
Murray Presbyterian Messenger



October 2025

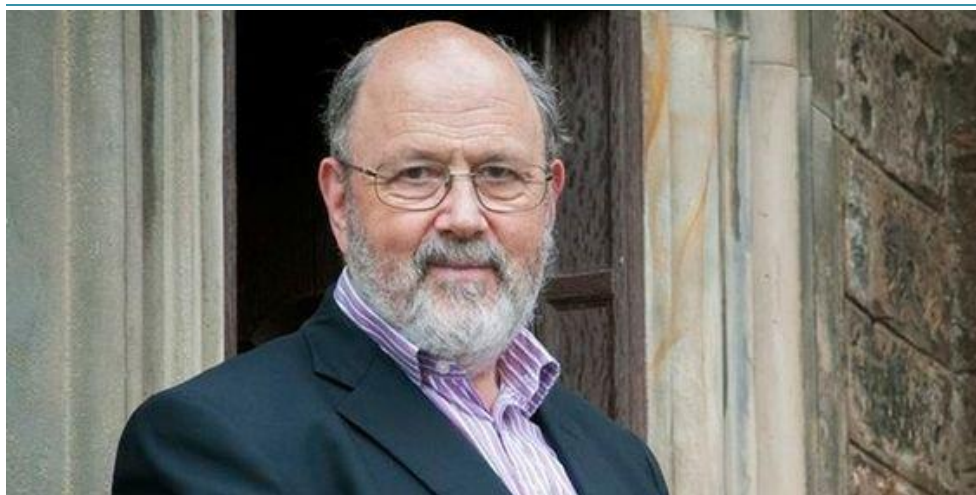


Murray Presbyterian Church

P.O. Box 196, 105 W. Main Street Murray, NE 68409

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

Featured This Month: *Simply Christian* Study



"*Simply Christian* is simply outstanding. It will confirm, challenge, and deepen your grasp of Christian faith and practice." — **Christianity Today**

"[No one] has done more to clarify what [...] Christianity looks like in our day than Tom Wright." — **John Ortberg, teaching pastor, Menlo Park Presbyterian Church**

"No one living today is writing more thoughtfully and compellingly about Christian theology." — **Jon Meacham, author of *The Soul of America***

Find out about an exciting opportunity to engage with N. T. Wright's *Simply Christian* right here at Murray Presbyterian Church.

See p. 5 for more information

or go to <https://www.murraypresbyterian.org/simply-christian/>

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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The following letter was sent out at the beginning of October to most members and regular attenders of Murray Presbyterian Church. It is reproduced here for the benefit of any newsletter readers who did not receive it in the mail:

There's a poignant piece of dialogue in the movie *Fried Green Tomatoes*, right after one of the main characters, Ruth, has peacefully passed away in the prime of life. "It's all right, honey," the wise old housekeeper tells a distraught Idgie. "Let her go. You know, Miss Ruth was a lady. And a lady always knows when to leave."

Knowing when to leave does require a measure of grace and wisdom. As I've thought about retirement, I have avoided making any long-term plan, simply trusting that I would somehow know when the right moment had arrived. Over the past several months, a combination of upcoming personal milestones along with developments in the wider church have made it unmistakably clear to me that the time has finally come. I would like to make it to the twenty-fifth anniversary of my ordination (February 4, 2026) and of the date on which my first call began (February 19, 2026) before hanging up my spurs. So, I'm asking the presbytery to dissolve my call to serve as your pastor effective February 28 and to enroll me as a retired member.

This announcement is being made now because I wanted the congregation and the session to know about these plans before any preparations for the upcoming year (such as budgeting and nominations) get underway. You also should know that my impending departure was very much on my mind as I was laying out the current sermon series based on 1 Corinthians. I obviously won't be talking directly about what's happening with me over the course of the series. But all the themes we'll be addressing—being a community that embodies the gospel, staying focused on the Cross, maintaining unity, using gifts to build up the body, prioritizing the virtue of love—represent the messages I want to leave with you. (I'm also willing to lead one more adult education class, if there is sufficient interest.)

