



# COUNTRYSIDE CURRENTS



The monthly newsletter of Countryside Community Church

## Do you have to believe in the hocus-pocus to be a Christian?

*by Rev. Dr. Keith Herron*

I served a church in Kansas City for fifteen years and, as in most churches of any age, we had several multi-generational families, most of which were three generations. But we also had one of those exceedingly rare 5-generation families. Pastor Kathy, my long-serving colleague, was the middler in that extended family system. She was the middler as her father and step-mother were active members and her two daughters were active as well. But, Julia, her father's mother was 95 and pretty active on her own. Kathy's two daughters each had their own children and that made it a 5-generation family. The whole family was a delight, quick witted with a very sharp sense of humor. Julia, the family matriarch, asked Kathy one day a question about faith since her granddaughter was a minister and theologically educated. [Who else do you go to when you need to ask a long-standing question about God?] Her question was, 'do you have to believe in the hocus-pocus to be a Christian?'

Julia had been a Christian for nearly a century and had come to the point where she felt free to ask her minister granddaughter a question of true depth. Being nearly a hundred years old is a vantage point of clarity as the far horizon looms now as the near horizon. Why not ask your question while you've got time? There was no need to specify what the hocus-pocus was, as the question seemed to presume it was in the eye of the beholder. In many churches, the answer is very specified and besides, such a question would be considered verboten where curious theological thinking is tightly controlled.

Today, I'd like to nibble around the edges of a topic I've thought about in the discussion about how we think about what happens to us and our relationship with God when the unthinkable happens. The unthinkable are all those events or occasions that occur when life happens. The unthinkable can be tragic or it can be ecstatic. Most of us live meekly between the good and the bad and live mostly in the middle ground, hoping nothing too bad or maybe even anything too good happens. We make our peace with a manageable middle bandwidth of normality.

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Rev. Dr. Keith Herron has provided solace, sermons and grace to Countrysiders for the past 15 months. Although his title carried the term 'Interim' he's been anything but 'pastor lite.' Be sure to join us on Sunday, Nov. 19 for Keith's final service (in official capacity) at Countryside and wish him all of life's joys and grace in his ongoing pastoral journey!

HELLO  
November

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Countryside is excited to introduce Michaela Fricke, our new communications and database assistant. Michaela's position has two key focus areas – the church database and communications. She'll be responsible for maintaining and maximizing the church database, training and supporting others in using the database. She'll also support the director of communications and support services. Going forward, if you see Michaela's name on email communications, you'll know it's important!

Michaela was born and raised in Omaha and received a bachelor of arts in history and geography from Wayne State College in Wayne, Nebraska. After graduating college, she worked as a geographic information systems specialist for the City of Iowa City Water division, a visitor services associate for the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids, and most recently worked as the education programs manager at The Durham Museum here in Omaha. After seven years of working in museums, Michaela is excited to be able to apply her skills and learn new ones as Countryside's database and communications assistant.

Michaela loves being a Mom to her soon-to-be one year old, exploring and spending time in nature, and learning about her community's history. She also enjoys traveling, baking, and going on walks with her husband, son, and two dogs.

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## Hocus-Pocus

If you're like me, you've been raised on a diet of explanations we tell ourselves when such things happen to us: There are multiple words for the explanations we give ... God's will, fate, providence, determinism or divine happenstance ... all those words imply God is behind the scenes pulling the strings of our lives, orchestrating this or that, throwing down in our path some unimaginable event we have to deal with, maybe on occasion even pulling our bacon out of the fire when we get in trouble. Think about all the prayers of desperation we've uttered to ask God to help us! (Some of you even pray for a parking spot near the church doors.) We have long held in our thinking that God is busy, by constantly attending to us and monitoring what goes on in life.

Is that the ONLY way we can describe what's going on? What do we do with all those instances where these good terms don't cut it? What do we do when those words aren't anywhere close to being true?

I think we need one more category ... What about luck? [Most of you are smart enough or cynical enough by now to ask the qualifier, "Do you mean good luck or bad luck?"]

Let me illustrate: I read a fascinating story a while back about a story that was told at the Aspen Ideas Festival. Jacqueline Novogratz, CEO of The Acumen Fund, an international organization that raises funds for worldwide developmental causes, shared a story of how she sensed a deep life-changing call to this important work.

When Jacqueline was 12, her Uncle Ed gave her a blue ski sweater. She said it was made "of soft blue wool, with stripes on the sleeves and an African motif across the front – two zebras walking in front of a snow-capped mountain." At the time, she'd never even heard of Mount Kilimanjaro; she only knew the sweater made her dream of places far away. That beautiful sweater made her feel so wonderful, she wore it often and everywhere. She even wrote her name on the tag to ensure it would be hers, forever.

But when she turned 14, her young body took womanly form and the scene on the sweater took a different form



too. One of the older high school boys made a lewd and cruel comment to her in a voice so loud everyone in the room heard him. She was so embarrassed she went home and immediately threw the sweater away and demanded to know from her mother why she would ever allow her to wear it. They left the sweater at the Goodwill Store

Novogratz buried this as one of those painful adolescent memories we try hard to forget.

