

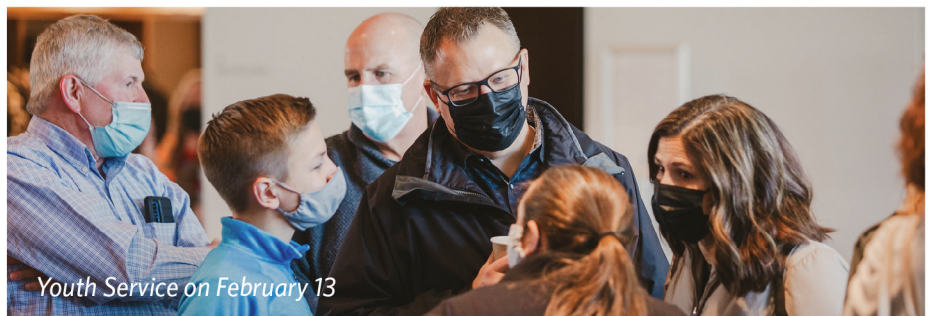
MARCH 2022



Annual Meeting on February 13



Sunday School



Youth Service on February 13

COUNTRYSIDE GOING TO ONE 10:00 AM SERVICE FOR LENT

Following the powerful and moving youth-led worship service on Annual Meeting Sunday, February 13, The Board of Deacons was inspired to build upon our community energy by intentionally bringing the congregation together in one worship service on Sunday mornings at 10:00 AM during Lent. Countryside will move to one service beginning Sunday, March 6, and go through Palm Sunday, April 10.

Post-Sermon Dialogue. We invite the congregation to gather in Marys' Hall following each Lenten service for a 45-minute discussion, reflection, and fellowship session. The Board of Christian Education will facilitate each session and the congregation will be invited to ask questions of the preacher and each other, sharing feedback and reflections on the sermon topic. Coffee will be served.

Sunday School will also gather after the 10:00 a.m. worship and during the Post-Sermon Dialogue and will be offered every week. Students will be welcomed at the Children's Education Area doors downstairs and escorted to their classrooms by a leader. We ask that our students' grown-ups remain outside of the space until Sunday School leaders bring their classes out. Parents can drop their kiddos off at Sunday School then hang out for discussion and coffee at the Post-Sermon Dialogue if they wish.

On Easter, we will celebrate the resurrection with our traditional sunrise service at 7:00 AM, followed by two Easter services in the Sanctuary at 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM.

We invite you to join us during Lent as we commemorate the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and continue to move forward on our collective journey toward what God is calling us to be.

Please see inside for all Lenten activities.



MEMORIALS AND BIRTHS

Births

Matilda (Tilly) June Bednar was born Thursday, January 27, in Omaha. Her happy parents are Kara Brown and her husband Alex Bednar. Jan and Mike Brown are Tilly's delighted grandparents, and Tyler Brown is her uncle.

Memorials

Nancy (Bob) Davis's sister, Judy Stokes, passed away in January, in Kansas City, Missouri.

Vince (Cynthia) Lindenmeyer's mother, Karen Lauer Lindenmeyer, passed away on February 9. Her memorial service will be held on March 15 in Clemson, South Carolina.

PASTORAL CARE

Prayer Tree

For Lent this year we will feature a prayer tree near the coffee shop. We invite you to write down something you would like others in our community to pray for. It can be prayers for yourself, your loved ones, your community, even the planet. You can then hang your prayer on the tree and then take someone else's prayer to pray for them over the Lenten season. This way of praying for each other brings people in our community together and this in itself creates healing for us during the season of Lent.

Children are invited to participate as well. If they cannot write they can always draw a picture of what they would like another to pray for.

We will also have prayer cards available to take home to help get you started on reflections and prayers for Lent.

SPECIAL SERVICE ON MARCH 31 LED BY STEPHEN MINISTRY

The Stephen Ministers are planning a service for Thursday, March 31 at 7 PM. When we gather for worship, you (yes you!) are invited to bring something that will be useful for all: Sing a hymn, tell a story, lead a prayer, provide an insight. Then each speaker gets a chance to say something special from God, and you all learn from each other. When we worship the right way, God doesn't stir us up into confusion; God brings us into harmony.

Far from being a dark and dreary season, Lent is truly a time of joy-filled anticipation and is intended for us to get ready for the glorious and joyful love that the promise of Easter brings. We would truly like this to be a service of joy and an opportunity to share our love as a church family. There will be snacks and coffee drinks available before the service at 6:30 PM. So, come join us as we all give our time, energy and attention to each other and rediscover our connection with God and through our church community.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

(If you are or have participated in the Stephen Ministry program, you are welcome to join our meeting on March 1 at 6 PM at Countryside Community Church to help us finish planning this special service.) Please contact Debbie Vihstadt at debbiev@countrysideucc.com if you have any questions.

