

COUNTRYSIDE CURRENTS



The monthly newsletter of Countryside Community Church



Countryside little ones in Children's Church - but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.' ~ Matthew 19:14

Faith as the Cloud

by Rev. Dr. Keith Herron

The Bible speaks of faith in a wide variety of ways ... narrative, poetry, song, parables, correspondence, prophecy, wisdom sayings, pithy stories, comedy, tragedy, & fairy tale (myth), proclamation/preaching ... lions & tigers and bears, oh my!

Some have been raised to think there is only one faith, only one way of believing, only one way of living the faith life. I suppose in some pedantic way, that may be true, but when it comes to living the faith, to accepting the challenge of making faith 3-dimensional in our lives, it's also true faith is like a cloud that hangs suspended above us floating at the whimsy of an unseen wind.

A while back, I was sitting outdoors reading a book when I decided to stretch my neck and rest my thoughts by



Inside this issue:

Welcome to
Countryside - 2
Maundy Thursday - 3
Get Connected - 4
Small Groups - 5
News - 6
Recharge- 7-8
Youth & Family - 9
News - 10-11

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Welcome to Countryside!

Let us offer you a warm Countryside welcome. As a community, we place great value on welcoming ALL to an open and affirming community where we celebrate and rest in a God who loves us beyond our wildest imaginations. We invite you to journey with us as we work together with the guidance of the Spirit, seeking those places where we are called to participate with God toward the fullest expression of who we are created to be. As a congregation of the United Church of Christ, we believe the greatest expression of the Body of Christ is found in the local congregation, and each person in our community has a unique conversation with God that serves the whole. Countryside is a place where God is still speaking to us and to our community. Each of us is called to discern that voice and act on that discovery. We welcome you and invite you to participate with us in this calling.

Our Mission We're an inclusive, open, and affirming family of faith, welcoming all to God's table of love and acceptance. We're 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 promote peace, equality, and justice in our conflicted world.,

New Visitor to Countryside? If you're a first-time visitor to Countryside, please let us know! We'd like to present you with a gift of our gratitude for visiting with us. Please stop by the Welcome Center in the Church foyer!

A brief look at Countryside

- Sunday Service 10 a.m. in person or streaming online.
- Nursery Child care is available at Sunday service and Wednesday Recharge evening programs. The Nursery is located on the main level along the south hallway.
- Common Grounds Coffeehouse –Join us before of after Sunday service in the Commons for coffee and fellowship.
- Amplified Hearing Devices & Hearing Loop are available at the Information Station in the Foyer.
- Community Worship & Children's Church offered.
- Countryside Email list If you'd like to receive
 Countryside's weekly e-newsletter, contact the <u>church</u>
 <u>office</u> at office@countrysideucc.org or call 402-391 0350.

Save the Date! Community Dinner Before Service on Ash Wednesday



Join us for a special Community Dinner on Ash Wednesday, February 22. Bring your dinner and enjoy the company of your fellow church members in the

Common Grounds from 5-7 p.m. before the Ash Wednesday service begins at 7 p.m. This is a great opportunity to connect with other members of the community, build relationships, and share a meal together. This event is open to all members of the community.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, leading up to Easter. The Community Dinner is a great way to start the Ash Wednesday service. So, mark your calendar and join us for a special evening of fellowship and community!

Help Heal the Environment - One Cardboard Box at a Time

The Tri-Faith Gardens is looking for donations of cardboard for their mulching project. Any size of cardboard is welcome, but the bigger the better. Before donating the cardboard, please be sure to remove all plastic tape, labels and any metal from the cardboard.

Recycling cardboard is a great way to reduce waste and help the environment. By recycling your cardboard, you can help reduce landfill waste and promote sustainable practices. Plus, you'll be helping the Tri-Faith Gardens with their project, which is a great way to give back to the Tri-Faith and greater Omaha community.

So, gather up all your unwanted cardboard and help make the world a greener place! Bring your cardboard to the church office by March 11!

Faith as the Clouds

Continued from page 1

looking up at the sky. I looked up at the clouds and noticed they weren't all in motion to the same degree as others around them. No one cloud was like any of the others around it. There were similarities to be sure but every cloud was distinctly its own being separate and apart from any of the others.

