



CURRENTS

From the Desk of Reverend Chris Alexander | Associate Pastor

Do you remember all the questions you asked your parents as a child about God and religion? “What does God look like?” “What is Heaven?” “What is Hell, and where is it?” “My friend Richard is Jewish and he says he doesn’t believe in Jesus. Does that mean he is not a child of God, too?” “Why did God create spiders and mosquitoes?”

I remember asking those questions, not only to my parents as a child, but also to my pastors, and even my seminary professors, as I continued to grow and wonder who this God is that is supposed to be living my life right alongside me. I am still asking those questions and many other, more complex ones, like “How can God possibly allow such pain, suffering and hatred in the world?” “How can we look at one another and only see the surface stuff, like skin color, gender, ethnic heritage or sexual orientation, and not see the light of creation bursting forth from within?”

These are questions about life, creation, love and forgiveness that we struggle with every day; and though many of us, at one time or another, think we have a handle on the answers to these questions, exceptions and doubt creep in, and we find ourselves right back at the core questions we asked as children, “Who is this God we talk about, and how am I related or affected?”

Rob Bell is an evangelical preacher from Grand Rapids, Michigan, who pastors a congregation of several thousand members who gather together, asking these questions of one another. They tell stories and listen to each other share their own experiences about what they have been told about God, and about the people in their lives in whom they have seen God working in the world. Lately, Rob has received a lot of press over a book he has written called *Love Wins*, that dares to entertain these questions and the answers and definitions we assign them to help explain them.

Coming from an evangelical background, the conversation of Rob’s community might have started out with well

defined categories of who Jesus was, what he taught his disciples, and how Jesus expected us to behave with one another, according to a literal, and historical reading of the scripture, much like many of our own experiences with communities of faith, or even with friends and family over dinner conversation. But, in my experience at least, and I suspect this might be what has happened with Rob Bell’s community as well, within the conversations of all these questions, our well defined categories and explanations began to crack open a bit, letting in even more questions, and the need for even more categories to explain away the huge gaps of reason behind our first set of answers or definitions.

What, now, do we do with these “gaps?” Do we run away from them and pretend we don’t really see them? Do we bend our words and phrasing around until we come up with explanations that seem to smooth out some of the inconsistencies we see in the biblical narratives? One most notable attempt at this is one I hear in my own family conversations that goes something like this, “Well, what is a ‘day’ to God? Is it a twenty-four hour period of time like we think of today, or can a ‘day’ to God really be something like 1 billion years as we understand ‘years?’” This question does help a little to bridge the gap between what we hear in the creation narrative about God creating the world in six days, versus what we hear from scientists about this planet existing over 13.7 billion years ago.

One of my favorite authors, Annie Dillard, wrote in her book *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, “The gaps are the thing. The gaps are the spirit’s one home. The altitudes and the latitudes so dazzlingly spare and clean that the spirit can discover itself for the first time like a once-blind man unbound.” So maybe the key is to enter these gaps, “with fear and trembling” to be sure, but to enter them, together, exploring, listening, learning, and living within them, in order to seek and discover life, in all its awe, all its wonder, and all its mystery.

continued on next page

Events and Meetings

Note: Child care will be provided for events by emailing Heather Dall at hdmdall@hotmail.com at least 48 hours in advance.

Lunch Bunch Circle will meet Monday, May 9, at 12:00 noon at Wheatfields at One Pacific Place. Shirley Clemens and Carmen Reed are our hostesses for that day.

SOS will meet on Sunday, May 15 at 12:30 p.m. at the Old Country Buffet on 145th and Center. Call Betty or Harry Freeman at 402-333-8598 with questions.

Friend to Friend will meet THURSDAY, May 12, 11:00 a.m. in the Moderator's Room kitchen as they prepare the luncheon for the Young at Heart. This multi-generational group meets monthly. Their mission is that of service to others.

20-30 Somethings will meet on Tuesday, May 13, 7:00 p.m. Be watching for upcoming information regarding their meeting place.

