

COUNTRYSIDE CURRENTS



THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH

The Unlocked Mind: Beyond Bible Studies

In a world that is constantly evolving, where the crossroads of faith and science beckon us to explore the depths of our beliefs and understanding, thought-provoking adult educational events are invaluable portals to intellectual and spiritual growth. The Fall 2023 series, [*Reconciling God and Science in the 21st Century*](#), hosted by Rev. Dr. Don Sarton and Dr. John Windle, stands as a testament to the transformative power of such endeavors.

Educational webinars provide a unique platform where minds can converge, ideas can clash, and perspectives can expand. The benefits extend far beyond the confines of traditional learning, offering participants an opportunity to engage with contemporary issues and age-old questions in a dynamic and accessible format. As we navigate the complexities of our faith and grapple with the ever-advancing frontiers of science, these webinars become guiding lights, illuminating unexplored territories and fostering a community of inquisitive minds.

The series, spanning eight weeks and exploring topics from the reframing of significant words in Christianity to the intersection of artificial intelligence and human consequences, exemplifies the richness of content that such educational webinars can deliver. Participants are not merely

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Church Office
13130 Faith Plaza, Omaha NE 68144
www.countrysideucc.org
P: 402-391-0350
E: Office@countrysideucc.org
FB: www.facebook.com/CountrysideOmaha

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz Thomas, Senior Minister
jennyst@countrysideucc.org

Dan Loven-Crum, Director of Administration &
Communications
danl@countrysideucc.org

Christine Kasel, Director of Communications &
Support Services
christinek@countrysideucc.org

Shari Garder, Financial Secretary
sharig@countrysideucc.org

Rev. Sarah Retzel Jones, Pastoral Care Manager
sarahrj@countrysideucc.org

Michaela Fricke, Database & Communications
Assistant
michaelaf@countrysideucc.org

Ashlee Gibson, Administrative Assistant
ashleeg@countrysideucc.org

Steve Gomez, Administrative Assistant
steveg@countrysideucc.org

Doug Bloomquist, Building Property Coordinator
dougbl@countrysideucc.org

Diane Scott, Engagement Coordinator
dianes@countrysideucc.org

Rebecca Morello, Director of Youth & Family
Ministries
rebeccam@countrysideucc.org

Emma Boyd, Youth Programming Coordinator
emmab@countrysideucc.org

Alex Ritter, Director of Arts Ministries
alex@countrysideucc.org

Tyler Gruttemeyer, Youth Music Director
tylerg@countrysideucc.org

Adam Witte, Choir Director
adamw@countrysideucc.org

Official Notice of Annual Meeting

Notice is hereby given, in accordance with Article 6, Section 6.2.5. of the Bylaws, that the Annual Meeting of Countryside Community Church will be held in person in the Sanctuary and virtually on Zoom at 11:45 a.m., on Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024.



To register, [click here](#), scan the QR code or visit countrysideucc.org/annualmeeting!

Members may participate in person or on Zoom. The purpose of the Annual Meeting is to elect officers and new board members, to receive the annual reports of the officers, organizations, departments, boards and committees, transact business, approve by-law changes and formulate plans for the new year.

The Annual Meeting will follow the 10 a.m. Youth Sunday Worship Service and a soup lunch in Marys' Hall, provided by the Board of Deacons.

The Box: February



Lydia House

Open Door Mission

Breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty

The Board of Christian Outreach has chosen Lydia House as the recipient of our February Box donations.

Open Door Mission's Lydia House/ Women and Families provides emergency services for single women and families in need of immediate assistance. In addition to food, clothing and services, Lydia House has 300 available beds which are filled to capacity every night. Countryside can help fill this month's **great need for diapers**. All sizes are welcome, but sizes 4, 5 and 6 are most needed.

The Open Door Mission, begun in 1954, is a Christian-based organization committed to breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty in our region. While they serve all people in need, we are directing Countryside donations to Lydia House and its focus on helping women and families reach a more stable future. Please add diapers to your shopping list, visit their [Amazon wishlist](#) or click on the QR code. The Box is located in the entryway of the church.