Twelve years later ... now in her mid-20's, she was jogging one day in the hills of Kigali, a small village in Rwanda and about 20 feet in front of her was a little boy wearing her sweater, or at least a sweater identical to the one she gave away. She thought to herself, "This cannot be!" She ran up to him, grabbed the surprised child and spun him around so she could look at the label inside the back collar and sure enough, there was her name.

The world is small indeed when a teenage girls' sweater can show up a dozen years later halfway around the globe in such an obscure African village.

How is it life makes these kinds of bizarrely unique connections as though life itself is beckoning us to get involved in a wider world?

In Christian circles, we are raised on a steady, unexamined line of thinking some call determinism. That's the view God "orders our steps," and we believe

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# Email Scams and Phishing Threats

## Spot the Hooks and Keep Your Online Waters Secure

Church staff have recently noticed an upsurge in phishing emails. A phishing email (scam) is sent from an internet criminal (scammer) and looks like it came from a legitimate, trustworthy source (such as a pastor). The email tries to trick you into providing the scammer with sensitive information or money (including gift cards), or downloading malware.

Below are two commonly used schemes that have resurfaced.

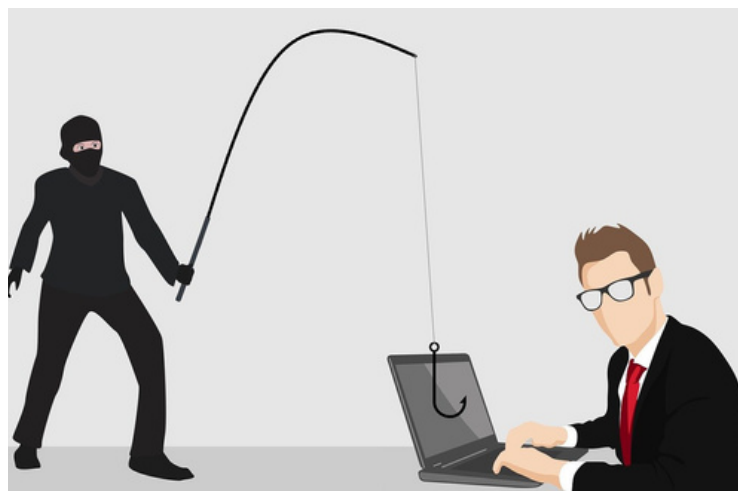
### Gift Card or Money Scam

The most common phishing emails are sent impersonating our minister or a leader with a message that they are busy and ask you to reply by email. But the reply email address doesn't actually belong to the person being impersonated (such as Pastor Keith or a church staff member).

*Example of a SCAM email - On Tue, Oct 10, 2023 at 5:22 PM Rev. Dr. Keith D. Herron <giftmail753@gmail.com> wrote:*

*Do you have a moment? I have a request. I'm in a conference meeting right now and only have access to mail. No calls, just reply to my email. Rev. Dr. Keith D. Herron, Minister*

These requests are huge red flags that the email is a scam. DO NOT reply to the email. If you reply, the scammer will ask you to buy gift cards or crypto, or transfer money. We never ask church members to buy cards or crypto, or make a bank transfer. ALWAYS contact the person directly, either with a phone

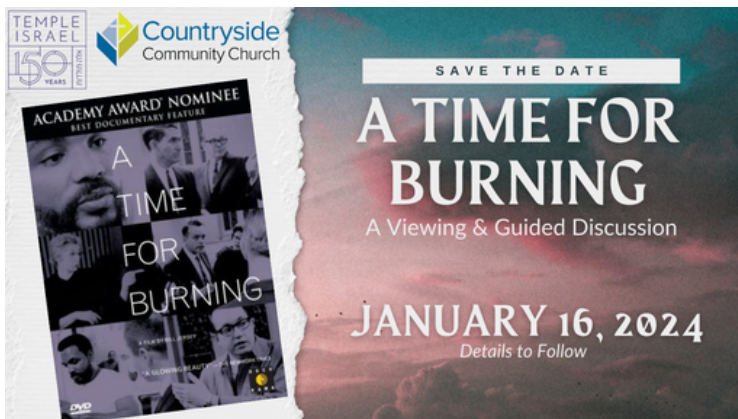
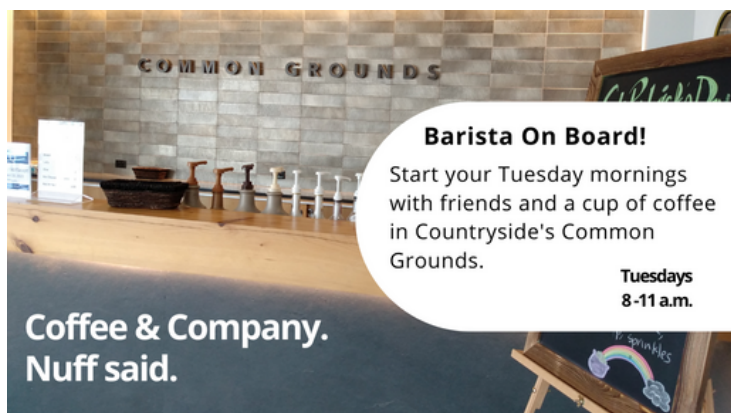


call or through a separate email to confirm the authenticity of the email.