ETC members will meet on Wednesday, May 11, 6:00 p.m. at Pacific Springs golf course for supper and site evaluation. RSVP to Mary Beth at marybethl@countrysideucc.org or at 402-391-0350 ext. 112.

Family Activities Committee is up and running!!! They will meet on Sunday, May 1, 10:30 a.m. at the home of Christine and Dan Kuyper, 1516 S. 141 Circle. The mission of this group is to create faith-based fellowship opportunities for families with young children through fun, family and all church oriented activities! If you would be interested in being a part of this committee, please contact Mary Beth at 402-391-0350 ext. 112 or at marybethl@countrysideucc.org.

Men's Breakfast Group - Tuesday mornings, 7:00 a.m. at the Garden Café in Rockbrook Shopping Center (108th and Center). This is open to all men of the church.

Men's Basketball - Monday evenings, 8:30 p.m. in Countryside's Gym. If you would like to play recreational ball, please feel free to join the group. If you have questions, contact the church office at 402-391-0350.

I think Rob Bell has courageously entered these "gaps" in his new book. And it is exciting to see all the commotion swirling around him now, as he speaks about what he has found within these fissures and under the rocks. We, at Countryside, wish to enter these conversations with Rob, and any others who wish to share with us, by doing a congregational read of Rob's book, *Love Wins*, (which can be purchased at the Bookworm across the street from the Countryside, or anywhere).

We will spend four weeks, from May 15 through June 12, exploring the questions about heaven and hell, salvation, forgiveness, pain and suffering, abuse and revelation, that come up in this reading and, hopefully, we can add into the mix, some of our own questions about God and how God works in the world with us and through us. Small group discussions will be formed if you'd like to join one, or start one yourself. Also, you can enter the conversations online with Darkwood Brew bloggers (www.darkwoodbrew.org) and with our Darkwood Brew Facebook page participants.

However it works best for you, I encourage you to enter the "gaps," knowing that we are in this together, and even though undefined spaces can be scary at times, we will watch each others' backs. And, if Rob Bell is right, and *Love Wins*, then what do we really have to fear? But, also, if Rob is right, and *Love* does indeed win, we have a new question to discuss... "Now what?"

Peace,
Chris

Countryside Worship

May 1, 2011

9:00 a.m. Classic Worship
11:00 a.m. Jazz Worship
5:00 p.m. Darkwood Brew
Rev. Chris Alexander
preaching

May 8, 2011

9:00 a.m. Classic Worship
11:00 a.m. Jazz Worship
5:00 p.m. Darkwood Brew
Dr. Eric Elnes preaching

May 15, 2011

9:00 a.m. Classic Worship
11:00 a.m. Jazz Worship
5:00 p.m. Darkwood Brew
Dr. Eric Elnes preaching

May 22, 2011

9:00 a.m. Classic Worship
11:00 a.m. Jazz Worship/
Baccalaureate
5:00 p.m. Darkwood Brew
Dr. Eric Elnes Preaching

May 29, 2011

9:00 a.m. Classic Worship
11:00 a.m. Jazz Worship
5:00 p.m. Darkwood Brew
Dr. Eric Elnes preaching



KINDERNOOK

Kindernook is currently registering children ages 2-5 for the 2011/2012 school year. Kindernook has classes that meet 2-5 days 9:00-11:30 a.m. and an afternoon class for 3 and 4 year olds that meets 1:00-3:15 p.m. There are just a few spaces left in our NAEYC accredited preschool program. If you are interested in visiting the classroom or would like more information about how your child can explore, experiment and play in our hands on learning environment, contact Stacey Carnazzo at 402-391-0350 ext. 114.

Kindernook Preschool will be holding a summer camp this year!