One was headed in one direction and just below it, another skirted underneath headed in a slightly different direction. It looked for a moment there would be a collision but what would it matter? They were clouds, not cars! Around the fringes of each cloud, I could see how they were constantly disappearing and reappearing. I suppose if I could have seen the entire cloud clearly, I would have noticed the entirety of the cloud was simultaneously melting and morphing.

Faith, like the clouds carried aloft above us, is dynamic and alive. It's wispy and ever-changing, growing and failing all in the same moment. You can be headed in different directions at times while also recognizing that you are being carried aloft by a power beyond yourself. No matter what you use as a metaphor to say the unsayable, know that God is in it all with you. God is a part of your thinking and a part of your being. God is with you in the doing of faith, whether you're succeeding in the moment or failing.

All is gift,
the air I breathe,
the wind through the trees,
the breath of God
breathes in them and in me.
I breathe the air that
Jesus breathed.
I feel the wind that Mary felt.
Every breath a thanks,
every breeze a praise.

Get Connected!

Countryside offers many opportunities to connect with one another and the community. Read the weekly C-10 for current and expanded information on these and other groups, events, and programs.

Social groups meet for the sheer joy of connecting with friends old and new. Some gather at the same location week to week, like Fellowship Arts and Music Etc. This group meets each Friday in the Common Grounds for – you guessed it – activities that revolve around arts and music. Others, like the Lunch Bunch, meet once a month at various venues. A devoted small group of young Dungeons and Dragons aficionados meet each Friday evening for gameplay. On Sundays, a small group of junior high school students meets just for the joy of fun and games!

Journey Groups meet weekly to discuss and discover what our Still-speaking God calls us to do in our lives, community and the world. In the process, we form deep relationships offering support to one another through life's journey. Journey groups meet in person, although some groups offer a hybrid Zoom option. Journey Groups are always being formed. If you're interested in joining a Journey Group, contact the church office.

Study & Interest groups meet to expand their horizons on specific or narrow topics of interest. Some move beyond deepening their understanding and awareness to become involved in the greater community. Some of the existing purpose-driven groups that meet in person include the Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group, Banned Book Lovers Group (third Monday of each month), and Banned Books Small Group (Tuesdays at 6:30). Race in America, a weekly Wednesday night group, meets on Zoom only. Phoenix

Affirmations groups delve into the 12 principles that guide Progressive Christianity. There's even a new poetry-focused group!

Bible Study groups focus on developing and deepening our understanding of what it means to be a Christian in today's world. Some meet on a regular schedule, others for a specific period of time. Rev. Don Sarton's extremely popular Bible Study group's current series is *Understanding Our Roots*, a 10-week study focusing on Luke's work organizing the many oral and written accounts of Jesus.

Educational small groups, like Adult Forum, meet to hear about and discuss various topics of interest. This group meets each Sunday after church service. Its most recent series focused on the history of world economics. Some small group opportunities are less structured. For example, the Impact Speaker program brings in outside experts on trending and important topics, like the impact of immigration on Nebraska's economy. Impact Speakers are presented on Recharge Wednesdays.

Volunteer Opportunities

Countryside has so many events and programs that offer volunteer opportunities, including office staffing, the Garden of Hope, Countryside Pantry, and special events such as the Ice Cream Festival, United We Walk, and Pride Parade. Check the weekly C-10 for the latest opportunities to get connected and make a difference!



Small Groups

sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group, 8 - 9 a.m. The Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group is studying *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism*, by Jemar Tisby. The Zoom link is on the church calendar at countrysideucc.org/calendar. Email Sharon Royers, srroyers@centurylink.net for more information.

Race in America, Wednesdays, 6 p.m., Zoom meets on Wednesdays, and is studying *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* by James H. Cone. For more info or to join, text Diane Scott at 402-707-1556, or <a href="mailto:emai

Sermons for Life with Rabbi Aryeh Azriel meets on Mondays, from 10-11:30 a.m. in the Chapel, or Zoom in with the link found on the <u>church calendar</u>, countrysideucc.org/calendar.

Lunch Bunch is on hiatus through February. The Lunch Bunch meets at noon on the second Monday of each month. Location varies. For more information, contact <u>Gloria Ried</u> at <u>g-g.ried@cox.net</u>.

