
Murray Presbyterian Messenger

May 2025



Murray Presbyterian Church

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

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

Featured This Month: **Community Picnic**



**Join us for food, fellowship, and fun, and an
opportunity to meet neighbors from our community!
Details on page 4**

Murray Presbyterian Church, Murray, NE
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Upcoming Events

Sundays

10:00 am: Morning Worship

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At the risk of stating the obvious, I'm someone who stands firmly within the Protestant Reformed tradition. Stacey and I named our son "John Calvin," for crying out loud! In my ministry, I'm supposed to be guided and led by our denomination's confessional standards, which include Reformation-era statements of faith that denounce the perceived errors of Roman Catholicism. I've also been shaped and influenced by the tradition of Protestant evangelicalism, with its emphasis on the authority of Scripture, the primacy of preaching, and the necessity of coming to a personal faith in Jesus. All this means there are definitely beliefs and practices within the Catholic Church that don't align with my understanding of Scripture. (Examples would include the veneration of Mary, praying to saints, and defining the 'true church' on the basis of being in communion with the Bishop of Rome [i.e., the Pope]).

Nonetheless, I have enjoyed rewarding fellowship with Catholic brothers and sisters over the years (both priests and laity). Our own congregation has been enriched by the participation of people with a Catholic background. As our society becomes increasingly secularized, even stalwart champions of Reformed Christian orthodoxy are discovering that the differences we have with believers of the Catholic persuasion (significant though they may be) pale in comparison with what we have in common.

So, with the world's attention now riveted on developments within the Catholic communion and the historic election of the first American-born pontiff, I thought I'd share a few features of Catholicism that even I, as a staunch evangelical, Reformed Protestant, still appreciate and affirm.

First and foremost is the Catholic Church's witness to the visible unity of the Christian Church over the centuries and around the world. There's no question about the fact that throughout the earliest centuries of the church's existence, staying in communion with the "one true, holy and apostolic church" was a standard of orthodoxy. Schismatics were condemned. By the time of the Reformation, that unity had already been broken by the Great Schism of 1054 (which divided the Eastern Church from the Western Church). As a Protestant Christian, I'd say the rampant corruption of the medieval church and widespread confusion concerning the gospel of free grace justified the departure of Reformed churches. And, over the ensuing centuries, the witness of the Reformed Churches has benefited the *entire* universal church (including the Catholic Church, which was motivated to clean up a lot of the corruption). Still, I am glad for the Catholic Church's ongoing reminder that visible unity is always the highest ideal to be sought after.

I'd compare it to the way I feel about the historic "peace churches" in the Anabaptist tradition (like the Mennonites). I adhere to the 'just war' doctrine, so I believe armed conflict is sometimes a tragic necessity in a fallen world. At the same time, I'm grateful for the witness of those peace churches, which stands in continuity with



Upcoming Worship Opportunities Easter Season Sermon Series



When the first followers of Jesus were trying to understand and explain what his resurrection was all about, they often turned to the Psalms. (The earliest example of this use of the Psalms is found in Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2.) You might say that the Psalms were the very first Easter hymns—even though they were written hundreds of years before Jesus! Join us during this part of the Easter season as we look at these Psalms, reflect on what New Testament Christians saw in them, and discover how they can help us apply the Easter message to our lives.

May 11: Resurrection Reassurance
(Psalm 2)

May 18: Resurrection Rescue
(Psalm 16)

May 25: Resurrection Reversal
(Psalm 118)

June 1: Resurrection Reign
(Psalm 110)

June 8: Pentecost Celebration

a tradition going back to the earliest Christians and which remind us that our highest calling is always that of peacemakers. Virtually all Christian traditions express and uphold some important dimension of the Christian faith.

Secondly, I appreciate, at least in moderation, the Catholic Church's focus on tradition and liturgy. Recently (April 17, 2025), the *New York Post* ran a story entitled "Why young people are converting to Catholicism en masse." A 30-year-old denizen of Manhattan's Upper West Side named Sydney was cited as a case in point. After growing up in a non-denominational Christian household, she explained her embrace of Catholicism this way: "There's just something so beautiful and transcendent about the rituals and the ancient history in the Catholic Mass that's been preserved. The church really communicates a degree of reverence that I didn't find in the more liberal, laissez-faire approach of nondenominational churches." To be sure, the big-box megachurches that have become the contemporary face of Protestantism, will continue to have an appeal for some. But the article shows that many thoughtful young people are searching for something with more substance and historical rootedness. As a Protestant Christian, I'd say that the ancient Christian heritage doesn't belong exclusively to Catholics. What these young people are looking for could, in my estimation, be found in Protestant Churches, were we inclined to tap into those rich spiritual resources.

Finally, I appreciate the social witness of the Catholic Church. The newly elected Pope's regnal name—Leo XIV—is a nod to that tradition, recalling the legacy of a previous Leo who issued one of the church's great social encyclicals (*Rerum Novarum*). Right away, pundits within the American context set about trying to position the new pontiff along the spectrum of American politics. It's a futile undertaking. As David French put it in the *New York Times* "no, the pope is neither MAGA nor woke. He's Catholic. . . ." That means he holds to positions that defy neat pigeon-holing. A Jesuit priest who edits a Catholic publication summed it up this way in a *New York Times* guest column: "Leo could well end up being the pope who makes it clear that the reason Catholic doctrine does not fit well into American politics is that it makes heavier demands than partisans on either side are willing to bear." Given the ideological captivity of much of American Protestantism (by the secular left in the case of mainliners and the secular right in the case of evangelicals), an approach that cuts across this traditional divide is refreshing. And, once again, what is routinely called "Catholic social teaching" is really just the historic social ethic of Christianity in general (which Protestants have largely discarded).

Whether we like it or not, the Pope is unquestionably the highest profile Christian leader in the world. So, all of us should be hoping and praying that the new pontiff will be a positive spiritual influence, displaying a servant's heart while also upholding historic Christian orthodoxy.

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

Mission & Outreach Melanie Honaker, Team Lead

Community Picnic in the Park



Christian Education

Julie Nickels, team lead

Graduate Recognition Sunday



During worship and fellowship hour on May 4, we celebrated two Conestoga High School graduates who are part of our church family: **Ryleigh Hill** (l) daughter of Lee and Linnea, plans to work at two girl scout camps over the summer. In the fall, she will be attending Peru State College, majoring in studio art and minoring in marketing

Bella Grasso (r), daughter of Scott, will be working and traveling over the summer. In the fall, she will be enlisting in the U. S. Air Force

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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



Vacation Bible School

Registration is now open for **YEE HAW**, this year's wild frontier-themed, weekend VBS. The dates and times are Friday, June 27 (6:30 - 8:15 pm, with family meal at 6:00 pm), Saturday, June 28 (9:30 am-12:00 pm), and Sunday, June 29 (10:00-11:00 am). Volunteers are needed to work at the various stations and to serve as crew leaders or junior crew leaders. To sign up VBS participants (pre-school to sixth grade) or to volunteer, go to www.myvbs.org/Murray2025VBS.

Worship & Family Life

Dana Stahl, Team Lead

Easter 2025



Save the Date



Save the date and be sure to join us on Sunday evening, **July 20**, when we are honored to be hosting **Brent Vernon**, Christian singer-songwriter, author-illustrator, and ventriloquist. For the past 30 years, Brent has been touring the country, thrilling audiences young and old with his repertoire of energetic, hope-filled songs. His ventriloquist sidekick, Sam, is always a hit with kids of all ages. You don't want to miss this exciting opportunity for our entire community! The cost is a free-will offering.