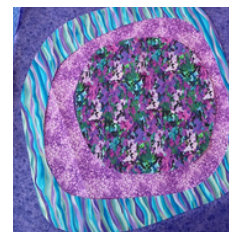


COUNTRYSIDE CURRENTS

The monthly newsletter of Countryside Community Church



A Warm Welcome to All at Countryside! Embracing the Advent Season

As winter's chill begins to creep in and the days grow shorter, there's a sense of anticipation in the air at Countryside Community Church. The season of Advent has arrived, and with it, a unique opportunity to come together, reflect on the past and look forward to the future. This special time is more than a chance for us to deepen our spiritual connection. It's also a perfect moment to invite friends, family, acquaintances and newcomers to join in the warmth and community spirit that defines Countryside during the Advent season.

Historical Significance of Advent

Before we delve into the reasons why Advent at Countryside Community Church is a fantastic time to extend invitations, let's explore the historical significance of this season. The word, Advent, is derived from the Latin "adventus," meaning "coming" or "arrival," has been celebrated by Christians for centuries. It marks the beginning of the liturgical year and typically spans the four Sundays leading up to Christmas.

For Christians, Advent is a time of preparation and anticipation, symbolizing the period of waiting for the birth of Jesus. It's a season of hope, peace, joy, and love, celebrated through the lighting of Advent candles, scripture readings and contemplation. The tradition of Advent calendars, wreaths and nativity scenes

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December

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Christmas Eve

- 10 a.m. Service
4th Sunday in Advent
- 5 p.m. and 10 p.m.
Candlelight Services

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Embracing the Advent Season

Continued from page 1

adds a layer of cultural richness to the season, making it a special and cherished time.

Inviting Friends and Neighbors

The Advent season at Countryside provides a unique opportunity. Here are some compelling reasons why we should extend a heartfelt invitation to friends, family, acquaintances and those new-to-the-neighborhood to join us for Advent services.

Inclusivity Advent is a season that radiates warmth and inclusivity. It's a time to come together and embrace the spirit of unity, a message that holds universal appeal. Inviting others to share in the joy of Advent can help them feel welcomed and valued. It's a chance to engage in acts of kindness and show the love and compassion at the heart of our faith.

Spiritual Nourishment The Advent season is a time of spiritual reflection and growth. By inviting friends and family, you provide them with an opportunity to explore their faith, deepen their understanding of the Christian tradition, and experience spiritual nourishment. And it reignites our own faith and deepens our spiritual connection.

Community Bonding Advent offers a wonderful chance for the community to come together in a shared experience of worship, fellowship, and service. Inviting others fosters stronger connections and a sense of belonging.

Meaningful Traditions Advent is rich in meaningful traditions, from lighting candles to engaging in acts of kindness. Sharing these traditions with newcomers and friends can create lasting memories and bonds.

Growth Last (but certainly not least!), growing our congregation brings fresh perspectives and energy to the church. Newcomers can contribute their unique talents and skills, enriching Countryside's ministry.

The Advent season at Countryside Community Church is a time of deep spiritual significance, unity, and tradition. By extending invitations to friends, family, acquaintances, and newcomers in the neighborhood, congregants have the opportunity to share in the warmth and fellowship that define this special time. It's a season of

Continued on page 7

January Events

Honoring the Divine Spark Within

"Moment by moment, the generosity of God is poured out into our life such that we are the generosity of God. But we don't see it. Why don't we see it? It's not achieved by attaining anything, because nothing is missing... The task is to begin to understand what the hindrance is made of." James Finley

The Board of Life Ministries in January will offer online sessions that will honor ourselves and others through the Enneagram. These sessions will be online Friday, January 19 from 7-9 p.m. and Saturday, Jan. 20, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Enneagram is a tool to use as part of our spiritual practice to honor the Divine Spark within ourselves. We will explore the personality types of the Enneagram and begin to understand how we hinder becoming all God creates us to be.

Presenter will be Debbi Horton, www.debhorton.com. Registration will be available soon on the church website. A link will also be available in an upcoming issue of the weekly C-10.