### New Phishing Scam

We've also recently had several staff receive an email from a scammer impersonating another church staff member, using an outlook.com email account. The impersonator asked that their email address be changed and for the receiver to send them a church directory. HOWEVER, the real, Countryside staff member does not use an outlook.com email. The scammer was PHISHING for a copy of the Countryside directory, which contains member information they could use to prey on other congregants.

If you receive a suspicious email, DO NOT reply. Confirm by calling or emailing directly with that individual. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the church office directly at 402-491-0350.



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## Hocus-Pocus

God makes things happen or not happen according to God's unquestioned and unsearchable will of God.

Those events we see as good for us are not the problem. It's those events that are against us we question.

The Bible gives a version of this thinking but even it is not as closely drawn as we assume with God in control of all things and orchestrating the divine path we all follow.

But what happens when that idea doesn't hold up? Think about Job, perhaps the oldest story in the Hebrew Bible, when his house collapsed and killed all his children. Then one tragedy after another hit him as if the dominoes of life were all falling according to some divine design. [Of course, we remember Job's reversal from a life of blessing to a life of cursing was the result of a divine wager between God and the Evil One. Read Job to see how all this took place.]

Are we pawns to the mysterious whims of the divine? Or, are we living a life in which all kinds of experiences are ours to experience, and when they happen, is God there with us or not, no matter what?

We are a meaning-making people. Morris West, author of *The Clowns of God*, wrote, "... we are creatures who walk in two worlds and trace upon the walls of our cave the wonders and the nightmare experiences of our spiritual pilgrimage." We take life as it comes, good or bad, and make meaning of it all.

As an undergrad at Baylor, I had a date with a young coed who was a choir member of the BRH Choir. I asked this beautiful, talented young woman to go out on the same night the choir was having a party so she invited me to go with her to the choir party. I knew a good number of the choir members and it was fun. We were in the Activities Building of the First Baptist Church of Waco and we all piled into a large room where we were watching a movie. I was sitting on the floor next to my date, when a sock-footed young woman behind me began tickling me with her feet. I vaguely knew who she was because she was a widely known singer. She didn't know me from Adam and didn't care except I laughed at her tickles.

The next week I didn't call my date from the week before (the beautiful, talented young singer), I called the sock-footed singer. She still did not know who I was, but she wanted to go out on a date and so she agreed to go with me. Later I learned she didn't even know my name and only learned it when she heard other students call me by name. A year later and a half, I married this sock-footed woman and we've been together for nearly 47 years. This is a story I vividly remember and she only smiles at the memory as she had no idea at the time the dominoes she tipped over from fifty years ago when we were students.


Was it providence that brought us together? Absolutely. Was it God's will? Oh, yes. Was it luck? No question.

**Register for Events at**  
**[Countrysideucc.org/register](http://Countrysideucc.org/register)**




## VETERANS DAY

Mark your calendars for **Sunday, Nov. 12**, when we honor Countryside military veterans during services and present them with a pin. Please join us in the Commons after the service for cookies, fellowship and recognition of their service.






The other day I overheard someone say that Countryside’s library is the ‘Library of the Banned Books.’ The library has so much more to offer than just banned books. Every library collection is determined by the clientele who take the opportunity to borrow from that library. Our church library is exactly that. It depends on the interests of the congregation as to the materials that are purchased and/or donated. We’re fortunate to have a very generous congregation. The materials in the library are in collections that pertain to the UCC designations and interests of our members.

Our collections include: Christianity, Creation Justice, World Religions, Anti-racism, Spiritual and Contemplative Practices, Fiction, Young Adult, Children, Biblical Reference, DVDs and CDs on all the above, and Challenged and Banned Books. Please stop by the library in the Lydia Room and peruse our collections. You are welcome to check out any of the materials. The checkout sheet is on the desk.

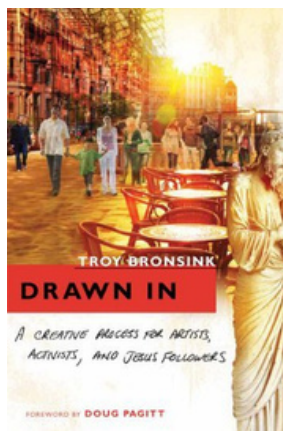
## Book Reviews

The books reviewed below by [supersummary.com](http://supersummary.com) can be found in the Countryside library.