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COUNTRYSIDE CONNECTED



RACE IN AMERICA

For the last year and a half, Countryside has offered book studies, in various forms with various facilitators, on the subject of Race in America. We continue to offer multiple opportunities, as our congregation has shown a genuine eagerness to learn and grow their understanding. Due to the popularity of these studies, we will continue to offer them into 2022. Some of the books we have read are *White Fragility*, *Caste*, *How To Be An Anti-Racist*, *The New Jim Crow*, *So You Want to Talk About Race*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as told to Alex Haley*, *My Grandmother's Hands*, *White Feminism*, *See No Stranger* and more. All of these have served a purpose in continuing our attempt to grasp this complex subject. Some of these books will be revisited this year and new ones, such as *Four Hundred Souls* and *The Sum of US* will be added. Please join us. If you are interested or have questions, please contact Diane Scott at dianes@countrysideucc.org or text 402-707-1556.

MINDFUL MEDITATION SITS WITH CARLOS, WEDNESDAYS AT 6 PM

Mindful Meditation Sits with Carlos Figueroa are continuing Wednesday evenings from 7-8 PM via Zoom. You can access these sits through the Zoom link on the church calendar: countrysideucc.org/calendar If you have any questions or would like more information about these opportunities, please contact the church office at office@countrysideucc.org or call 402-691-0350

FAME (FRIDAY ARTS & MUSIC EXPERIENCE) EVERY FRIDAY AT 10 AM

Join a fun group of seniors every Friday at 10 AM at Countryside for an art project, a yummy treat and to listen to some good music. We may also have visitors from time to time. It is a great way to get out of the house and enjoy time with friends for an hour. Everyone is welcome. No reservations are required. Masks are required right now for our indoor activities.

JOYS AND CONCERNS MINISTRY

Thursday mornings at 10AM. You are invited to come together to develop the spiritual practice of group prayer. We pray for our church, our families, our community, our country and the world. We come together of one accord to pray for any and all prayer needs and requests, for ourselves and others. All prayer requests are kept confidential and not shared.



SATURDAY MORNING ZUMBA CLASSES VIA ZOOM

These sessions are free, introductory classes, open to all ages. Saturday mornings at 8:00 AM. For more information, contact Cynthia Lindenmeyer at cynthia@sacredactivismtoday.org.

MEN'S BREAKFAST, TUESDAYS AT 8 AM

Looking for fellowship and great conversation? Check out the weekly Men's Breakfast at First Watch on 72 and Pacific. Every Tuesday morning at 8 AM feel free to stop in and have breakfast. You can come every week or stop in once a month, it's up to you! All are welcome to attend!

LUNCH BUNCH - SECOND MONDAY OF MONTH

Lunch Bunch meets on Mondays. If you're interested in joining this group, which is our traditional "circle" group from way back, please contact Gloria Ried at g-g.ried@cox.net. The next meeting is on March 14.

COUNTRYSIDE UPDATES



RELIGION@WORK PODCAST

Religion@Work, a podcast from Tri-Faith Initiative, brings together diverse voices to share stories and discussion on the intersections of religion, faith, and spirituality in our work lives.

Join Tri-Faith Deputy Director Erik Servellon as he interviews diversity, equity, and inclusion experts, scholars, and workers from a range of industries. They'll talk about how we can better integrate religious diversity into the workplace by bringing our whole selves to work.

Listen to our premiere episode, "Pushing Interfaith Work Forward" with Wendy Goldberg, Executive Director of Tri-Faith Initiative, on Apple, Google, and Spotify Podcasts.

Go to trifaiith.org/ourwork/religion-at-work to learn more.

PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Pastoral Search Committee (PSC) began meeting in December and continues to meet twice a month. In addition, the committee met for an all-day retreat on Saturday, February 19. The purpose of this retreat was to dive deep into the information gathered from the discernment groups. The congregation's input is vital to the search process. At the retreat, a task force was formed to take the discernment data and subsequent questions generated by the committee to develop a survey. The survey will be administered to the congregation and your responses will aid the PSC in further understanding the priorities of our church members. (Details regarding the survey will be coming soon.) All the information together will serve as the foundation to develop the church profile. This profile is the tool used to attract and recruit our new settled minister.

