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# Murray Presbyterian Messenger

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July-August 2025



Murray Presbyterian Church

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

[www.murraypresbyterian.org](http://www.murraypresbyterian.org) Tel: (402)235-2754

Featured This Month: Brent Vernon Concert

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**Sunday, July 20 5:00 pm**  
**(followed by ice cream social)**

**Free-will offering**

**See page 5 for more information**

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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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Crowds supporting "Presbyterianism"

Number crunchers tell us the Presbyterian Church (USA) is shrinking faster than any other mainline Protestant denomination. So, it was rather gratifying recently to see literally millions of people throughout our land taking to the streets to promote an idea that has its roots in Presbyterianism!

I'm referring, of course, to the "No Kings" protests that sprang up last month. In fact, we might not be celebrating Independence Day this month without the Presbyterians. So, every time you hear fireworks going off, thank a Presbyterian!

Our tradition's conflict with heavy-handed monarchs goes all the way back to the founder of Scottish Presbyterianism, **John Knox**, who repeatedly clashed with Mary Queen of Scots, declaring that "resistance to tyranny is obedience to God." **Samuel Rutherford**, a subsequent Scottish Presbyterian pastor-theologian and member of the Assembly that formulated the Westminster Confession of Faith, wrote a classic work entitled **Lex Rex** (Latin for "the Law is King"). Most of his seventeenth century contemporaries would have reversed the wording—making it *Rex Lex*, "the king is the law"—but Rutherford established the case for constitutionalism, the rule of law, and limited government. Scholars say he paved the way for **John Locke** and his social contract theories that helped inspire the American Revolution.

Against this backdrop, it's not surprising that when the American colonies rose up to topple British rule, Presbyterians (many of them of Scots Irish extraction) were at the forefront. Twelve of the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence were Presbyterian, including **John Witherspoon**, the only clergy signer. King George III is supposed to have dubbed the whole affair "**a Presbyterian rebellion**" and his first minister told Parliament "Cousin America has run off with a Presbyterian parson." No wonder German historian Leopold Ranke opined that "**John Calvin was the virtual founder of America.**"

When the time came to devise a constitution for the newly formed nation, two thirds of the framers (according to one source) had a Calvinist background, and the majority of those were Presbyterians. The oft-repeated claim that the Constitution was deliberately patterned after Presbyterian church government can't be proven. But there certainly are parallels. Styles of church governance that put a lot of power in the hands of bishops operate more like a monarchy. By contrast, Presbyterianism operates on the basis of a bottom-up style of representative governance, where persons are elected to office and serve alongside one another as equals.

## Upcoming Worship Opportunities Summer Sermon Series



**June 22: "Abraham: Pleading for Justice"** (Gen. 17)

**June 29: "Jacob: Wrestling With God"** (Gen. 32)

**July 6: "A Prayer for America"**  
(Psalm 72)

**July 13: "Hannah: Cry of a Troubled Heart"**  
(1 Sam. 1:3-2:10)

**July 20: "David: Plea for Forgiveness"** (Psalm 51)

**July 27: "Daniel: Claiming the Promise"** (Dan. 9:1-19)

**Aug. 3: "Job: Sound of Silence"**  
(Job 38:1-7, 40:1-5, 42:1-6)

**Aug. 10: Guest Preacher:**  
**Craig Huffman**

**Aug. 17: You Can't Go It Alone**  
**(Worship on the Water)**

**Aug. 24: "Paul: Praying for Others"**  
(Eph. 1:11-23, 3:14-21)

**Aug. 31: "Jesus: The Last Battle"**  
(Matt. 26:36-46, 27:45-46)

So what happened to these Presbyterian principles that helped inspire America's grand experiment in representative government and constitutionalism? Basically, the traditional culture of denominations like Presbyterianism has been increasingly supplanted by a new church paradigm. In Fundamentalist and Pentecostal circles, as well as in the broader megachurch ecosystem and the sprawling network of parachurch enterprises (like media empires), religious institutions routinely operate like personality cults, revolving around an autocratic leader. Accountability structures are weak or non-existent. The figures heading up these operations tend to not be all that well educated. But what they may lack in formal theological training, they make up for in spades with charisma, self-confidence, and assertiveness. Is it any wonder, then, that people nurtured in this kind of religious environment gravitate toward a style of politics that can resemble a personality cult with autocratic leaders who are assertive, domineering, and charismatic? Where the need for accountability is minimized and expertise is devalued? What has essentially happened is that a warped ecclesiology has had detrimental social consequences.

Sadly, many of our secular friends today, spooked by what they call "Christian Nationalism," have come to view Christianity as a threat to democratic values. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth! **Our representative democracy is a direct byproduct of our Christian heritage.** Thankfully, traces of those Christian influences are still implanted in our collective consciousness, even if they are cut off from the original source. But, in my judgement, we would benefit as a nation from a renewal of that original source of values—a healthy, strong, thoughtful, civic-minded, classical Reformed faith. John Adams, a son of Puritan New England who lauded the influence of Calvin's Geneva on the creation of the American commonwealth, once wrote in a letter: **"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."** For the sake of our beloved country, may God continue to stir up fresh awakenings of genuine Christian faith and conviction.

