach Kyle Nickels, Team Lead

Back to School Supply Drive



BACK TO SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE

It is time to fill the Cougar Convenience Corner

Please help us fill the Cougar Convenience Corner at Conestoga Jr.-Sr. High School and provide school supplies to Conestoga Elementary students and teachers!

NOW-SEPTEMBER 8, 2024

Suggested Items to Donate:

- Chapstick
- Deodorant
- Body Wash
- Shampoo/Conditioner
- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste
- Flossers
- Small Tissue Packs
- Razors
- Feminine hygiene products
- Dude Wipes
- Hair ties
- Socks
- Mechanical Pencils
- Pencils
- Dry Erase Markers
- Folders
- Notebooks
- Glue Sticks
- Sharpies
- Colored Pencils
- Markers
- Crayons
- Folders
- Prepackaged Snacks
- Easy Mac
- Oatmeal Packets
- Cup-O-Soups

YOUR SUPPORT IS APPRECIATED!
MPC MISSIONS AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Donations can be placed in tote in the back of the sanctuary.

Personnel Committee



With his impending departure for college, **John McConnell** will be turning over the reins in the church office. We have appreciated John's dedicated service over the past two years, during which he systematized procedures and worked very efficiently.

At the same time, we are delighted to welcome **Laura Daws** back. Laura served in our office for a short period of time during Rev. Portia Iverson's interim pastorate, before having to leave Nebraska for a family medical emergency. She is now one of our Murray neighbors and works full-time as a project coordinator for a global I.T. services company. Welcome Laura!

Keep Filling the SENCA Cart

AFTER SCHOOL HEALTHY SNACKS



With the start of the school year, the SENCA donation theme for August is "Back to School Snack." We are looking for non-perishable items such as granola bars, trail mix, crackers, and other foods that kids can have as an after-school snack. These items will then be donated to the SENCA food pantry in Plattsmouth, which serves all of Cass County.

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Vacation Bible School

Dozens of youngsters from our congregation, Murray Christian Church, and the community-at-large embarked on a deep-sea scuba adventure in July, where they learned that "God is a friend who is real," "God is a friend who loves," "God is a friend we can trust," and "God is a friend forever." Each session began with a family meal. After a round of boisterous singing, the kids began rotating around to various stations. In Deep Bible Adventures, they engaged in interactive Bible learning, by (for example) rocking in a boat with Jesus, while being sprayed with mist or entering the belly of a big fish like Jonah. In Sticky Scriptures, they practiced Bible navigation skills. In Imagination Station, they explored some of the wonders of God's creation. And in Reef Rec, they played outdoor games. Here's a look at highlights:



An Historical Retrospective: Mississippi Freedom Summer Project (1964)



Photo by Steve Schaprio via Miami Art Museum



Rev. Dave Anderson (at wedding of Al & Sherrill Konfrst)

This summer marks the 60th anniversary of the 1964 Freedom Summer project when over a thousand out-of-state volunteers converged on the state of Mississippi, then a bastion of racial segregation. Working alongside thousands of local Black civil rights activists, organizers attempted to register Black voters and set up Freedom Schools and Freedom Libraries. It was a dangerous undertaking. Three of those civil rights workers were murdered (an event depicted in the movie, *Mississippi Burning*).

Rev. Dave Anderson, Murray Presbyterian Church's pastor at the time, was one of those who felt called to be a part of this movement. He specifically volunteered to go to Hattiesburg, Mississippi and join a group of clergy members providing transportation and escorting Black citizens seeking to register to vote. But first, he approached the session. The minutes indicate that "he wanted, not only the approval of the session but their blessing and empathy." He indicated that he did not wish to do anything that would be divisive and impair his effectiveness in ministry, and he also apprised the session of the dangers associated with this effort.

After some discussion, the following resolution was moved by Towner Livingston, seconded by Olin Morris, and passed unanimously:

"The sentiment of the session was all in favor of the expression of both love and concern for our fellow man, and it is our honest belief that this will not cause dissension among our own people, and that for the most part, this movement will have their blessing. Our prayers are certainly with Dave in these trying days ahead, and as a court of God's house, we wish to go on record saying that we fully realize this is not a pleasant thing to do, nor is it a situation toward which one looks forward with fond anticipation, but we are proud of our minister who, with the full knowledge of the possibilities, seeks to serve God in this way in the ministry of the world."

It was a remarkable gesture of support, coming at a time when this community was (as someone who was a member of our church back then pointed out) overwhelmingly white and largely isolated from the kinds of issues that prompted this undertaking. Another follow-up item should be noted. There is sometimes been a tendency to view evangelism and social justice as antithetical to one another. Liberals, it is said, emphasize social justice at the expense of evangelism, while conservative Christians promote evangelism, sometimes to the exclusion of social justice concerns. *The Murray Presbyterian session did not embrace this utterly false dichotomy!* At its very next meeting, the session voted to support a Billy Graham crusade being held in Omaha that September. And it voted "that Dave [Anderson] should be given a free hand in participating in this program to whatever extent he wished and in accordance with his good judgment." A pastor who could, within the span of a few months, go to Mississippi to work for the civil rights of disenfranchised citizens and then return to do evangelism in the context of a Billy Graham crusade is an excellent role model for all of us!