### Christian Spirituality

*Drawn In: A Creative Process for Artists, Activists and Jesus Followers*, Troy Bronsick

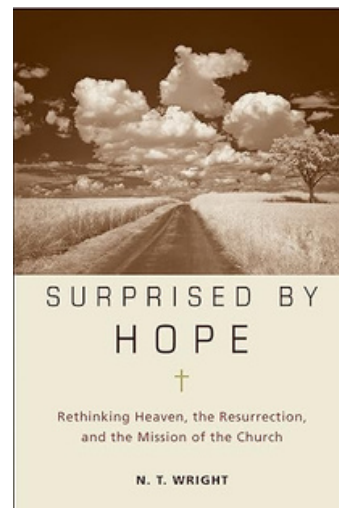
In this book, Bronsick shows how the rhythms of God’s creative work can be discovered through design thinking and creative processes. Exercises invite participation in God’s life and redemptive rhythms. This holistic approach will shift how Christian creatives think of mission, worship, collaboration, and everyday discipleship. (Thriftbooks)



### Christian Adult Education

*Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*, N.T. Wright

In *Surprised by Hope*, Wright attempts to do three things. First, he exposes current Christianity’s muddled views of the afterlife by taking us through the historical evidence for and the theological explanation of Jesus’ resurrection. Second, he answers questions regarding eschatology that necessarily arise from his Resurrection theology – showing how his eschatological framework best fits the New Testament witness. Third, he shows how the Christian’s future hope of resurrection forms the foundation for current social action, evangelism, and spirituality.



### Young Adult

#### Grades 5-7

*Number the Stars*, Lois Lowry

Newbury Medal-winning *Number the Stars* is a stirring World War II novel that personalizes the story of Denmark’s heroic rescue of its Jews from the Nazis. It follows a brave 10-year-old Danish girl who helps her family smuggle her Jewish friends to safety in Sweden.



#### Grades 4-8

*Indian School: Teaching the White Man’s Way*, Michael Cooper

In the late 19th century, government-supported boarding schools were created to educate and assimilate Native American children into the overriding white culture. In *Indian School*, Cooper examines the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, one of the best known of the boarding schools, and some of its former students.



## Get Connected!

Countryside Community Church 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 each week, like Fellowship Arts and Music Etc. This group meets each Friday in Rahab 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 meets 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!



The Banned Book Club's final meeting this fall will be Tuesday, Nov. 14, 6:30 p.m. We meet by Zoom so anyone is welcome. Please join us if you can. We will begin meeting again the second Tuesday of February 2024.

**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 most recent series was *Understanding Our Roots*. The study focused 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 baking for and assisting at funerals, the Ice Cream Festival, United We Walk, and Pride Parade. Contact the [office](#) at 402-391-0350, or check the weekly C-10 for the latest opportunities to get connected and make a difference!



## Feature: Tri-Faith Gardens

# Nurturing Unity, Harvesting Hope



As the autumn leaves begin to fall and the sun starts to set a little earlier each day, the Tri-Faith Unity Garden and Hope Orchard are nearing the end of their growing season. Located behind Temple Israel, they are not just places of growth. They are also thriving symbols of unity, partnership, and service. And, amazingly, all of it is lovingly cultivated and maintained by volunteers.

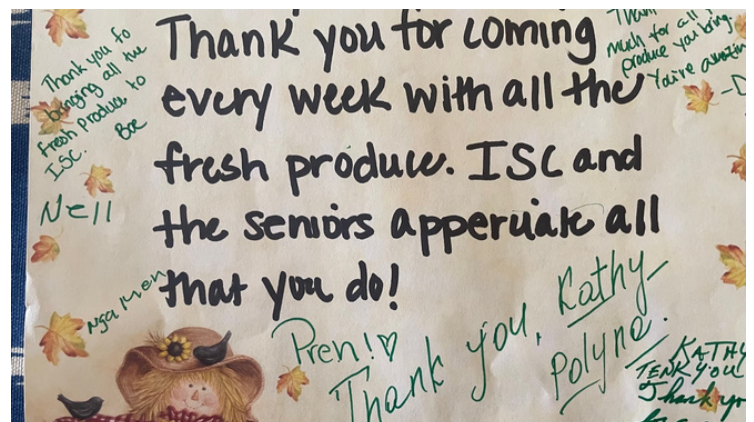
The workers who give their time in this remarkable project come from Countryside, AMI, Temple Israel, as well as the greater Omaha community.

As of October 22, the volunteers had raised, harvested, and delivered an astounding 7,722.83 pounds of fresh produce to people in need.

The Tri-Faith Unity Garden is a beacon of hope and harmony in an increasingly divided world. It embodies the values of community partnership and the spirit of bringing together religious "others" to serve our larger community, all while fostering physical, mental, social, environmental, economic, and spiritual well-being.

One of the most significant impacts of this initiative is its contribution to reducing food insecurity among our neighbors. It provides fresh vegetables and fruit to families who, in many cases, couldn't afford these nutritious essentials. By supplying the Countryside's Community Cupboard, Intercultural Senior Center, Clair Memorial United Methodist Church food pantry, UNO Student Pantry and various others, the Tri-Faith Garden and Hope Orchard are directly addressing hunger in our community.

