
Murray Presbyterian Messenger



April 2025 

Murray Presbyterian Church

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

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

Featured This Month:

Holy Week



April 13: Palm Sunday

April 17: Maundy Thursday

April 18: Good Friday

April 20: Easter Sunday

**See page 4 for information about special
services**

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

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At some point along the way, in most great stories there is that inevitable “aha” moment. It’s the point when all the pieces begin to fall into place. The loose threads of the narrative come together. Everything begins to make sense. It’s the point when we say, “So *that’s* what it was all about.”

It’s a feature of literature that Aristotle described in his *Poetics*, the oldest surviving study of dramatic theory. According to Aristotle, an effective plotline revolves around an event that is unpredictable until it happens. But then when it has happened, the reader can see that it *had* to happen. It could not have been any other way. One of the examples Aristotle uses is Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*. The reader never suspects the final outcome, with Oedipus blinding himself. But once done, we see that the whole story in fact follows—indeed it must follow—from this one act.

If you stop and think about it, it’s a pattern that’s preeminently displayed in the Jesus story. The events of what we call Passion Week in many ways represent a dramatic reversal. Going back to the birth narratives at the beginning of the story, it looks like Jesus is being cast into the role of the triumphant Liberator, who will topple the oppressive system and set up a dynasty like king David’s. From there, the story moves on to episodes featuring miracles, fanfare, and popular acclaim (along, of course, with an undercurrent of opposition from religious elites). Jesus’ closest followers never anticipated the way things would turn out. Up until the last minute, they are jockeying for positions of power in the new regime.

So initially, the Cross is a shocking development. Missionaries showing the *Jesus* film to unreached people groups in tribal areas sometimes have to pause the projector when the crucifixion takes place. Having never heard the gospel story before, the audience members become so upset and outraged that they have to be calmed down and reassured that the story doesn’t end this way.

And yet, once we process the initial surprise, it all seems so obvious in retrospect. Of course, it had to happen this way. The Cross was the most inevitable event that ever took place. They might be overlooked in a casual reading, but there are little clues in the story itself pointing forward to this kind of development. (For example, there’s the oblique reference in Luke’s nativity story to the sword that will pierce Mary’s heart.) More importantly, the Cross ties together elements of the biblical storyline that span the millennia. According to John Levenson, the death of the beloved son is one of the great archetypal patterns in biblical literature. We see it first in the Abraham-Isaac saga, that includes the cryptic statement “God will himself provide the lamb” (Or should it be translated “God will provide *himself* the lamb”?) There is the Passover paradigm, the sacrificial system, the innocent sufferer in the Psalms and Isaiah’s Suffering Servant of Yahweh. Aha, it all makes sense now! Yes, the story had to turn in this direction.

Upcoming
 Worship Opportunities
 Lenten Sermon Series
 CSI: Jerusalem



It’s the greatest ‘whodunit’ of all times: *Who Killed Jesus?* Join us as we investigate the suspects—and come to a startling conclusion!

- March 9:** Rule-Bound Religion (Pharisees)
Matthew 12:1-14
- March 16:** Political Expediency (Caiaphas)
John 11:45-53
- March 23:** Economic Self-Interest (Chief Priests)
Mark 11: 12-18
- March 30:** The Control Instinct (Judas)
Mathew 26:1-3, 14-16; 27:1-5
- April 6:** Moral Cowardice (Pilate)
John 19: 4-16
- April 13 (Palm Sunday):** Popular Opinion (The Crowd)
Matthew 27:11-26
- April 17 (Maundy Thursday):** All of Us
Isaiah 53:1-6

Pastor's P.O.V

(cont'd)

But wait, there is one more dramatic reversal in store for us as the story continues. The Cross is overcome by resurrection victory on Easter Sunday. Once again, the disciples never saw it coming! They found it impossible to believe at first. And yet, once again after it has taken place, it's apparent in retrospect that it *had* to happen this way. Death and resurrection are inseparable in Israel's story. Hope and new life always prevail, even in the midst of defeat and exile.

In fact, it's a cycle that fits with a universal pattern. The dying and rising God is one of the most universal archetypal motifs in the world's mythology. Critics of the Christian faith have used this similarity to debunk the historicity of the Jesus story. Early Christians, they say, simply fused the story of Jesus with a mythological framework. C. S. Lewis, an Oxford don who specialized in the study of ancient literature, was well aware of the striking parallel. But he offered a different explanation. In the Christ event, he said, the world's great myths all came true! Our intuitions were right all along. Of course, it had to happen this way!