Men's Breakfast, Tuesdays, 8 a.m. at First Watch, 72nd and Pacific streets. Everyone is welcome!

Dungeons & Dragons, Fridays, 5:30-8 p.m. Sr. Highage students, in the Youth Room. Jr. Highage students, Tamar.

Jr. High Youth Group, Sundays, 5-6 p.m. Open to ALL Jr. High-age students, grades 7 & 8.

The Banned Book Lovers Group, third Monday each month, 6:30 p.m. in Anna. For information call Leslie Summers-Day at 402-490-2983.

The Banned Book Study Group, Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m. in Common Grounds or Zoom. Link and passcode are available on the church <u>calendar</u>. For more information call Ann Huxtable–Scates, 402–670–9585.

Adult Forum, Sundays, 11:10 a.m. in the Deborah Room for an educational exploration of various topics and books. A Zoom link is also available on the church calendar at countrysideucc.org/calendar.

Mindful Meditation, Thursdays, 7 p.m. Zoom only, link is available on the church calendar.

Fellowship Arts and Music Etc. (FAME), Fridays, 10 a.m. in the Common Grounds. No reservations are required!

Another Way to Get Involved: Tri-Faith Gardens

The <u>Tri-Faith Gardens</u> is a joint effort of all three faith partners and others not affiliated with any of the Tri-Faith Congregations. We began in 2019 with eight, 4 ft x 12 ft. raised beds. We now have 16 raised beds with 4,317 square feet of garden space devoted to growing plants for community food pantries. Last year the Tri-Faith Garden produced more than 5,300 lbs.

Several UNO classes have volunteered and studied the garden. We're presently involved with the UNO Scott Scholars, who want to develop a program to help us in ways we may not have envisioned. We've partnered with the Native American community and planted their ancestral corn using their 'Three Sisters' method and provided corn for their ceremonial use. We'll be featured in two video projects, The Harvard Pluralism Project and a documentary by Iron Zeal Films.

We invite you to join the gardening group, no experience is needed. All skill levels are welcome. We also need non-gardening volunteers to help with data entry, making plant labels, consulting on planting plans, researching seed varieties adapted to our environment, and delivering produce.

Join us at FAME!

Fellowship, Arts, Music, and Etc. (FAME) has been around for a long time, thanks to the dedication and hard work of Jim and Jane Dalen, former members of the Countryside congregation. They created the group for seniors to connect with each other in a fun and safe environment, but it's not just for seniors. FAME welcomes everyone to come and participate in a wide range of activities.

If you're interested in painting, coloring, or creating your own drawings, FAME is the perfect place for you. The group also offers opportunities for sticker book pictures, needlework, and other craft projects. Bring your own project or simply come for a cup of hot coffee and a treat or two. FAME is also a great place to have meaningful conversations, tell jokes, and share stories with a group of caring and compassionate people.

In addition to the regular activities, FAME also goes on field trips. In the past, the group has visited historic homes in Omaha and learned about the history of each house. They also had a wonderful trip to Lauritzen Gardens, where they enjoyed a delicious lunch in a beautiful setting. Brunch is a high priority for the group and they frequent different restaurants. Everything they do is fun and meaningful.

If you're looking for a way to connect with others and have fun, FAME is the perfect place for you. The group meets every Friday at 10 AM in the Common Grounds and they would love to see you there. Don't hesitate, come and see for yourself all the things FAME has to offer.

Free Parenting Workshop Feb. 15



Are you struggling to manage behavior issues at home or find the right words to say in difficult situations? Look no further than the upcoming parent workshop, From Chaos to Calm: The Power of the "Pause," presented by Kindernook Preschool and Countryside's Youth and Family Ministries.

This free, interactive session will explore the Conscious Discipline® program, a comprehensive self-regulation program and social and emotional framework that is based on current brain research, child development information, and best parenting practices. Attendees will learn evidence-based strategies to create an emotionally and physically safe home environment and techniques to remain calm in moments of chaos.

This workshop is perfect for parents or guardians who want to empower themselves and the children they parent. Join us on February 15 from 6-7:30 p.m. at Marys' Hall, Countryside Community Church for an informative and beneficial evening. Don't miss this opportunity to gain valuable tools and insights to improve your parenting skills and create a more peaceful home environment. Registration not required but appreciated LINK

Don't Fall for Countryside-targeted Phishing Scam

What do I do if I receive an EMAIL purporting to be from Pastor Keith, requesting a favor or asking me to purchase gift cards?