The impact, however, goes beyond just providing food. For the Tri-Faith volunteers and neighbors who come together to work in the garden, the experience is transformative. They are not only exposed to fresh air and outdoor exercise but also connected to each other. The act of gardening becomes a bridge that connects people from different backgrounds, including individuals of all ages, races, cultures, and social classes. In these shared moments, a sense of community and shared







ownership of the project grows, fostering a cooperative spirit that transcends any differences.

The garden teaches valuable lessons about food sources and environmental awareness. It's an educational experience that creates a better-informed, socially aware and more environmentally-conscious community.

Currently the Unity Garden boasts eight raised beds, which, during the growing season, teem with many different vegetables, herbs, and flowers. The growing season is extended by the two beds that can be covered. The land surrounding the raised beds produces the rest of the more than 7000 lbs. harvested this year.

In addition, each year a piece of the land is a dedicated Three Sisters garden, planted with corn, beans, and squash seeds from our Native neighbors, nurturing our relationship with them and expanding our knowledge of their culture.

The Tri-Faith Unity Gardens serve as a shining example of what can be achieved when communities come together to address critical issues such as food insecurity and environmental concerns. As the growing season comes to a close, the impact of this project continues to grow, connecting people, improving lives, and providing a sanctuary for all who visit. The Tri-Faith Garden and Orchard is more than just a garden; it's a living testament to the power of unity and the beauty of cooperation.



## Small Groups

Want to join a group but don't see what you're interested in? Why not start your own?! Whether it's a social, reading/discussion, issue-related, hobby, educational, or faith-based small group, there's always room for more! Contact Diane at [dianes@countrysideucc.org](mailto:dianes@countrysideucc.org) or text her at 402-707-1556.

**Core 56**, Wednesdays, 6-8 p.m. Movies, games, outside activities, art and more!

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

**Jr. High Youth Group**, Sundays, 4-6 p.m. Youth Room. Open to ALL Jr. High-age students, grades 7 & 8.

**Sr. High Youth Group**, Sundays, 6-8 p.m., Youth Room. Open to ALL Sr. High-age students.

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

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

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

**Adult Forum**, Sundays, 11 a.m. in Deborah and on Zoom. Link is available on the [church calendar](#).

## Small Groups for Food Lovers!

Food is a great way to connect with one another! Three current groups meet monthly:

- **First Thursday Singles** If you're solo and want some like-minded company, this group is for you!
- **Second or Third Thursday Couples:** Kinda self-explanatory!
- **Last Thursday Sushi!** Yes, there are 38 sushi restaurants in Omaha!

Interested in something you don't see here? Why not start your own?! You could start a limited series to try it out. Contact Sherryl at 402-658-7416. All are welcome!

## Odd Tuesday Coffee

### New Small Group to Explore Progressive Christianity

Don Sarton, Rick Royers, Denny Clark and Ray Meints invite you to join them on the First and Third Tuesday of each month at 9:30 a.m. in the Common Grounds. This is an opportunity to explore, share, understand what it means to be a Progressive Christians.

How do we articulate our beliefs when we are challenged by others? How do we articulate our beliefs in conversation with our Tri-Faith partners, in a respectful and understanding way?

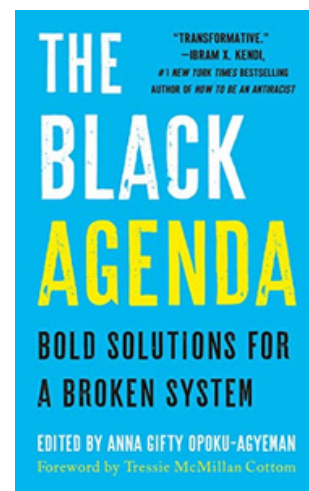
We'll share some of our journey to Countryside, explore our beliefs through conversation and shared insights. Each of us possess wisdom, theological insight and understanding. We invite you to come and share in the conversations at Odd Tuesdays Coffee. The coffee shop has a barista on board for your favorite morning beverage, so stop by!

### New Book for Racial Justice Book Group

The Sunday morning Racial Justice Book Group has begun reading *The Black Agenda: Bold Solutions for a Broken System*. Discussions are held via Zoom on Sundays from 8-9 a.m. The Zoom link can be found on the [church calendar](#).

"*The Black Agenda* mobilizes top Black experts from across the country to share transformative perspectives on how to deploy anti-racist ideas and policies into everything from climate policy to criminal justice to healthcare. This book will challenge what you think is possible by igniting long overdue conversations around how to enact lasting and meaningful

change rooted in racial justice." Ibram X. Kendi, *New York Times* bestselling author of *How to Be an Antiracist*.