Beyond Bible Studies



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THE UNLOCKED MIND: BEYOND BIBLE STUDIES

Feeding Spiritual and Intellectual Appetites with Bible Studies and Adult Ed

spectators; they are active contributors to a collective journey of discovery, challenging preconceptions and seeking a deeper understanding of the intricacies that shape our world.

Moreover, the accessibility of on-demand presentations ensures that the benefits of these thought-provoking discussions extend beyond the confines of time and space. For those who couldn't attend the original sessions or are seeking intellectual and spiritual nourishment at their own pace, the ability to revisit these webinars becomes a valuable resource.

In a fast-paced world where information bombards us from every angle, thought-provoking educational events like [Reconciling God and Science](#) stand as oases of contemplation, fostering an environment where curiosity is celebrated, questions are embraced, and growth is inevitable. They serve as catalysts for personal and collective transformation, offering a roadmap for those eager to navigate the crossroads of faith and science in the 21st century. They offer an opportunity to unlock our minds and illuminate the path to a deeper understanding of our world and ourselves. 🌟



Exploring the Crossroads of Faith and Science

Reconciling God and Science in the 21st Century

In the fall of 2023, Countryside had the privilege of hosting a thought-provoking and intellectually stimulating adult educational series, [Reconciling God and Science in the 21st Century](#).

This series was led by co-teachers Rev. Dr. Don Sarton and Dr. John Windle. Rev. Sarton worked with Windle on developing the insightful 8-week program that delves into the intersection of Christianity and modern science.

If you couldn't attend the original sessions or are looking for intellectually and spiritually enriching content, read on! The series recap below presents a series that promises to challenge your perspectives and deepen your understanding of the intricate relationship between faith and science. [Reconciling God and Science](#) provides a contemporary, scientific lens through which to view God.

Rev. Sarton and Dr. Windle, a cardiac electrophysiologist and director of the Center for Intelligent Health Care at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, collaborated to explore how our evolving brains and ancient wisdom shape our



"Reconciling God and Science" provides a contemporary, scientific lens through which to view God.

comprehension of God in the 21st century. Rev. Sarton's presentations looked at traditional words of Christianity and reclaiming/reframing them in terms of current scholarship, both in the fields of science and current thinking in theology/Biblical Scholarship.

The series sought to establish an authentic foundation for faith journeys. Participants were encouraged to question traditional interpretations that may conflict with the teachings and life of Jesus. All eight episodes are available on-demand and can be watched in any order. (INLCUDE LINK)

Week 1: *Introduction to Reframing Significant Words of Christianity and God and Science*

The series began by setting the stage, reframing key words and concepts in Christianity through a modern scientific viewpoint. This laid the foundation for the subsequent discussions.

Week 2: *Sin and Salvation*

Week 3: *Sacrifice and Crucifixion*

Week 4: *Resurrection*

The hosts courageously navigated through challenging topics such as sin, salvation, sacrifice, crucifixion, and resurrection. The goal was to evaluate traditional terms and present a progressive understanding that aligns with both science and spirituality.

Week 5: *God is Dead – The Post-Modern Perspective; Reconciling God and Science in the 21st Century*

Delving into post-modern perspectives, the series explored the concept of 'God is Dead' and its implications in today's world. This session encouraged participants to reflect on evolving theological landscapes.

Week 6: *Human – What Science Teaches Us About Being Human*

This episode discussed what science teaches us about being human, aiming to bridge the gap between scientific discoveries and our spiritual understanding of humanity.


Week 7: *Culture of Right and Wrong; Artificial Intelligence and Human Consequences*

Examining cultural norms and the ethical implications of artificial intelligence, the series brought attention to the complex interplay between our values and technological advancements.

Week 8: *An Integrating Summation*

The series concluded with an integrating summation, providing participants with a cohesive understanding of the crossroads of faith and science.

One of the series' strengths was its acknowledgment of historical interpretations in Christianity, recognizing that many theological perspectives emerged in the politics of the 11th to 13th centuries. By understanding this history, participants gained valuable insights into key biblical lessons.