We will explore art, science, building, cooking and outdoor adventures during our fun and interactive summer camp. There will be three sessions: Wonder of Nature, June 13-17; Bug Bonanza, June 20-24 and Bubbles, Balls and Balloons, July 18-22. All camp sessions are one week long and will run from 9:00-11:30 p.m. Cost for camp sessions is \$65.00/session. The camps are for children ages 3-5 years of age. You can register for one or all three of these great camps! For more information or a registration form, contact Stacey Carnazzo at 402-391-0350 ext. 114.

NEXT SMALL GROUP STUDY & ALL CHURCH READ

Love Wins by Rob Bell is the focus of and ALL CHURCH READ as well as the next small group study. The book is available for purchase at the Bookworm in Countryside Village. Information regarding small group sign up opportunities is available in the hallway to the right of the main office door. As with the past studies, you will be able to access the following tools on your computer:

- The website www.darkwoodbrew.org
- A master schedule of bloggers and Skype Guests for Darkwood Brew's series.
- "The Nugget," a small 15-minute video "summary" of the Darkwood Brew Service from the week that can be viewed by your small groups for the first 15 minutes of meeting and then discussed. This video Nugget will be available through the www.darkwoodbrew.org site as well.
- A small groups tab on www.darkwoodbrew.org so you will always be able to go to that tab for easy access to materials and more.

For information on the classes and/or the reading material, contact Mary Beth at 402-391-0350 ext. 112 with your questions.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Christian and Carmen Madson welcomed their third son, Noah Oliveros, on March 31. Noah joins big brothers Josiah and Elijah. Proud grandparents are Buzz and Percy Madson. Congratulations Madson family!

Justin and Kelly Horn welcomed their second child, Wesley Dwain, on March 25. Wesley is loved by big sister Haley and great-grandfather, Dwain Horn. Best wishes to the entire Horn family!

Conor and Michelle Campbell welcomed their second child, Chase William, on February 19. Big brother is Braydon and grandmother is Lynette Campbell.

SYMPATHY TO:

Please remember in prayer the families of the following Countryside members:

Fran Koehler – Fran passed away March 30 here in Omaha. Fran's husband is Bob Koehler and her daughter and son-in-law are Cyndi and John Kugler. A memorial service was held here at Countryside April 9, officiated by Dr. Eric Elnes.

Ron Lambert – Ron, a longtime Countryside member, passed away April 15 here in Omaha. A memorial service was held here at Countryside April 20, officiated by Rev. Chris Alexander.

May "Box" InCommon

Clothing for their
Community Closet
and/or food for
Monday night meals

A Time of Transition



As a person called to ordained ministry with the United Church of Christ, it is a privilege to share that calling with you. The calling has led me down a path that has rarely been straight, though the call has been true. From my days as a fundamentalist until today, I have always been captivated by the numinous. My journey took me through the Methodist, Lutheran, Baptist, Presbyterian, Evangelical, fundamentalist and Disciples of Christ traditions before finding a home with the UCC. My seminary experience freed me from my fundamentalist past and opened the door to know God in new and invigorating ways.

Toward the end of my seminary training, I began to seek out a relationship with the UCC. My first step was to join a UCC church. Though I was a Youth Director of a Congregational Church it was necessary for me to spend time in a UCC congregation, in order to begin the in-care process. One of my last classes in Seminary was a UCC history and polity course, which is required of all UCC clergy. After a year in the church, I assembled a committee, which affirmed

my call and presented me to the denomination. Once my call was confirmed by the denomination, I was assigned a mentor, whom I met with monthly. I was also assigned to a group that consisted of members from 10 churches, which met monthly, who would eventually also affirm my call. Finally, I went through psychological testing, boundary training, and worked as a chaplain at a hospital in order to continue the process towards ordination.

At the end of two years, a year before I could seek to be ordained, my wife received an offer from Boys Town in Omaha that was too good for her to pass up. Therefore we moved, and with the move I started the in-care process all over because in-care status doesn't transfer from region to region.