For further information on the Enneagram and simple prep for the event please visit: Heart of the Enneagram podcast [here](#) or watch the short YouTube video from Suzzane Stabile [here](#).

TEMPLE ISRAEL 150 YEARS

Countryside Community Church

ACADEMY AWARD NOMINEE BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

A TIME FOR BURNING

SAVE THE DATE

A TIME FOR BURNING

A Viewing & Guided Discussion

JANUARY 16, 2024

Details to Follow

FAME

Fellowship, Art, Music, Etc.

From the Financial Office

Three quarters of the church year is behind us already! We appreciate and thank you for your financial support of Countryside's ministries. Total revenue received continues to be slightly above the budget passed in February and our operating expenses are slightly below budget! Please remember the we, the congregation, passed a deficit budget. Because of that, we have had to use some of the church's reserves, as we expected, to cover the negative cash flow. Now is the time to catch up on your planned gifts to the church if you have fallen behind. If you'd like to make a special end-of-year donation – it would be greatly appreciated!

Here are two ways to keep Countryside on the right financial foot with Pastor Jenny Schultz-Thomas starting this month?

Stewardship Pledge Cards

If you have already returned the Stewardship Committee pledge card sent out in November, thank you. our goal is 10 percent pledging for all members. If you have not submitted a 2024 pledge please do so today. Visit countrysideucc.org/give.

2023 Contribution Deadline

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.

Thank you, The Financial Office

COMMON GROUNDS

Barista On Board!

Start your Tuesday mornings with friends and a cup of coffee in Countryside's Common Grounds.

**Tuesdays
8:30-11 a.m.**

Common Grounds will be closed Dec 19, 26 & Jan 2.

St. Patrick's Day

Shamrock
with cane, espresso
whip, green sprinkles

Lucky Leprechaun
green mint, chocolate
espresso, whip, sprinkles



O! The Wonder of Christmas: Candlelight Services at Countryside

As Christmas approaches, you're invited to immerse yourself in the wonder of our Christmas Eve Candlelight Services on December 24.

Countryside is known for its inclusive and welcoming congregation – all are truly welcome. Our Candlelight Services always provide a profound experience. All are brought together in unity and peace to celebrate the wonder of Christmas.

Our new Senior Minister, Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas will lead us in reflection and celebration at the 5 and 10 p.m. Candlelight Services. She brings a fresh perspective and a deep commitment to fostering spiritual connection and community engagement, adding to the joy of the season.

Come experience the magic of the season as Countryside opens its doors to embrace the community with the warm glow of candlelight on Christmas Eve. May the shared moments of joy and reflection foster a sense of unity and peace that extends far beyond the church walls.

HELP DECORATE THE COUNTRYSIDE HALLS!

Hanging of the Greens

Saturday, December 2

- Hot brunch
- Christmas tunes!
- Friendship and fun!

EMAIL DIANE SCOTT AT DIANES@COUNTRYSIDEUCC.ORG

Christmas Concerts

JAZZ
Coffee
HOUSE

Friday, Dec. 8 at 7 p.m.

Countryside Jazz Band will take the stage in the narthex/coffee house for an evening of beautiful holiday music.

Jazz Coffeehouse ~ Friday, Dec. 8, 7 p.m.

Jazz Coffeehouse returns for this immensely popular Christmas tradition, featuring our very own Countryside Jazz musicians performing your favorite holiday music. Join us for a great cup of coffee and some smooth jazz in the comfort of the Common Grounds Coffeehouse.

Sunday, Dec. 17, 4 p.m.

Christmas
PIPE ORGAN
EXTRAVAGANZA!

Enjoy the very best of Christmastide organ repertoire from meditative carol arrangements to pieces that pull out all the stops!

Pipe Organ Extravaganza ~ Sunday, Dec. 17, 4 p.m.

Our Sanctuary will resonate with the sounds of Christmas! Director of Arts Ministry and organist Alex Ritter presents a concert of new and old Christmas music played on Countryside's John-Paul Buzard Opus 47 pipe organ.