We encourage you to explore this on-demand, enlightening series. In a world where diverse theological perspectives exist, this series provided a safe space for exploration, dialogue and the building of a foundation that aligns with our evolving understanding of God and science. 

[Click here](#) to access all eight classes on Countryside's YouTube Channel!





2024 COUNTRYSIDE ANNUAL MEETING EMBRACING UNITY AND VISION

[Register now!](#)

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Countryside Community Church holds a special place in the hearts of its members, fostering a sense of community, spirituality, and shared purpose. One key event that brings our congregation together is the

annual meeting. This gathering goes beyond a mere formality; it is an opportunity for every member to actively contribute to our church's growth, understand our direction, and participate in important decision-making processes.

Transparent Communication Attending the annual meeting allows you to engage in transparent communication with church leadership. Reports on Countryside's financial health, ongoing projects, and future plans are shared, providing insights into the behind-the-scenes workings of the church. This transparency builds trust and strengthens the bond between our leadership and the congregation.

Active Participation in Decision-Making The annual meeting is not just a time for passive listening; it's an arena for active participation. You have the chance to voice your opinions, ask questions, and contribute to the decision-making process. Whether it's approving the annual budget, electing leaders, or discussing significant church initiatives, each member's input is valued and considered.

Unity and Community Coming together for the annual meeting fosters a sense of unity among Countryside's members. It's an opportunity to meet new faces, reconnect with old friends, and collectively celebrate the shared values that make Countryside a unique and vibrant spiritual home that truly welcomes all. The meeting is a powerful reminder that Countryside is a community working towards common goals.

2024 ANNUAL MEETING: EMBRACING UNITY & VISION

Register now!

Understanding Countryside's Vision To actively contribute to the church's mission, you need a clear understanding of our vision. The annual meeting serves as a platform for leaders to articulate the church's vision and goals. Through presentations and discussions, attendees gain insight into the direction the church is headed and how individual contributions align with the larger mission.

Celebrating Achievements and Acknowledging Challenges The annual meeting is a time to reflect on our achievements over the past year and acknowledge the challenges we faced. It's an opportunity to celebrate milestones, express gratitude for the hard work of volunteers, and collectively address any hurdles we may be facing. Through shared experiences, we can better appreciate our shared journey.

Attending our annual meeting is more than a commitment; it's a chance to actively participate in the life and growth of our community.



Join us for Youth Sunday, followed by a soup luncheon courtesy of the Board of Deacons - and then the Annual Meeting!

By fostering transparent communication, encouraging active participation, promoting unity, and providing insight into our vision, this annual gathering is a vital step towards building a stronger, more connected community.

Every member's presence adds value, contributing to the shared journey of faith and fellowship at Countryside Community Church. 🏡



Save the Date! Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, leading up to Easter. Countryside this year will offer a lunch hour Disposition of Ashes and Ash Wednesday evening service.

Ash Wednesday, February 14

- Disposition of Ashes, noon
- Ash Wednesday Service, 7 p.m.

2024 Board Members: Mark Your Calendars

An All Board Member Training will be held on Sunday, Feb. 25, 12-3 p.m. in Marys' Hall. Get to know other members of your new board and learn the roles and responsibilities of being a board member.

This meeting is for all board members and your attendance at this meeting is **strongly requested**. [Click here to register](#). If you have any questions about the training, please contact Dan Kuyper at dan-o@dcpack.us. Dan will serve as Countryside's Moderator after the annual meeting.

Anti-Racism Designation Group

The Countryside Anti-Racist Designation group continues to plan activities that contribute to Countryside's UCC Anti-Racist Designation.

February is Black History month, reminding us to continue to educate ourselves on the painful history of racism in our country.

We're currently building an Anti-Racist section in the James Hicks Memorial Library and will post reviews of Countryside library books that focus on racism.

Our ongoing work toward achieving the UCC Anti-Racist designation will include speakers, workshops, reading suggestions, and activist opportunities.