The PSC understands the urgency of this task; however, it is important to honor the process. The intent is to continue to communicate updates to the congregation via the church newsletter and monthly at worship services. We are also in the process of setting up an email account so you, the congregation, can email any questions, suggestions, or concerns directly to us.

We greatly appreciate your participation, prayers, and support throughout this search process. Onward!

FLOWERS

Have you noticed? For the last few weeks Countryside has had fresh flowers gracing our Sanctuary and altar. HUGE thanks to Kim Schwartz for taking on the job of coordinating this reminder of God's beauty in our world.

You can sponsor a week's flowers in honor of or in memory of a loved one or of a joyous event. Or just because - FLOWERS! The cost is \$40 and after church you may take your flowers home or have Countryside deliver them to one of our shut-in members.

Stop by the church office to sign up!



USHERS

The Board of Deacons invites you to donate 100 minutes. That's all it takes to be an usher for one service. You will greet people at the Sanctuary door, hand out bulletins and the communion elements, light the altar candles and other simple duties. It's super easy but so very important to help members and guests feel welcome in our church home.

If you've never been an usher, signing up is easy. Give your email address to the church office. They will pass it on to Dede Marshal. She'll give you the link to Sign Up Genius where you can choose the dates you want to serve. Come 15 minutes before the service begins and plan to stay for 20-30 minutes after it's over to pick up bulletins and other things left in the pews.

It's only about 100 minutes of your time, but it's a vital part of our mission to be the church where ALL ARE WELCOME.

DESIGNATION GROUPS AND TRI-FAITH



DESIGNATION GROUPS

If you recall, we recently offered a six-week sermon series on each of six designations offered from the conference. During those weeks, we also provided sign-up sheets for those of you who are interested in working on a team to take Countryside on a path to that designation. In December, in staggered starts, a few representatives of each group started meeting to write a mission statement and to brainstorm ideas that would provide education and involvement in their designation. The Mental Health group is currently working in collaboration with BOCO for the Easter offering. The FATE/Creation Justice group has been meeting and is currently offering a Zoom gardening class at no charge for the entire congregation. If you missed the first part, please join in on March 3 for the conclusion. Many more opportunities will be coming soon from this group. The Immigrant-Welcoming group will be starting up in March. The Anti-Racist representatives have been meeting and discussing a curriculum for church leadership and the entire congregation. Many exciting things are developing for Countryside's future. If you feel like being a part of any of the designations, please reach out to Diane Scott at 402-707-1556 or dianes@countrysideucc.org and she will direct you to the right contact person. Watch for developments in this spot every month to see what is happening with these important projects.

TRI-FAITH INITIATIVE

WOMEN OF TRI-FAITH VIRTUAL LUNCH

Monday, March 14, 12 - 1 PM, online

The Women of Tri-Faith Virtual Lunch is an opportunity to meet new friends, stay connected, and build intergenerational bonds between women of all faiths and identities.

Join us for sisterhood and casual conversation over lunch!

Registration required - go to trifaith.org/events to register.

ABRAHAM'S WHITEBOARD: BLACK MUSLIMS AND THE WAR ON DRUGS WITH DR. ALAINA MORGAN

Thursday, March 3, 6:30 - 8:00 PM CST, online

To Serve (Allah) and Protect: Black Muslims and the War on Drugs

In this special session of Abraham's Whiteboard, guest host Dr. Alaina Morgan of USC will discuss the impact of the war on drugs on Black communities, as well as the ways that Black Muslims intellectualized the crisis and sought solutions.

Alaina Morgan is Assistant Professor in the Department of History at the University of Southern California (USC). Trained as a historian of the African Diaspora, Professor Morgan's research focuses on the historic utility of religion, in particular Islam, in racial liberation and anti-colonial movements of the mid- to late-twentieth century Atlantic world. As part of a body of work of intellectual, political, and religious history, Professor Morgan's research teases out the connections between religious identity and racial formation, intellectual discourse and grassroots activism, and local and global politics.

Abraham's Whiteboard is a monthly educational class led by Tri-Faith's Education Director, Jeremy Fricke, on a wide variety of special topics, historical moments, and world religions. For example, a session could focus on definitions of religion or on non-Abrahamic religions like Hinduism or Buddhism. All Abraham's Whiteboard sessions are open to all people regardless of background, but will connect the content to Judaism, Christianity, and/or Islam.

Registration required - go to tri-faith.org/events to register.