## Care, Act, Reach: Our journey beyond Abraham’s Bridge

Deliveries of food from Countryside’s pantry, first Saturday of each month

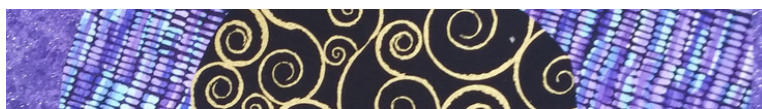
**Saturday, Nov. 4, 2023**

Words aren’t sufficient to describe the pain, fear, and trauma the current war is causing so many in our Tri-Faith family. To be a light in this darkness, consider joining our sisters and brothers to shop for (Friday November 3) or deliver (Saturday November 4) food from Countryside’s food pantry, for those who are hungry but can’t come to the pantry themselves.

Click [here](#) to sign up. You won’t regret having taken the time! Questions? Contact [Shari Hess](#), 402-290-0122, slhess45@mac.com or [Jenn Vinton](#), 402- 202-7478, jenniferfitchett@yahoo.com.

## Interfaith Thanksgiving Service Unity in a Time of Conflict

Join us for an evening of unity at the 2023 Interfaith Thanksgiving Service on Sunday, Nov. 19, at 6 p.m. This year’s theme is Unity in a Time of Conflict. This year’s event will take place at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, 113 N. 18th St. (located at the corner of N. 18th and Capitol streets). The featured speaker will be Mike Hornacek of Together, Inc. Don’t miss this opportunity to come together as a community in the spirit of gratitude and harmony.



## The Box: November



**3SISTERS**

The Board of Christian Outreach has chosen 3Sisters as the nonprofit recipient of the November Box donations.

3Sisters is the “dream come true” of creator Marshawn Ford. The organization identifies the

needs of Omaha women (she/her/hers) and works to supply resources: food, clothing, diapers, gas cards, toiletries to those who need a little extra help at month’s end. Their Feed Omaha program provides food, clothing and toiletries for those without housing.

Educational workshops and classes share knowledge, self-empowerment and encouragement to their clients. The staff strives to ignite passion, help identify goals and brainstorms paths toward those goals.

Requests for help coming to 3Sisters is constant. Please add some items to your shopping list or visit their [Amazon wish list](#) or scan the QR code below. You can also search your closets for gently used clothing of all sizes. Deposit the goods in The Box located in the church entryway.

- Gently used clothing - especially winter wear, all ages, all sizes
- Toiletries - tooth brushes/paste, shampoo, deodorant, razors, etc.
- Children’s supplies - diapers, school supplies
- Gas cards
- Non-perishable food items - PB&J, canned and boxed goods



Ready for some

# FOOD, FRIENDS & FUN?

Call or text Sherryl  
402-658-7416



## New Member Reception

**November 5** *New Members Sunday*

Join us in Common Grounds after the service for a casual cookies and coffee reception for new members. This is a great opportunity for members to introduce themselves and welcome them to the Countryside family. Please be sure to wear your name tag - it really helps with introductions!

For more information, email or text Diane at 402-707-1556, [dianes@countrysideucc.org](mailto:dianes@countrysideucc.org).

## 2023 Contribution Deadline

Please remember to submit your final contributions of 2023 to the church before the end of the year. The IRS looks closely at charitable giving, and we want you to understand that in order for your contribution to be deductible in 2023, your contribution must be postmarked or physically received at the church office by December 31, 2023. *Please note that your check date alone will not control which year your contribution applies to.*

## Lantern Walk Update



## New Parking & Meetup Area at Temple Israel

If you're walking with Kindernook for the annual Lantern Walk, please park in the Temple Israel's parking lot and meet us in Temple's playground at 5 p.m. to chat and play.

Everyone is welcome to walk with us Sunday, Nov. 5, from 5-6:30 p.m. Our Lantern Walk serves as a celebration of the end of daylight savings time and a time to reflect on the beauty surrounding us. As the sun sets, we'll "light" our lanterns and walk around Abraham's Bridge.

## *All Church Book Read 2023*

## Thank You to Everyone Who Read *How to be an Antiracist!*

Thank you to the many people who took the time to participate in the all-church book read of *How to be an Antiracist*. This is only the beginning of our journey and we would like to encourage our church community to continue reading, unlearning and learning, about our nation's true history.

There are many excellent books by African American authors. For example, in his New York Times bestselling book, *How the Word is Passed*, Clint Smith takes a tour of several historic sites in the United States and uncovers some long-forgotten and often intentionally buried truths about our country's past. There are many truths revealed but one that stands out is the origin of the Statue of Liberty.

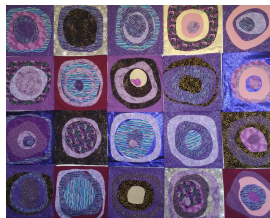
So many of us have been taught and therefore believe that Lady Liberty was a gift from the French to help welcome European immigrants to our shores. However, the truth is the statue was originally meant to be a gift from the French commemorating our friendship and the emancipation of enslaved people.