Please join us in organizing and supporting events related to our Anti-Racist efforts! For more information [email Sharon Royers](mailto:sroyers@centurylink.net) at sroyers@centurylink.net.

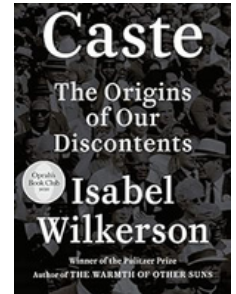
Note! Sharon was recently quoted in a United Church of Christ press release about the all-church read. [Click here to read the release!](#)





Racial Justice Book Group Review

Caste, Isabel Wilkerson
Review by Marcia Blum



Isabel Wilkerson incorporates strong historical research with stories about the lives of people that bring the facts to life. She describes

the creation of a caste system in the United States, placing white Europeans at the upper caste and Blacks as the lowest class, likening this to the caste systems in India and Germany. She outlines the ongoing justification for withholding freedom from the Blacks using laws, intimidation and violence to maintain the rights of the upper caste. She describes how this allowed power and money to be held by the upper white class by enslaving Black Africans as property and free labor with no rights.

The book gives examples of the many opportunities during the evolution of the United States where choices could have led to different and more humane and equal treatment for all. Following emancipation came other ways to keep the lower caste down, including the Jim Crow laws and the unequal war on drugs and the growing prison system.

With our eyes more open, we become aware of the ongoing inequities that can be changed. I will always remember a story about a young Black girl from the United States who won a contest asking what would be a just punishment for Hitler. Her response was, "Have him be a Black person in the United States."

Communion Volunteers needed

Interested in volunteering as a Communion server? [Email Glenn Phillips](mailto:glennphillips0616@gmail.com), glennphillips0616@gmail.com

Book Reviews

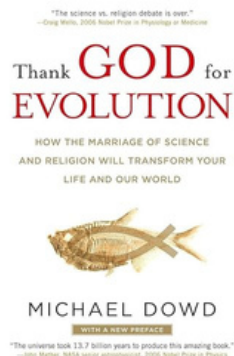
The books reviewed on this page can be found in the Christianity section of the Countryside library. All reviews taken from Amazon.com.

Thank God for Evolution

by Michael Dowd

With evidence from contemporary astrophysics, geology, biology, anthropology, and evolutionary psychology, *Thank God for Evolution* lays out a compelling argument for how religion and science can be mutually enriching forces in our lives.

(Christianity:261.55 DOW)

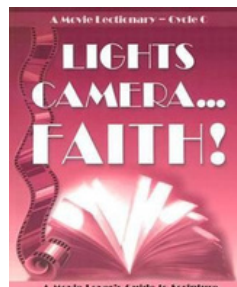


Lights, Camera,...Faith! A Movie Lovers Guide to Scripture

by Peter Malone & Rose Pacatte

Malone and Pacatte create a dialogue between Scripture and film, engaging faith through culture and culture

through faith in this exciting series. This volume provides a fresh take on the Scriptures through the lens of popular movies such as: *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Where the Heart Is*, *The Family Man*, *Forrest Gump*, and more. A movie synopsis, film commentary, film dialogue with the Sunday Scriptures, points for reflection and conversation, and suggested prayers are included. (Christianity: 261.5 MAL)



Giving Made Easy!

Scan the QR code to the right, [click here](#), or visit countrysideucc.org/giving



Get Connected!



Countryside offers many opportunities to connect with one another and the community. Read the weekly C-10 for new and updated information on these and other groups, events, and programs. For more information on how to get involved, [email Diane](mailto:dianes@countrysideucc.org) at dianes@countrysideucc.org, scan the QR code to the right or text her at 402-707-1556.