THE BOX FOR MARCH

The Box for March is Rejuvenating Women. Rejuvenating Women is a nonprofit organization providing hope and restoration to those enslaved in human trafficking. They encourage victims and survivors of human trafficking and empower them to lead healthy, independent lives. RW is committed to developing long-lasting relationships with the women who have experienced significant trauma. They raise awareness of human trafficking in Omaha and surrounding communities. They help them restore their physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

RW raises awareness of human trafficking in Omaha, Nebraska, and surrounding communities. Their team of dedicated staff and volunteers invest in the lives of each individual living in the recovery residential home as well as those participating in other programs or services that we offer.

Rejuvenating Women believes in a multidisciplinary team approach and tailoring the best possible care for each survivor and prevention of future human trafficking. Our integrated curriculum and trauma informed approach honors diverse perspectives and experiences, and intended prevention of future human trafficking.

To learn more go to: rejuvenatingwomen.com.

Go to countrysideucc.org/give and click the Box to donate.



LENTEN ACTIVITIES

LENT BEGINS ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, WITH ASH WEDNESDAY

- There will be an opportunity between 7:00 and 9:00AM in the Sanctuary for the imposition of ashes. Lent is a time of repentance and marks the beginning of Jesus's 40 days in the desert. Ashes are ceremoniously placed on the foreheads of participants in the shape of a cross. These ashes come from the burning of the previous year's palms after the celebration of Palm Sunday
- Coffee will be served during this time in the coffee house until 10:00 AM.
- Countryside will host a brief Ash Wednesday evening service from 7:00-7:30 p.m. in the sanctuary - please join together so we, like dust, awaken to this ever-constant change that shapes us as we prepare our hearts for the coming 40-days as we open our lives to God.

On **Thursday evenings** at 7:00 PM during Lent there will be **special spiritual practices:**

- March 3: Care of the Earth - Earth University Speaker on Zoom.
- March 10: Pew yoga, breath work, prayer and meditation
- March 17: Singing bowls, guided prayer and meditation
- March 24: Organ, hymn, prayer and meditation
- March 31: Organ, hymn, prayer and meditation
- April 7: Walking prayer and meditation practice (labyrinth and Abraham's Bridge)

The worship theme for Lent this year is **Journey to Jerusalem**. The journey begins with the announcement of the mission and ministry of Jesus in Luke 4:14-21 when Jesus returns to his home synagogue in Nazareth. Jesus selects a section in the scroll from the Prophet Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6, and proclaims "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, let the oppressed go free." Jesus announced "this is my mission, my ministry, I am committed to following the path of Isaiah."

The journey of Jesus calls forth the image of God's love as central in the lives of all people and that all people have inherent dignity. The trust of the spirit of God at the core of your being has brought you healing. Jesus has many encounters with outcasts, and rejects, that mainstream leaders would consider beneath their dignity to interact with such as the slave of a Roman centurion, a despised symbol of Roman occupation, and then a Roman centurion guard who is among the first to recognize Jesus as innocent and the Son of God.

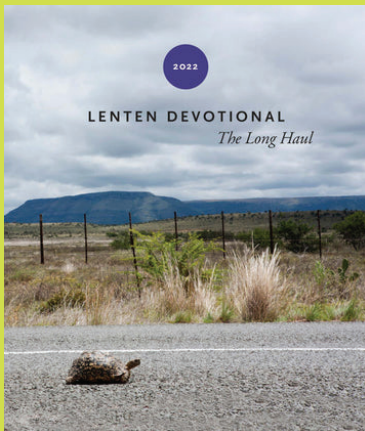
There are many encounters as Jesus is involved in the lives of so many diverse people; men and women, children, lepers, healing the blind and freeing those who are bound by a demonic spirit, the despised Samaritans, most notably the woman at a well, a tax collector and a woman to bathe his feet and anoint him with oil.

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

This year's Lenten Devotional is called *The Long Haul*. It is written by The Still speaking Writers' Group composed of United Church of Christ ministers and writers who collaborate on resources for people in the church, outside the church, and not sure about the church. In this devotional series, we invite you to take a breath. We invite you to understand that breath is a gift. We invite you to embark on the road before you and to know that what is asked of you will be met. The Holy Spirit is your companion on this journey. And so are we.

Stay with it for the long haul. Seek out and recognize your companions for the trip. Know God to be with you. May these devotionals help.