Smith writes, "In an early model of the Statue of Liberty, then known as 'Liberty Enlightening the World,' she was in a similar position except that in her left hand she clutched a pair of broken shackles - believed to symbolize the abolition of slavery - rather than the tablet we know today. By the time the final version of the statue emerged in US soil in 1886, the shackles were no longer in Lady Liberty's hand but had become small pieces of broken chains, less conspicuously, at her feet and partially hidden beneath her robe."

The reason for the change from the original design was that the sculptor had to seek funding and approval from the US, and this was just after the civil war. Smith shares, "Centering the story of the statue on emancipation only a few years after slavery had been abolished in the US... would have made fundraising more difficult."

Imagine if Lady Liberty stood holding broken chains of slavery as originally designed. This hidden history is just one example you will find in *How the Word is Passed*. The Antiracist Designation group encourages our faith community to read and discuss this book.

# Deepened Wonder With Advent Devotionals



At Countryside, Advent devotionals play a vital role in helping ourselves and each other experience the “Oh!” of wonder during this sacred season. They provide a pathway to spiritual

community building and a deepened connection to the true meaning of Christmas.

As we gather together in candlelit peace, we are reminded that everything has changed. Not just in the world, but within us. Advent devotionals are a treasured tradition that brings us closer to the heart of the Christmas story and the transformative power of Christ’s birth.

Are you new to devotionals? Just want to remind yourself of what they are and mean? Here are four ways devotionals enrich our spiritual lives and the upcoming Advent season.

**Spiritual Growth:** Advent devotionals provide a structured and intentional way for our members to grow spiritually during this season of anticipation. They encourage introspection, prayer, and a deeper connection with God.

**Community Building:** Coming together to participate in Advent devotionals fosters a sense of community and shared purpose. It allows our congregation to support one another on their spiritual journeys.

**Focus on the True Meaning:** In a world filled with commercialism and distractions, Advent devotionals help us center our hearts and minds on the true meaning of Christmas – the birth of Jesus Christ.

**Deepened Wonder:** The wonder of Advent is found in the simple and humble, just as it was in the dusty shepherd faces that reflected the splendor of a swaddled child in a manger. Advent devotionals encourage us to embrace the beauty of simplicity and to recognize that the most significant moments in life often occur in the quiet corners of our existence – a deepened wonder that can rekindle our faith and invigorate our spiritual lives.

# Glow: 2023 Advent Devotional

The 2023 Advent devotional *Glow* will be available in the Church foyer on Sunday, Nov. 5, for a suggested freewill offering of five dollars.

*Glow* includes:

- candle-lighting liturgies for home use,
- daily readings with scripture and prayer.



The Advent daily devotional *Glow* guides us through the days of Advent and Christmastide, to the celebration of Epiphany.

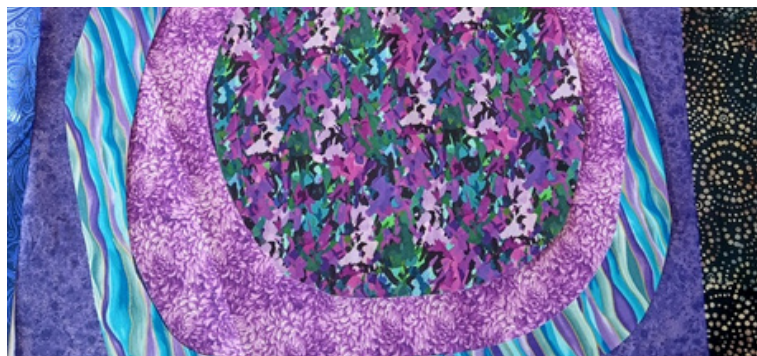
- The glow of Advent is a watchfire's embers as a new day begins to dawn.
- The glow of Advent is the beauty of dusty shepherd faces reflecting the splendor of a swaddled child.
- The glow of Advent is the peace of candlelit faces singing, *O Come, All Ye Faithful*.
- The glow of Advent is the realization of the season's meaning: everything has changed.

**You Are Loved - Loved  
Beyond Your Wildest Dreams!!!**

To watch Countryside's new Pride video, visit [countrysideucc.org/pride](http://countrysideucc.org/pride), or scan one of the QR codes below!!!!







# Youth & Family Ministries

[Rebecca Morello](#), Director of Youth & Family Ministries, [rebeccam@countrysideucc.org](mailto:rebeccam@countrysideucc.org)  
[Emma Boyd](#), Youth & Family Ministries Program Coordinator, [emmab@countrysideucc.org](mailto:emmab@countrysideucc.org), 402-884-8035

## Children’s Ministries

Pre-K – 6th grade, Sundays.

- Nov. 5:** Community Worship
- Nov. 12:** Children’s Church
- Nov. 19:** Community Worship
- Nov. 26:** Children’s Church

## Wednesday Wonderers, Core 56

Wednesdays, 6-7:30 p.m.

- Nov. 1:** The story of Esther
- Nov. 8:** Jonah! (this one’s about the guy...not the fish)
- Nov. 15:** Thanksgiving Family Project!
- Nov. 22:** No Class
- Nov. 29:** Christmas Carols and Art, Family Caroling 7-7:30 p.m.