So, here I am, starting over, as a member of Countryside. I have been taken in-care by Countryside, been confirmed by the denomination, and am working towards ordination. I am also meeting with a mentor, working on a paper to present to the denomination and waiting for a church to call me into ministry. Meanwhile, before I am called to a congregation, it is important that I continue to grow in ministry through the local church (through you all). Therefore, it will be paramount during our time together that we rub shoulders, because it is always the people of the church that affirm (and confirm) the calling of a UCC minister.

-Josh Sawyer

FAM*li* LIFE

Fellowship Opportunities

Extreme Parenting is a ten week, interactive parenting group based on the book *Beyond Consequences Logic and Control: A Love-Based Approach to Helping Children With Severe Behaviors*. This group is designed around The Beyond Consequences Institute Parent Training Course which uses the Stress Model, developed by Brian Post, Ph.D. and Heather T. Forbes LCSW. This course explores the Attachment Theory and the responsibility of both the parent and child in the attachment process. It also addresses the latest brain research and its effect on the development of secure attachments in both adults and children and its impact on severe behaviors. This course will be facilitated by Susan E. Coffey MS. LMHP and will run from May 31-August 1, 6:00-8:00 p.m. in the Chapel. A suggested donation is \$10/class. Child care is available by advanced reservations to hdmdall@hotmail.com. You may sign up for this course by contacting Mary Beth at marybeth1@countysideucc.org or at 402-391-0350 ext. 112 or by stopping at the Information Station.

Reel Faith meets on the odd numbered Friday nights of the month from 7:00-9:30 p.m., in the Chapel. Generally the first film of the month is Family oriented (GP) and the second film is more adult in nature, subject and scope. Join your Countryside friends, watch a great movie with a message, eat popcorn and chat! The purpose is not to intellectualize the experience, but to share what moved us and speaks to us.

- May 13 – *Finding Nemo* -Life along the Great Barrier Reef is full of dangers when you are a tiny clown fish. And for Marlin, a single parent determined to protect his only son Nemo, there are constant fears and anxieties. When, on his first day of school, Nemo defies his father and swims off alone to investigate a boat, he is suddenly scooped up by a diver as Marlin helplessly watches.
- May 27- *High Noon* - A retiring lawman about to leave town with his new bride seeks allies among the fearful townspeople when an outlaw he put in prison returns with his gang to take revenge in this classic western.

Movie Lovers Unite! Countryside's cinema group is all about fellowship and current running movies. They meet on the first Friday evening of the month at various movie theaters for a current movie, followed by discussion, food and friendship. Be forewarned...movies with all ratings will be viewed! For more information, contact Cary Sharkey at Sharkey_NE@cox.net or 402-399-9491.

Mothers & More welcomes all mothers and caregivers who are involved in the lives of young children. They are a group created to maintain a healthy balance between home, family and self by providing spiritual, social, educational and emotional support. For more information on this outstanding small group, contact Monet Davies at 402-333-9652 or monet3@hotmail.com. Child care is provided by contacting Heather Dall, nursery coordinator, at least 48 hours in advance at hdmdall@hotmail.com. May's schedule is as follows:

May 11 – Pot Luck and year-end celebration!

Agape Many thanks to those of you who have volunteered to serve! It has been so helpful! Suzi Kroeger, chair of Agape, is reconstructing her volunteer list and many hands are needed. She is currently looking for folks to assist in the serving, baking and hosting of our Funeral/memorial receptions at Countryside. If you would like additional information or would like to help, please contact Suzi at 402-650-1668 or suziakroeger@gmail.com.

Knit-n-Wit meets every Wednesday evening in the Commons beginning at 5:30 p.m. Come just for conversation or bring any of your projects (scrap booking, organizing photos, quilting, crocheting or knitting). This FUN and FRIENDLY fellowship of people is looking forward to meeting you! If you would like more information regarding the group, contact Christine Johnson at cajcatch23@cox.net.