## Vacation

The pastor will be on vacation leave from August 4 – 13. During this time, a session member will be on call to handle any pastoral care needs that may arise. (Information about the person to contact will be in the Sunday bulletins.)

## 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 Bennett

Kathy Friedli

Mike Honaker



## Mission & Outreach Melanie Honaker, Team Lead

### Community Picnic in the Park (June 8)



### Volunteer Opportunity at Open Door Mission



**Sunday, July 27**  
Dinner Service Time:  
**5:00 – 7:30 pm**

Sign up and carpool from the church lot at 4:00 pm.  
Or go to the Volunteer Entrance (NE corner of Garland Thompson Men's Center) at Open Door Mission, 2705 N 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Omaha

**Need to know:** Volunteers will feed the hungry by serving food, handing out drinks and desserts, assisting with clean-up and more!  
**Volunteers must register individually** on the Open Door Mission website: <https://www.opendoormission.org/volunteer/> (If you need help signing up, see Melanie or Stacey.)  
**All volunteers must wear long pants and closed toe / closed-heel shoes**, per Health Dept. regulations. Open Door Mission supplies aprons, gloves, and hairnets. If you have a favorite apron or hat, please wear it! (See the back table for more info and to sign up)



## 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

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## Brent Vernon Concert & Ice Cream Social



You won't want to miss this exciting opportunity for our church and community! We are honored to be hosting a concert with **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 alike with his repertoire of energetic, hope-filled songs. His ventriloquist sidekick, Sam, is always a hit with kids of all ages. Brent has released three studio albums, two instrumental albums, and several other recorded works for children and adults. He also is the author and illustrator of seven children's books, including the Audrey Amaka and the Gingerbread series. (See his website: [brentvernon.com](http://brentvernon.com)) Invite friends and neighbors to join us for this special event! An ice cream social will follow. The cost is a free-will offering.

## Pentecost (June 8)



The sanctuary was a "sea of red" on June 8 as we celebrated the church's birthday and the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

## Guest Preacher (August 10)



A special opportunity in worship is coming up on Sunday, August 10, when we will once again have the honor of welcoming **Craig Huffman** into the pulpit of Murray Presbyterian Church. Craig is the Executive Director of Calvin Crest Camp, Conference and Retreat Center in Fremont, Nebraska and a longtime friend of our congregation. Countless generations of young people from

Murray Presbyterian have made fond summer memories and enjoyed spiritual mountaintop experiences at Calvin Crest, our local Presbyterian camp and one of our church's valued mission partners. Please join us on this Sunday to welcome Craig and show our support for this long-standing partnership.

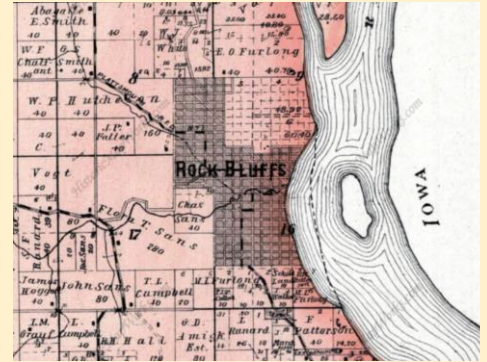
## Worship on the Water (August 17)



**"You Can't Go it Alone!"** Our spiritual forefathers and mothers knew that when they came as pioneers to the Nebraska Territory and organized our congregation 165 years ago. We need to remember that principle of life ourselves and encourage our friends and neighbors to adopt it. You can't go it alone! You need a spiritual community in your life. And you need a relationship with God.

Join us at Beaver Lake Pavillion 1 on **August 17** as we mark 165 years of ministry and celebrate what our church family means in the lives of our current members. **This is designed to be an outreach event, so invite friends and neighbors, especially if they don't presently have a church home.** Using music, a message from the New Testament, and testimonies, we will be emphasizing the importance of "not going it alone." A potluck meal will follow the service.

## 165 Years Ago



"According to appointment of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church made at Philadelphia in May, 1860, I came a missionary to Nebraska Territory in July and commenced preaching half time in Rock Bluff, Cass County.

By arrangement with those who requested preaching, August 18 was designated as the time for organizing a church. And on the day appointed, after sermon from Matthew 11:29, the following persons were admitted in full communion by assenting to the principles of the church, to wit: Rob't M. Latta, Letitia Latta, William S. Thompson, Hanna E. Thompson, William H. Royal, Elizabeth Royal, David Storey, Jane Latta and Mary Latta. Also Robert M. Latta and W. L. Thompson were, by ballot, chosen ruling elders and the organization named 'The United Presbyterian Congregation of Rock Bluffs'."

(First entries in our Session Minutes, by Rev. Thomas McCartney, organizing pastor)



## Vacation Bible School (2025)

Yee Haw Vacation Bible School was an awesome experience! Over the course of three days, culminating in a rousing Sunday morning service, thirty-one students, along with a dedicated team of adult and teen volunteers, came together to “celebrate God’s greatest gift”—Jesus. As always, there was exuberant singing, games, crafts, and Bible lessons. Here’s a peak at some of the scenes. A video is available on the church’s Facebook page.