## D&D group

Fridays, 5:30-8:30 p.m.  
 While our groups are full at the moment, please let us know if your student would like to be on the wait list for a new group!

- Group 1: Emotional Damage, Youth Room
- Group 2: Holy Rollers, Tamar

## Jr. High Youth Group

Sundays 5-6 p.m. Youth Room.

- Nov. 5:** Pathfinder
- Nov. 12:** Hide and Seek
- Nov. 19:** Gratitude Collages
- Nov. 26:** Movie & Game night with Sr. High **5-8 p.m.**

## Sr. High Youth Group

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

- 6 p.m. BYOD
- 6:30-8 p.m. programming & fellowship

- Nov. 5:** Spaghetti and Marshmallow Tower Challenge
- Nov. 12:** John Lewis: Good Trouble Documentary—Required Sunday
- Nov. 19:** Wink Murder Mystery Game
- Nov. 26:** Movie and Game night with Jr. High 5-8pm

## Confirmation

Sundays, 4 - 5 p.m.

- Nov. 5:** Affirmation 4
- Nov. 12:** Service Sunday
- Nov. 19:** Affirmation 6
- Nov. 26:** No class: Thanksgiving Break



Rev. Dr. Keith D. Herron, Intentional Interim Minister

# Countryside Fellowship Gallery ~ October

Rev. Dr. Keith Herron joined Countryside Aug. 8, 2022, as our Intentional Interim Minister. Since then, he's baptized us, joked with us, counseled us, consoled us, and walked with us through times both joyful and sorrowful. Our gratitude is deep and abiding. The fellowship gallery this month takes a look back at the 15 months of Keith's tenure with us. Join us on Sunday, Nov. 19 for his final service. We wish him joy and fulfillment today, tomorrow - and always.



Temple Notes

# Looking Forward to Celebrating Throughout the Jewish Year



*Yom Kippur, or Day of Atonement, this year began at sundown on Sunday, Sept. 24 and ended on the evening of Monday, Sept. 25. During this holiest day of the year, those in the Jewish faith dedicate their mind, body and soul to reconciliation with their fellow humans, themselves and God. They commit to inner change and self-reflection.*

*At the beginning of Kol Nidre, a declaration recited before the beginning of the evening service on the night of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Senior Rabbi Benjamin Sharff spoke about the importance of letting go of hurts in order to focus on the process of self-reflection and Teshuvah. (In the Jewish tradition, repentance is called teshuvah.) He illustrated this through an incident he experienced when one of his children's schools rescheduled a program to Yom Kippur morning, which is marked by a special prayer service.*

Thankfully, I was able to speak with our child's principal, and it proved to be an opportunity both for relationship-building as well as a teaching opportunity. As I learned, they simply did not have a calendar in front of them when the decision was made. This was further exacerbated in that only the evening was marked on the calendar and not the day-long observance on Monday. So, even if they had checked, they would not have seen Yom Kippur. I was able to provide the evening and morning dates for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur for the next year as well as explain the intricacies of the Hebrew calendar. It was a good moment for healing and being able to move on.

Speaking of the Hebrew calendar, it is complicated. It is based on the lunar cycle, but we have holidays that have to fall in the Fall (Sukkot), Spring (Passover), and Summer (Shavuot). In addition, there are days when a holiday cannot begin. For example, Yom Kippur can never start on a Thursday evening, because we would not have time to prepare for Shabbat. And, because it is based on the lunar calendar, seven times every nineteen years, there is a leap month added. This is why everything gets earlier and earlier, and next year, it will be much later.

Living according to the Jewish calendar is complicated, to say the least. Nonetheless, we have many more wonderful celebrations and observances on the horizon, including Chanukah (beginning December 7) and Tu b'Shvat (beginning the evening of January 24).

We engage in the process of Teshuvah and prepare ourselves to be ready to take on the awesome task of striving to become the people we wish to be. It is not easy, and truth be told, Yom Kippur is not the end, but rather just a moment in this lifelong journey. Holidays and gathering can also be a time for self-reflection just as they can also be amazing moments for celebration. As we enter into the fall and early winter, may all our gatherings be meaningful, and may they all be marked on the calendar, evening & morning.

FROM THE PRODUCERS OF **HEISYMAN** AND **BLEED FOR THIS**

**MY FATHER MUHAMMAD ALI**

FROM CHAD YERKS & TOM DENICO

THE UNTOLD STORY

**AN EVENING WITH:**  
**Muhammad Ali Jr.**  
**Meet-and-Greet**

11/02/23  
 6:00PM - 9:00PM  
 COUNTRYSIDE CHURCH  
 13130 FAITH PLZ,  
 OMAHA, NE 68144

Omaha Organization for Outstanding Musical Artists  
 SEAK, Inc. 2012

Countryside Community Church

*Muhammad Ali's Legacy Continues..*  
*Join us for a glimpse into the film, Q&A and how you can support the mission of the foundation.*