MAY'S MONTH OF MEALS

Countryside members are invited to provide meals for families in need in the Omaha area through Together Inc's food pantry. This month we are asking for the following to be dropped off at the church by May 29:

1 box of pasta, 1 jar of pasta sauce, 2 cans of vegetables, 2 cans of fruit, 1 box of brownies, 1 box of bread mix (i.e. Bisquick)

Thanks to Molly Britten-Campbell, who is volunteering her time and talent in coordinating the Month of Meals program at Countryside!

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Schedule of Events

The last Sunday for regular Sunday School is May 22. Summer Sunday School starts May 29.

Starting May 29, at the 9:00 & 11:00 a.m. services the 2-year olds may go to the nursery or with the 3's, 4's and Kindergarteners. They will be upstairs with Mrs. Sarah Schulz and 1st, 2nd and 3rd graders will be in the Moderator's Room downstairs with Mrs. Nancy McCann. Miss Aly Bolte will be having music with the children at the 11:00 a.m. service.

All 4th, 5th and 6th graders will go to worship with their families for the summer.

We welcome volunteers for Summer Sunday School. We would prefer them to be high school age and adult. Contact Nancy McCann if you are interested.

Vacation Bible School and Countryside Street Kid registration forms are available at church in the Foyer at the Information Station or on the Countryside website. VBS is for children 4 years old through 4th grade and CSK is for children going into 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Our theme for VBS is "Fun in the Sun... The Sea. The Sand. The Bible." It will be a fun week filled with Bible lessons, music, crafts, recreation, tie-dye and, of course, snacks! VBS/CSK is July 11-15 9:00 a.m.-noon. Our theme for CSK is "Reaching Out." Our children and leaders will be out in the community serving the homeless, young children and their families and the elderly, giving our CSK many experiences and asking "What Would Jesus Do?"

Class size is limited and the registration deadline is June 24. If you have questions contact Nancy McCann.

Volunteers are needed in all areas for VBS. Community service hours will be given for high school students helping with VBS. We request that you have your service hours form with you when you come for the week. That way, they can be signed and returned to you at the end of the week.

The nursery is a wonderful ministry that Countryside is able to offer families with children. We are very blessed to be able to offer child care every Sunday for all 3 worship services. CCC is a busy church with many activities going such as small groups, Mothers & More, Center for Faith Studies, parenting classes, Wednesday Night Alive, choir practice just to name a few. To fulfill our nursery ministry, we want to be able to provide child care for every event at CCC whenever possible. The nursery does have a budget, but with so many activities to provide child care for, we need to offset the cost of the nursery by implementing a "free will" donation for the nursery. Starting in May, you will notice a mailbox in the nursery that says "Countryside Community Church Nursery/Childcare "Free Will" donation." If you have a child/children who use the nursery, or even if you do not have children, please consider making a "free will" donation for the nursery. You may donate by cash or check. Envelopes are provided. If writing a check, please put "Nursery" in the memo. If you have more time than money, you may consider volunteering some of your time in the nursery. We want to be able to keep the wonderful ministry of a working nursery at Countryside. Questions? Contact Nancy McCann, Children's Ed. Director.



The Community Cupboard is at COUNTRYSIDE! We are thrilled to share with you that the first Community Cupboard was a great success, not only for the participants, but for our volunteers as well! The April pantry served 405 families! If you would like to become a part of this ever-growing ministry, please contact Molly and Anthony Britten-Campbell or Mary Beth Link.

The next pantry will be held on **May 7**, and 30 volunteers are needed to assist. Listed below are the times and volunteer descriptions needed. Thanks for your help!

9:00-10:00 a.m.

Pantry day set up, unload the Food Bank truck,
Arrange food & tables, put out forms, signs,
Clean up cardboard and plastic supplies as needed.
Host the pantry, greet, help people shop, carry bags to cars, hand out flyers & postcards.

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 p.m.

Host the pantry, greet & help people shop, carry bags to their cars, hand out surveys & postcards. Clean up, load unused food into trucks, take down signs, wipe tables.

If you are interested in helping, stop by the Information Station Sunday mornings to sign up or ask for additional information. We thank you.