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

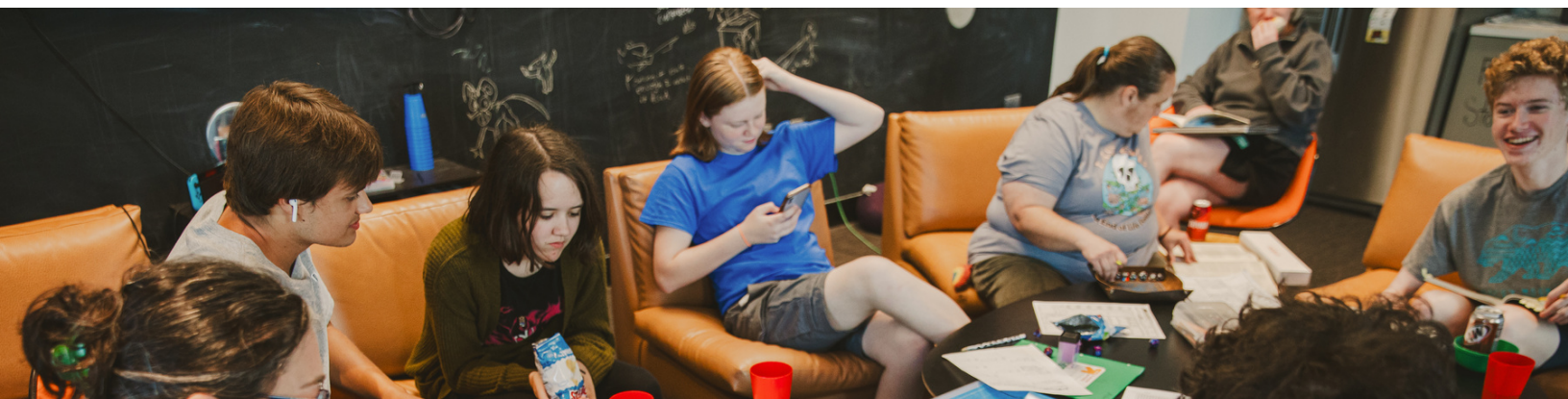
Christianity. There's even a new poetry-focused group!

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 Sartor'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 Hope Garden, 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!



Youth & Family Ministries

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

Children's Ministries

Pre-K-6th grade

Feb. 4: Children's Church
Feb. 11: Community Worship
Feb. 18: Children's Church
Feb. 25: Community Worship

Wednesday Wonderers, Core 56

Wednesdays, 6-7:30 p.m.

Feb. 7: The Faith of Friends
Feb. 14: Ash Wednesday:
Community Worship at 7pm/no
class
Feb. 21: Jesus as Shepherd
Feb. 28: The Parable of the Sower

D&D group

Fridays, 5:30-8:30 p.m.

Our groups are full at the moment,
but let us know if your student
would like to be on the wait list for a
new group!

Group 1: Emotional Damage
Group 2: Holy Rollers
Group 3: Chaos Campaigns
Group 4: One Group to Rule Them All

Jr. High Youth Group

Sundays, 5-6 p.m. Youth Room.

Feb. 4: Hide and Seek
Feb. 11: Super Bowl Party
Feb. 18: Board Games!
Feb. 25: Among Us! IRL

Sr. High Youth Group

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

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

Feb. 4: Viewing of Black Power
Mixtape—required Sunday
Feb. 11: Super Bowl Party!
Feb. 18: To Spielbound We Go!
Feb. 25: Not Just February

Confirmation

Sundays, 4-5 p.m.

Feb. 4: Affirmation 11
Feb. 11: 10 a.m. Youth Sunday
Worship/ Annual Mtg-required
attendance (no 4pm class)
Feb. 18: Service Opportunity
Feb. 25: Affirmation 12



Countryside Fellowship Gallery ~ January

Fellowship after services at Countryside is important in building community, deepening relationships, and fostering a sense of belonging among members and visitors. It's a vital aspect of the church's mission and values, and a tangible expression of our commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive space for all.

Members and visitors gather together in the Sanctuary, Narthex and Common Grounds for coffee and conversation. It allows informal interactions and connections to be made and provides an opportunity for members to get to know each other on a more personal level.

Fellowship isn't just a social activity. It reflects a commitment to building a welcoming and inclusive community. It is a tangible expression of our belief in the power of connection and relationship-building, and a testament to the transformative potential of shared experiences and shared values.