Christmas Offering 2023 Helping Omaha Through Partner Together

Take a moment to imagine these children - they could be Muslim, Jewish, or Christian. Regardless of their religious background, one undeniable truth is that they're hungry.

Right here in Omaha, in our own neighborhoods, there are families grappling with the daily challenge of putting food on the table and securing a stable home for their loved ones. These families need our support.

This season, let's help change lives in our own community through our Christmas offering to Together.

Countryside is incredibly fortunate to have Together as our partner in Omaha, a partnership that has been going strong since 1975. Our role is to provide the donations, and Together takes the lead in ensuring our Omaha neighbors have access to meals and safe housing. This Christmas season, we urge you to take action. Please consider giving in any way that suits you - online, via mail*, scanning the QR code, or by using the envelopes available in the pews.



Because of you, Countryside helps change lives. Your generosity can help make a difference in the lives of those in need right here in our community.

With warmest appreciation,

Your Board of Christian Outreach



"Glow" with 2023 Advent Devotional Deepen Your Wonder

Advent devotionals play a vital role in helping ourselves and each other experience the "O!" 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.

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

If you haven't picked up a copy of the 2023 Advent devotional *Glow*, they're still available in the Church foyer for a suggested freewill offering of five dollars.

Glow includes:

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



Welcome New Members!!!!

New members join us for many of the same reasons current members are so dedicated to Countryside. They embrace the Tri-Faith Initiative, the feeling of belonging and sharing values and beliefs. They strive to live an authentic life not just on Sundays but every day. Our latest group of new members joined in November. Take a moment this (and every!) Sunday to welcome them and get to know them. Not pictured: Christine Kasel, Jared and Melissa Sharman, Draven Stevenson, Amber Deann and Andrea Wright.



Christian Perez



Susan Carter-Rothe



Heather Moran



Randy Nuss



Jack Jones



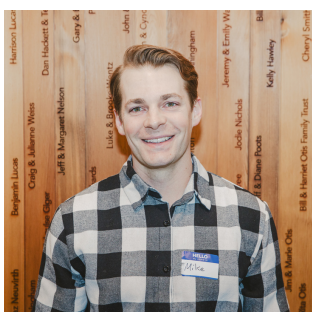
Jordan Vazquez



Kayla Johnson



Denise Lenhart



Michael Ryan-Simkins



Kelsey Ryan-Simkins



Rob Stevenson



Megan Benoit





Sarah Jones



Michael Pirnie



Kitty Berg



Tif Pilypaitis



Vicki Roy



Joe Roy



Embracing the Advent Season

Continued from page 2

inclusivity, reflection, and community bonding, making it the perfect occasion to embrace the spirit of Advent with open hearts and open doors. So, let the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love burn brightly, inviting all to join in the celebration of the coming of Christ, and share in the joy that is Advent at Countryside Community Church.

Celebrating Openness and Affirmation at Countryside

While Advent season brings its own unique charm to Countryside, there's an aspect of this church that shines throughout the year – our commitment to welcoming all to our congregation.

All are Welcome! Countryside is proud to be an All Are Welcome! congregation. Love, acceptance and understanding are at the core of Countryside beliefs. Our proactive stance in welcoming individuals of all

backgrounds is a central part of our identity.

Countryside is a safe and welcoming space for all – everyone is embraced for who they are. Our commitment to welcoming all goes beyond words. It's reflected in our actions and outreach efforts. We actively work to create an environment of love, understanding and support for all. Our culture of acceptance extends a warm invitation to all, especially during the Advent season.

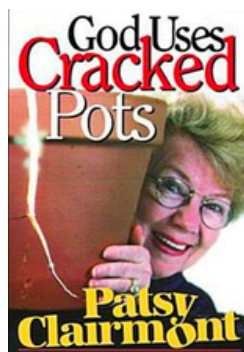
This Advent season, we invite everyone to experience the inclusive and welcoming environment at Countryside. Whether a longtime member, a newcomer, or someone who has been searching for a place that embraces diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, you'll find that Countryside is a beacon of openness and affirmation, where all are invited to come as they are and be a part of a loving and supportive community.