DO NOT REPLY! Forward the email to Dan Loven-Crum, danl@countrysideucc.org, then delete it. DO spread the word among your network of friends in the church, especially those you think might be most vulnerable to this kind of fraud.

What do I do if I receive a TEXT MESSAGE purporting to be from Pastor Keith, requesting a favor or asking me to purchase gift cards? DO NOT REPLY! Report it in an email to Dan Loven-Crum, danl@countrysideucc.org, sharing the phone number and sending the text. If you know how to take a screenshot, attach this to the email. Block sender. Delete the text. DO spread the word among your network of friends in the church, especially those you think might be most vulnerable to this kind of fraud.

RECHARGE WEDNESDAYS

Recharge night provides opportunities to nurture brains, bodies, and spirits. Break bread with us! Bring your dinner and eat with family and friends in the Common Grounds Coffee Shop before programming begins. Walk, meditate, work, read – you can even catch a little nap if you want. Bring your kids for fun and bible shenanigans, and stay for yourself! Nursery care is available

No Recharge activities on Ash Wednesday Feb. 22!

IMPACT SPEAKER, FEB. 8, 6 P.M. AN INTRO TO THE HISTORIC CHURCHES OF OMAHA

North Omaha is home to the oldest religious activities in the city. This presentation covers the denominations and individual churches that helped build the community north of Dodge and east of 72nd into today's North Omaha. Mostly focused on the century before 1950, it includes how these churches started, where they were, and what happened to them over time. Participants also learn about architecture, preservation, and restoration efforts. Presenter Adam Fletcher Sasse is a North Omaha native and author of numerous articles, a podcast host, and author of a 3-volume set on the History of North Omaha. This is a Zoom event. The link will available on the Church website calendar, countrysideucc.org/calendar.

UNDERSTANDING OUR ROOTS

Bible Study with Don Sarton, *Understanding Our Roots*, continues Wednesdays nights from 6-7:30 p.m. The study delves deeper into the work of Luke and explores its spiritual roots. By looking at the text through the perspectives of various scholars and utilizing various resources, we hope to gain a more thorough understanding of the book.

We hope to not only gain an intellectual understanding of Luke, but understand the spiritual foundations that allowed a diverse group of people, including Jews, God-Fearers, and Gentiles, to come together and form a movement centered on the belief in Jesus as the Messiah and the grace and love of God as revealed through him. We hope that this study will help us gain insight into the roots of the Christian faith and the ways in which it has evolved over time.

CHOIR PRACTICE

Handbell Choir, 7:30-8:15 p.m. **C4 Adult Choir,** 6:15 - 7:30 p.m.

FAMILY + YOUTH MINISTRIES

BYO dinner to the coffee house and join us for mealtime, catch up, and share some laughs. Volunteering for service hours during this time is also always an option. Please don't forget, All Are Welcome!

CHILDREN + YOUTH PROGRAMMING

Pre-K through grade six **Wednesday Wonderers** can bring their dinner and eat with staff and guests in the coffee house before the programs begin. at 6 p.m.

NURSERY/CHILDCARE

The Nursery is open 6-7:30 p.m. for childcare during Wednesday Night Recharge programming.

February Box: Countryside Cupboard

The Board of Christian Outreach has chosen Countryside's own Community Cupboard as the recipient of the month for February. This is an excellent opportunity for the community to come together and help those in need by providing them with essential food items.

Most importantly, we need protein items.

Canned and packaged meats, stews, chili, peanut butter, and other shelf-stable proteins are suitable. These items are not only nutritious but also easy to store and transport, making them ideal for those who are in need.

With the high demand on food pantries in Omaha, it is crucial that our patrons have access to additional protein to help feed their families. This is where you can step in and make a difference. By adding a few items to your grocery list, you can help provide essential nutrition to those who need it the most.

The first Saturday morning of each month, the Cupboard is open until all the available food is distributed. You can drop off your gifts in the Box located at the front door of the church. Your generosity is greatly appreciated and will make a significant impact in the lives of those in need.