These booklets are on sale on Sundays after church for \$5. A PDF version is also available. Go to <https://www.thepilgrimpress.com/collections/new-releases/products/the-long-haul-2022-lenten-devotional>



Annual Meeting on February 13

LENTEN ACTIVITIES



FOLLOW THE CROSS

As part of our Lent and Easter celebrations, Countryside will once again be offering Follow the Cross. This walk-through experience will take place on Wednesday, April 13 and Thursday, April 14, both evenings from 5:00 to 7:00 PM. This year, in addition to our acknowledgment of the cross, we will be embracing our place in the created world and also will include spiritual practices. As always, there will be activities for the children as well. If you would like to be a part of the creative process, please contact Diane Scott at 402-707-1556 (text anytime) or dianes@countrysideucc.org. Otherwise, please join us for this Easter event.

LENTEN JOURNEY BY WALKING

The journey to Jerusalem will take place each Tuesday and Thursday morning during Lent from 8:00 to 9:00 AM followed by prayer in the Sanctuary at 9:30 AM. Rev. Judy Waible once walked 20 miles during Holy Week. We won't be walking 20 miles at once but maybe during Lent these miles will accumulate as we journey to Easter. Please join Judy as she walks Abraham's Bridge every Tuesday and Thursday morning during Lent. Abraham's Bridge is .25 miles for one round, four times around is a mile. There are a lucky 13 Tuesdays and Thursdays during Lent so that would be a little over six rounds every Tuesday/Thursday to get to 20 miles!

PRAYER ON TUESDAY AND THURSDAY

Rev. Dr. Norman Pavey will be leading centering prayer in the Sanctuary every Tuesday at 9:30 AM during Lent. Centering prayer is a meditative prayer that uses words or phrases from the Bible. As you breathe in and out you think of the word or phrase which the Spirit has given you, and you continue to do to this for the time you have chosen. Prayers for the people will happen on Thursdays at 9:30 a.m. These will be prayers for the church and for the congregation and any specific prayers people would like to bring to this holy place during this holy time.

LENTEN WORSHIP SERVICES

LENTEN WORSHIP SERVICES will take place at 10:00 AM followed by Post-Sermon Dialogue and Sunday School at 11:00 AM

- March 6 - Rev. Don Sarton will introduce the Journey to Jerusalem series
- March 13 - Elaine Wiles, Youth member
- March 20 - Rev. Dr. Norman Pavey
- March 27 - Guest TBA
- April 3 - Guest TBA
- April 10 - Palm Sunday - Rev. Judy Waible
- Easter Sunday, April 17, sunrise service at 7:00 AM, followed by services at 9:00 AM and 11:00 AM.



COUNTRYSIDE MISSION STATEMENT

We are an inclusive, open and affirming family of faith, welcoming all to God's table of love and acceptance. We are diverse, yet united by Christ's example. We care for one another, support one another and challenge one another to become all that God creates us to be. We work together to nurture our community and to promote peace, equality and justice in our conflicted world.

RESOURCES FOR DISCERNMENT

During discernment Countryside members will be asking themselves the following questions:

1. How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?
2. What is our call to serve?
3. What does it mean to be the Christian partner of the Tri-Faith Initiative?

To prepare yourself to better answer these questions here are some resources you can take some time to look over at your leisure before attending a small group session. Information about Tri-Faith, check out their website at trifaith.org or the Countryside website about their involvement in Tri-Faith, countrysideucc.org/relocation. Download the Countryside bylaws and the 2020 annual report countrysideucc.org/discernment.



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YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

Sr. High Youth

This month, we will welcome a guest speaker from the Tri-Faith Gardens, host movie nights to watch Encanto and Guardians of the Galaxy, have a park clean-up day, and begin a new book, *Such a Fun Age*, by Kiley Reid.

Registration for the Youth Summer Trip with Seed of St. Louis will be up this month so please be on the watch for that email!

Children's Ministries

Sunday School

March 13 - The story of the Transfiguration.

March 27 - Touching the Hem of Jesus' Cloak

Nursery

The Nursery will remain closed until COVID-19 numbers are more reasonable. However, we are setting up a spot in the coffeehouse for families of young kids, including pre-k aged kids, to hang out and watch worship. They'll be toys, books, and coloring sheets available. This area will be unstaffed although there will likely be very nice folks willing to make you a latte or other delicious beverage. For the record, your baby/toddler/young one is always...ALWAYS...welcome in worship complete with their little sounds, fussiness, giggles, grumps, and wiggles. All are welcome means all are welcome.

Confirmation

Week of March 6 - The Season of Lent—a look into how we observe and celebrate the season of Lent both within wider Christianity and within Countryside.

Week of March 13 - Faith Story Workshop—8th graders only, students should bring a notebook and something to write with.

Week of March 20 - Living into Caring for our Community Part 1—Considering Progressive Christianity Point 3 and Affirmation 6

Week of March 27 - Living into Caring for our Community Part 2