Book Reviews

The books reviewed on this page can be found in the Christianity section of the Countryside library.

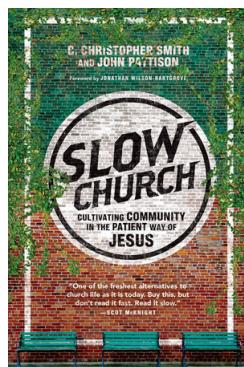
God Uses Cracked Pots, Patsy Clairmont
 Speaker Patsy Clairmont humorously shares how her personal flaws, mistakes and struggles demonstrate how God's light shines best through the cracks and broken places in our lives. (Christianity: 248.4 CLA)



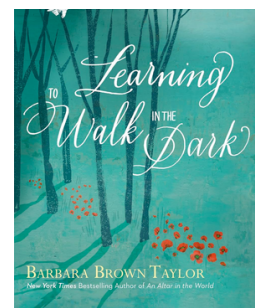
Normal is Just a Setting, Patsy Clairmont
 With wit and wisdom, the best-selling author and humorist Patsy Clairmont declares normality abnormal, setting readers free from their pursuit of the unattainable. (Christianity: 248.4 CLA)



Slow Church: Cultivating Community in the Patient Way of Jesus, Christopher Smith and John Pattison
 The authors have done a fantastic job of envisioning a wholesomely sustainable, spiritually alluring and thoroughly kingdom-centric church that is simply fulfilling its purpose of witnessing to Jesus in the rhythms of God's grace. (Christianity: 253 SMI)



Learning to Walk in the Dark, Barbara Brown Taylor
 In *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, Taylor asks us to put aside our fears and anxieties and to explore all that God has to teach us "in the dark." (Christianity:248.4 Tay)



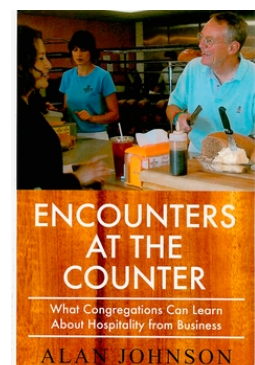
Tweet if You Love Jesus: Practicing Church in the Digital Age, Elizabeth Drescher

A timely wakeup call for mainline Christian churches to make use of the social media before it's too late and they are left behind. (Christianity: 253.02 DRE)



Encounters at the Counter: What Congregations Can Learn About Hospitality From Business, Alan Johnson

Encounters at the Counter shares Johnson's engaging in face-to-face customer service. It explores the dimensions of hospitality that can be applied to congregations seeking to demonstrate genuine hospitality, such as: the contagion of happiness, maximizing routines, renewing resources, taking time and making time and promoting the quality of the product as well as the process. (Christianity: 259 JOH)



Better. Waking Up to Who We Could Be, Melvin Bray

What if we could actually change the world by telling better stories? What if the world we have—with its racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, religious hatred, ecological disregard—is exactly the world we have spun into existence through the stories we have told? Melvin Bray insists that a better world is possible if the stories around which we organize our lives begin to match the beauty we imagine is possible. (Christianity: 261.09 BRA)



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!

Phoenix Affirmations

4: Expressing our love in worship that is as sincere, vibrant, and artful as it is scriptural.

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!

Register for Events at
[Countrysideucc.org/register](https://countrysideucc.org/register)



Youth & Family Ministries

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

Children's Ministries

Pre-K - 6th grade, Sundays.

Dec. 3: Community Worship

Dec. 10: Children's Church

Dec. 17: Community Worship

Dec. 24: Children's Church

Dec. 31: Community Worship

Wednesday Wonderers, Core 56

Wednesdays, 6-7:30 p.m.

Dec. 1: The story of Esther

Dec. 8: Jonah! (this one's about the guy...not the fish)

Dec. 13: Last WW before Winter Break!

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.

Dec. 3: Christmas Shorts and Playlist

Dec. 10: Christmas Pictionary

Dec. 17: Christmas Charades (and probably hide and seek)

Dec. 24: No Jr High Youth Group: Christmas Eve

Dec. 31: No Jr High Youth Group: New Year's Eve

Sr. High Youth Group

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

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

Dec. 3: Keep it Up!