Let's all come together and help the Community Cupboard provide essential food items to those in need. Your small act of kindness can make a big difference in the lives of those who are struggling. Thank you for your support!











AMERICAN MUSLIM INSTITUTE'S EVENT

MAR 3

1:30 PM

"The Wisdoms of Ramadan"

Witness Jum'ah (Friday) prayer with English translations of the Arabic, learn the spiritual significance of fasting in Islam, and explore how Ramadan is celebrated across the Muslim world with delicious foods that help with daytime fasting!

TEMPLE ISRAEL'S EVENT MAR 10

5:45 PM & 6 PM (DUAL PROGRAMS)

"Sabbath Peace - Shabbat Shalom"

Experience Shabbat Shira (6 PM), a musical service "in-theround" with energetic singing, then sample traditional Shabbat foods hors d'oeuvres-style. Or, try "Tot Shabbat," a tot-friendly program (5:45 PM) where kids and their families can braid challah bread and hear a brief Shabbat service!

COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH'S EVENT MAR 19

10:00 AM

"The Way of Holy Week"

Enjoy a shortened Sunday service followed by a brunch including casseroles, fruit salads, and pastries. Then, discover the spiritual significance behind each day of the Christian Holy Week through dramatic storytelling, poetry, and art!



SAVE THE DATES

Nothing brings a community together like amazing food!

Join us this March as the entire Tri-Faith Commons shares a slice of cultural pride and religious identity with one another.

Stay tuned for more details and registration!

Youth & Family Ministries

Rebecca Morello, Director of Youth & Family Ministries, 402–884–8036 Emma Boyd, Youth & Family Ministries Program Coordinator, 402–884–8035

Sr. High Youth Group

Sundays, 6-8 p.m., Youth Room

Feb. 5: Prepare for Youth Sunday

Feb. 12: Super Bowl Party

Feb. 19: Finding God in Ordinary Places

Feb. 26: Accessible to All (A2A) Education*

*Required for students attending the summer 2023 service trip.

D&D group

All 7th - 12th grade age students are invited to join a Dungeons & Dragons campaign on Friday nights.

Fridays, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Sr. High: Youth Room Jr. High: Tamar

Jr. High Youth Group

Sundays, 5-6 p.m. in the Youth Room. All 7th & 8th grade students are invited!

Feb. 5: Valentine's Day Crafts

Feb. 12: Super Bowl Party

Feb. 19: Blow the Ball and Cup Catch

Feb. 26: Hide and Seek



Confirmation

7th & 8th grades Sunday, 4-5 p.m. & Thursday, 5-6 p.m. classes:

Feb. 5/9: Affirmation 9

Feb. 12/16: All students should attend the Annual Meeting in place of their class time this week

Feb. 19/23: Affirmation 9 **Feb. 26/Mar. 2:** Community
Service Project Workday

Children's Ministries

Pre-K - 6th grade Sunday Schedule:

Feb. 5: Children's Church

Feb. 12: Community Church **Feb. 19:** Children's Church

Feb. 26: Community Church

Wednesday Wonderers

Pre-K - 4th Grade 6-7:30 p.m., Blue Room, Green Room, and Tamar (Lower Level)

Feb. 1: Jesus in the Wilderness

Feb. 8: Fishers of Men

Feb. 15: The Hem of Jesus

Feb. 22: NO WEDNESDAY

WONDERERS (Ash Wednesday)

Core 56

5th and 6th Grades Wednesdays, 6-7:30p.m., Blue Room, Green Room, and Tamar (Lower Level). Same schedule as Wednesday Wonderers.

Feb. 1: Jesus in the Wilderness

Feb. 8: Fishers of Men

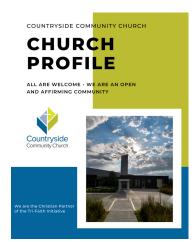
Feb. 15: The Hem of Jesus

Feb. 22: NO CORE 56 (Ash

Wednesday



Pastoral Search Committee Update



The Pastoral Search
Committee (PSC) has
kicked off the new year
with a Saturday retreat to
discuss and develop our
review of candidate
profiles as well as outline
the interview processes
we intend to follow.
Individuals interested in
applying

for our senior minister position apply by submitting their respective candidate profile.