Whenever I have had to share news like this with a congregation, it inevitably involves mixed emotions. First and foremost, Stacey and I are grateful. We are grateful for opportunity the Lord gave us to serve here and for every way in which the ministry here has enjoyed his blessing. Exciting things are happening. We've seen our leadership teams reinvigorated, a blossoming of outreach initiatives, and a renewed interest in Bible study. We're thankful for the slow, but steady, infusion of newcomers and the delightful presence of young families with children.

Upcoming Worship Opportunities: Fall Sermon Series

GRACE CHANGES EVERYTHING



Becoming a Gospel-Centered Community
(The Message of 1 Corinthians)

Corinth was the most messed-up church we encounter in the New Testament! But their missionary founder, the Apostle Paul, had a ready-made solution for all that was wrong: a return to the simple gospel message he had proclaimed to them. His first letter to that church offers a window into what it means to be a community of people fully shaped and formed by the gospel of the crucified and risen Christ. Join us this fall as we consider what that message might mean for us!

Sept. 17: Gospel Identity
(1 Cor. 1:1-9)

Sept. 24: Gospel Unity
(1 Cor. 1:10-17)

Oct. 5: Gospel Wisdom
(1 Cor. 1:18-25)

Oct. 12: Gospel Foundation
(1 Cor. 3:10-23)

Oct. 19: Gospel Accountability
(1 Cor. 5:1-13)

Oct. 26: Gospel Transformation
(1 Cor. 9-11)

Nov. 2: Gospel Freedom
(1 Cor. 8:1-13)

Nov. 9: Gospel Surrender
(1 Cor. 9)

On a personal note, our family is very grateful for all your expressions of generosity over the years and for the ways you encouraged and supported John in his endeavors. This was a good place for Stacey to launch her career, for John to spend his high school years, and for me to wind down my time in active ministry. The support, affirmation, and encouragement so many of you express on a regular basis has been greatly appreciated.

Now, it's time to look to the future. For me and Stacey, my retirement will mark the end of our sojourn on the Great Plains. We plan to return to the place where we started out as a family—in Western Pennsylvania. We're trusting the Lord to provide Stacey with employment in that area and to lead us to the right house and to an active church community.

For you, as a congregation, a change like this invariably ushers in a period of uncertainty. But we confident in the fact that God is faithful. The one who began a good work in you will carry it to completion (Philippians 1:6). The next person the Lord calls to serve here may not have the same gifts and priorities as me. But he or she will be the right person to lead you on the next stage of your journey, a journey that has continued for 165 years now!

May God bless you all!

In Christ's Love,

Rev. William J. McConnell,

Pastor



June 26, 2016

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

Friday Nite Bites



Friday Nite Bites continued offering a safe gathering space for Conestoga high school students following home games at Cougar Stadium. The final two dates this month are **October 3** and **October 24** (Homecoming weekend).

Free Spiritual Retreat: The Bread On Our Table



Fresh baked bread...very few things are more inviting to our senses than that! Just the thought of it invigorates our smell, touch, sight, and taste. It's not surprising, then, that Jesus uses bread, which causes such a visceral

response in our physical bodies, to help us remember and recognize his spiritual presence always with us.

All are invited to a one-day spiritual retreat on **Saturday, November 8** from **10 am to 3 pm** at the **First Presbyterian Church in Plattsmouth**, based on the theme "The Bread on our Tables." Led by Rev. Laura Rasmussen, spiritual director and minister member of our presbytery, participants will reflect on the importance of bread in cultures around the world, consider Christian traditions with the popular Matthew 6:35 verse, and experience Jesus' spiritual presence as they enjoy both beloved, familiar breads as well as unfamiliar, foreign breads. (Gluten-free options will be available). For more information or to register, go to: <https://www.pmr.org/ninja-forms/63bdfm/>



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

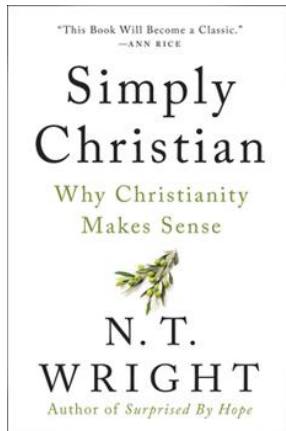
Christian Education

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

"Simply Christian" Adult Education Opportunity



What's the heart of the Christian message?