Dec. 10: Black is King film **Required Sunday**

Dec. 17: Holiday Party! Games, food, yuletide shenanigans

Dec. 24: No Youth Group: Christmas Eve

Dec. 31: No Youth Group: New Year's Eve

Confirmation

Sundays, 4 - 5 p.m.

Dec. 3: Affirmation 4

Dec. 10: Service Sunday

Dec. 17: Service Project Sunday

Dec. 24: No class: Christmas Eve

Dec. 31: No class: New Year's Eve



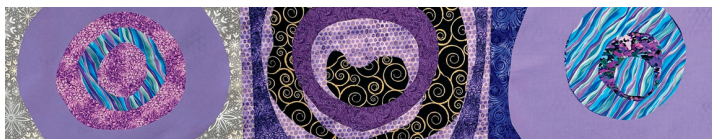


EPS Recycling: A Gift for the Environment

Just like last year and in time for the holidays, Countryside Community Church will have a collection site for heavy, Expandable Polystyrene (EPS) packing Styrofoam. EPS is the hard white packaging foam used to transport goods like TVs, appliances, glass items, temperature-sensitive medications and perishables like fresh fruit or meat. There's certain to be a lot of it during the gift-giving season. Give it another life by sending it to Plastilite rather than the landfill.

You'll find the collection site on the lower level of Countryside near the south double doors. Drop-off times are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. Access to the green bag container by ringing the buzzer from the outdoor entrance. You can also enter through the main upper-level doors.

Please don't drop off tape, labels, flexible foam, food containers, packing peanuts or foam sheets. The collection site will be open Dec. 10, 2023, through Jan. 15, 2024. Give the environment a holiday present by recycling your EPS!



The Box: December



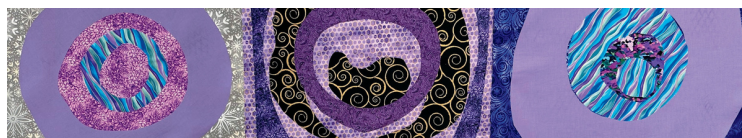
The Board of Christian Outreach has chosen Together as the

recipient of our December Box donations.

Together's mission is straightforward and compelling: To prevent and end hunger and homelessness in Omaha and surrounding communities. Together has a special place in the hearts of Countrysiders because we, along with many other congregations, Temple Israel, Dundee, Kountze, St. Cecilia and others, organized to provide help for affected families after the devastating tornado of 1975. The founders realized that countless families need help every day and Together grew and evolved to serve Omaha's neediest citizens up to the present day.

There is a pressing need for kitchen essentials for newly housed families who have lost everything and must start anew. Please remember to include kitchen equipment in your next excursion to Walmart, Target, Lowe's, such as cookware, tableware, dishes, utensils, mixing bowls, cutlery, small appliances, dish towels, sponges, oven mitts, etc.

Click [here](#) or scan the QR code to choose something from their Amazon wishlist. Send your donations to church or put them in the Box located in the entryway.



Ready for some

FOOD, FRIENDS & FUN?

Call or text Sherryl
402-658-7416



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 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!

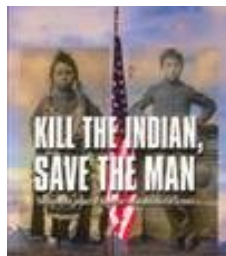
Fellowship Arts and Music Etc. (FAME), Fridays, 10 a.m. in Rahab. No reservations are required!

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](#).

New Title for Racial Justice Book Group

The Sunday morning Racial Justice Book Group will begin reading *Kill the Indian, Save the Man* in December. Discussions are held via Zoom on Sundays from 8-9 a.m. The Zoom link can be found on the [church calendar](#).



Odd Tuesday Coffee

New Small Group Explores Progressive Christianity

Join the Odd Tuesday Coffee crew on the First and Third Tuesday of each month at 9:30 a.m. in the Common Grounds. This is a great 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!