Countryside's Food Pantry Committee is always recruiting new members. If you have a passion for working with the pantry, contact Mary Beth Link at 402-391-0350 ext. 112 or marybethl@countrysideucc.org or Molly & Anthony Britten-Campbell at foodpantryidea@yahoo.com. This group usually meets on Wednesday evening following the Saturday pantry at 5:45 p.m. in the Commons.

LOVE WINS

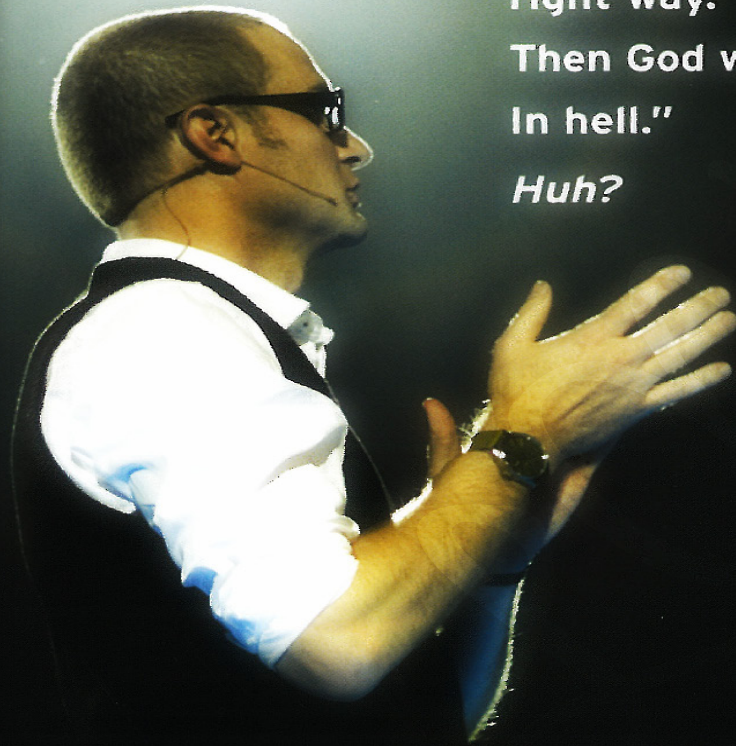
"God loves us.

God offers us everlasting life
by grace, freely, through no
merit on our part.

Unless you do not respond the
right way.

Then God will torture you forever.
In hell."

Huh?



IF LOVE WINS....What Now?

Centering on the study of the book *Love Wins*, by Rob Bell
Begins the week of May 15-June 5

All Church Read & Next Small Group Study

Small group sign ups available in the hallways to the right of the main
office doors. Books may be purchased at the Bookworm in
Countryside Village.

Spring Cleaning?

Please remember to **donate** your second-hand furniture, appliances, clothing and other household items to **Countryside Youth** for our **Garage Sale**.

When/Where?

10 am - Noon

April 23 • May 14 & 28 • June 11 & 25 • July 16

Drop off at Millard Lumber

12900 I Street (Customer Entrance - See map on reverse)

Questions?

Call Tim Kerrigan at 402-290-6868.

Garage Sale Drop Off - Trailer **INSIDE** Millard Lumber
12900 I Street

(East on I Street from 132nd Street - Use **DRIVE IN DOOR** - Next to main customer entrance)





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Family Life

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402-391-0350 | countrysideucc.org

The Children's Choirs of Countryside Church are holding a talent show/fundraiser on May 1 in Memorial Hall, immediately following the 11:00 a.m. service. We invite you all to bring a picnic lunch and join us for some fellowship, followed by some incredible entertainment. The children are raising money to help support the Community Cupboard. A free-will offering will be taken. Please join us in this celebration.

Office Hours

Church office hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Only the main office door will be open during that time. For night activities, access to the church after 4:30 p.m. will be through the northwest door (upstairs by the gym) only.



Countryside

Community Church