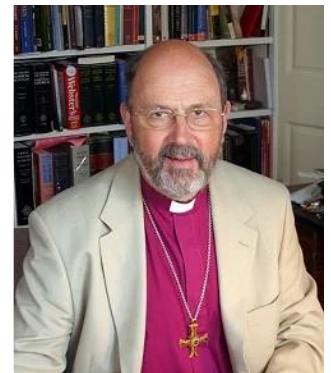
Does Christian faith make sense in the modern world?

You're invited to come explore questions like these in a series of studies based on the book, *Simply Christian*, by esteemed New Testament scholar and Anglican bishop N. T. Wright. Hailed as a spiritual classic and a modern-day equivalent to C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*, Wright's work presents a fresh, compelling case for Christian belief in a secular age and provides a perceptive overview of the basic Christian message. Established believers will gain new insights through Wright's provocative and original approach. Skeptics and doubters will go away with case to consider, presented in a gentle, reasonable way.

This class will meet Sunday evenings, **October 19 – November 16** from **6:30-7:30 pm**. Each session will include a short (15-20 minute) video presentation by Professor Wright summarizing one section of his book. There will then be opportunity for questions and discussion. The book will be made available to participants, but having a copy is not necessary to benefit from the class.

About N. T. Wright

Widely regarded as one of the world's pre-eminent New Testament scholars, N. T. "Tom" Wright has written over 85 books, including both scholarly works as well as popular treatments of biblical themes. His distinguished career has included teaching posts at Cambridge, Oxford, and University of St. Andrews. He is currently Senior Research Fellow at Wycliffe Hall (Oxford). A leading representative of the evangelical wing of the Anglican Church, he has served as canon theologian at Westminster Abbey and (from 2003-2010) Bishop of Durham and Lord Spiritual in the British Parliament. He has a remarkable ability to combine scholarly insight with vivid prose and to present complex ideas in a way that's readily accessible.



Property and Finance

Tanner Miner, Team Lead

Fall Stewardship Campaign



Do you enjoy seeing the exciting things God is doing at Murray Presbyterian through the pages of this newsletter? Has the church been a blessing in your life? If so, remember this is the season of the year when our members and friends are challenged to make a financial commitment to the church for the coming year. Letters went out by mail to members and those who have pledged in the past. Extra copies of the mailing are available on the back table. Please return your "plan of giving" card, sealed in the small envelope, on or before Stewardship Sunday, **November 9**. You can also email your pledge information to our church accountant at murraypc.bookkeeper@gmail.com. Thank you for prayerfully considering how you might be a part of this ministry in 2026!

Hwy 1 Litter Clean-Up



Volunteer from our church cleaning up litter along our assigned stretch of Hwy 1 on September 14.

Birthday Cake Kits



The SENCA cart in the back of the sanctuary is now overflowing with donations, including birthday cake supplies that will be assembled into kits for SENCA patrons to use in making birthday memories. Thank you to everyone who participated in this special project. And keep filling the cart with donations of non-perishable items for needy families in our community.

Fire Department Meal



The following note was received from the Murray Volunteer Fire Department acknowledging the meal that was provided by our church for their monthly meeting on September 9:

Dear Murray Presbyterian Church,

We are honored by your faithful support of the Murray Volunteer Fire Department. We look forward to your delicious meal every year. That ice cream dessert is a beloved favorite. We appreciate you spending your time and efforts on us. What an encouragement you are!

Sincerely

Jule Babe, treasurer, MVFD