The Jesus story not only makes sense out of the biblical storyline. It makes sense out of life itself. There's a tragic dimension to the human experience, represented by the Cross. Goodness meets with opposition, love must suffer, and forgiveness is costly. That's one inevitable reality. But deep down inside, we know that's not the whole story. Death and evil can't have the final word. The horizons of our experience aren't confined to the parameters of earthly existence. We were made for something more than this. "The human soul," Leon Kass writes, "yearns for, longs for, aspires to some state, some goal, toward which our earthly activities are directed, but which cannot be attained in earthly life." The Jesus story—Cross and resurrection, Good Friday and Easter—makes sense out of life. It had to happen this way.

So, the drama we celebrate this month is the climax of God's revelation in the Bible and the most basic story there is. I invite you to join us in worship as we rehearse the story once more and reflect on its meaning for our lives.

VACATION:

The pastor will be taking a vacation leave from April 28 – May 5. There will be a session member providing coverage for any pastoral care needs that arise during this time.

Leadership

Session

Moderator

Rev. William McConnell

Clerk of Session

Debra South

Class of 2025

Sharlyn Deterding
Debra South

Class of 2026

Tanner Miner
Julie Nickels

Class of 2027

Melanie Honaker
Dana Stahl

Deacons

Class of 2025

Ryleigh Hill
Stacey McConnell
Karla Remmers

Class of 2024

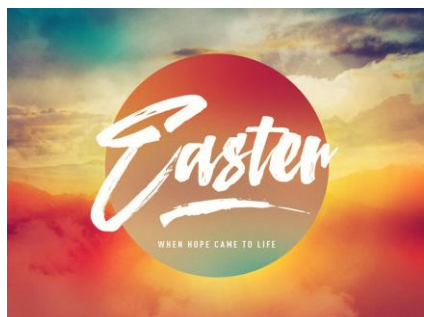
Jocelyn Deterding
Kathy Friedli
Mike Honaker

Holy Week



Palm Sunday (April 13)
Holy Week begins with a celebration of Palm Sunday / Passion Sunday, which will include the distribution of palm branches and the final Sunday message in the C.S.I.: Jerusalem series.

Maundy Thursday (April 17)
This special service enables us to focus on the Cross during this pivotal week of the church year. Our service at 7:00 pm in the sanctuary will include the final message in the C.S.I. sermon series and will close with the Lord's Supper around table in an Upper Room setting.



Easter Sunday (April 20)
Invite friends and family members and join us for a festive celebration of the resurrection on Easter Sunday. The service will include the traditional Easter hymns and a timely message from God's Word. There will be special activities for children during the worship hour.

Guest Preacher



Once again, we are honored to have the **Rev. Dr. Mike Elliott** coming to lead in worship on Sunday, **May 5**. Dr. Elliott recently retired as pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Bellevue after 25 years of pastoral ministry. A native of Long Island, NY, he graduated from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and served churches in Pennsylvania and New Mexico before coming to Nebraska.

For this third Sunday in Eastertide, the message will focus on the Emmaus Road story in preparation for gathering around the Lord's Table.



Leadership Teams

Worship and Family Life

Dana Stahl, *Team Leader*
Deb South, *Session Rep.*
Christina Dolvin
Linnea Hill
Julie Nickels
Sherrill Konfrst
Laraine Young

Mission and Outreach,

Melanie Honaker, *Team Leader*
George Collins
John McConnell
Stacey McConnell
Dana Stahl
Ann Wieringa

Christian Education

Julie Nickels, *Team Leader.*
Denise Ayers
Sharlyn Deterding
Kathy Friedli
Linnea Hill

Properties and Finance

Tanner Miner, *Team Leader*
Sharlyn Deterding, *Session Rep.*
Dave Friedli
Linnea Hill
Norm Koester
Peg Lawton
Gary Reike
Michael Stahl

Litter Clean-Up



Thank you to the TEN volunteers from our congregation who spent a couple of hours on April 6 policing our assigned stretch of Hwy 1 and collecting a whole truck load of litter!

Keep Filling the SENCA Cart!



So far this year, **132 items** have been placed in the shopping cart in the rear of the sanctuary and donated to the SENCA food pantry in Plattsmouth. Non-perishable items are always welcomed and appreciated. Keep filling the cart and helping to feed needy families in our community.

Summer Ministry Opportunities

Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information about these ministry opportunities coming up this summer:

June 8: Picnic in the Park at Tyson Park (Murray): This is a summer outreach event intended to be an opportunity for us to make connections with our neighbors in a neutral, off-site location.

June 27-29: Daily Vacation Bible School, held at the Murray Presbyterian Church building.