The PSC is excited to share that we have begun to receive candidate profiles. We are also making concerted efforts to reach out to others who can share within their networks that our Church Profile has been posted. We are also advertising our senior minister opening in the Christian Century and Sojourner publications. We intend to do all we can to get the word out and create a strong pool of candidates.

A special thank you to Associate Conference Minister Sarah Jones and Pastor Keith who have both been readily accessible to answer any questions and guide us throughout this journey. As Sharon Royers mentioned in our monthly update on Sunday, January 15, we encourage all congregants to contact any personal connections you may have who could be interested in our senior pastor position at Countryside Community Church. If you haven't had an opportunity, please view our Church Profile on our website for further information. You can also reach us at

<u>pastoralsearchcommittee@countrysideucc.org</u> with any comments, questions or concerns.

New A2A Committee Update Focused on Accessibility

As a community of believers, we strive to be inclusive and welcoming to all, which is why we want to bring attention to our Accessible to All (A2A) committee. The A2A committee is dedicated to educating our congregation, advocating for changes, and assisting community members with disabilities.

Did you know we have large print bulletins at every service? We also have hearing amplification devices and several mobility items, including wheelchairs, walkers, bath stools, canes, and crutches. If you or someone you know would benefit from using these items, please let us know.

We want to continue to support our members in any way we can. If you have suggestions or ideas, bring them to the suggestion box on the welcome table in the foyer. Suggestions can be anonymous if you prefer. If you have questions or need more information, email Emily Wadhams at emshee02@yahoo.com.

Let's continue to make Countryside Community Church a welcoming and inclusive space for all.



Getting to Know You

Have you met new member Kari Randazzo and her daughter Paisley? Kari joined last December and is now working in the nursery on Wednesday nights!

Temple Welcomes New Rabbi



Temple Israel is welcoming Rabbi Benjamin Sharff as the next Senior Rabbi of Temple Israel. Rabbi Sharff brings a wealth of experience and leadership to the congregation, having served as Rabbi for The Reform Temple of Rockland in Upper Nyack, New York since 2016. He also served as Senior Rabbi at Har Sinai Congregation in Baltimore and Assistant/Associate Rabbi at Temple Emanu-El in Tucson, Arizona.

Rabbi Sharff's rabbinic leadership is both deep and wide-ranging, with a particular focus on social justice. As a URJ Religious Action Center Brickner Fellow, he brings new ideas for congregational engagement, innovative Shabbat experiences, and involvement in both the Jewish and secular communities. Rabbi Sharff is excited to collaborate with Rabbi Berezin, Cantor Alexander, Rabbi Azriel, the staff, and lay leadership to usher in a new chapter in Temple Israel's storied history. His tenure starts in July.

Rabbi Sharff and his wife, Joy, have three children: Emily (16), Noah (13), and Alex (9). Rabbi Sharff quickly fell in love with our community during his visit. We look forward to the contributions he will make to Temple Israel and the Tri-Faith community.

Tri-Faith Welcomes Four New Staff Members

Several new staff positions have been filled at Tri-Faith. Below are quick bios – to learn more about them, click <u>here!</u>



Megan Griffiths joined Tri-Faith Initiative in October 2022 as mission advancement coordinator, coordinating and facilitating programming that furthers the

organization's mission.



Kalil Johnson joined the Tri-Faith team as administrative coordinator in December 2022. Kalil is the first point of contact within Tri-Faith,

facilitating internal/external communications, and will work closely with the Board of Directors.



Lucas Schulte joined the Tri-Faith Initiative in January 2023 as program associate. He'll help develop curricula, facilitate programs, and uphold and expand

diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.



Maddie Cunningham joined Tri-Faith in January as a grant writer & project specialist. She'll help communicate its mission to strategic partners and assisting

with special event planning.

SR. HIGH
YOUTH GROUP



Spiritual Development and Fellowship for the Next Generation



Church Office Hours 8 AM to 4 PM Monday - Friday

> Worship Sundays, 10 AM

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Pastoral Care

For pastoral care visits, prayer requests, and items for our Joys and Concerns, please contact the church office at 402-391-0350 or office@countrysideucc.org. Church staff will work with the Pastoral Care Board, Pastor Keith Herron, and Stephen Ministers to minister to the congregation's pastoral care needs.



