



Currents

From the desk of Rev. Chris Alexander | Associate Pastor

Advent has begun. This means we wait... with anticipation. For me this concept is an ongoing experience; a way of being in the world that has become part of who I am. I have been waiting with anticipation for a whole year now, and the only thing I am sure of is that I'm not "there" yet. I'm beginning to realize that the "there" I'm looking for may not exist in the same way for me anymore.

When I first heard that I would become the new Associate Pastor at Countryside Community Church, I had to wait a month before I could begin. Then I moved to Omaha and began the call, but I had to wait for my daughter to graduate from high school before my family could join me, then I had to wait until our house in Bismarck sold before my husband could join us, then I had to wait to find a house where we could settle in and begin to really feel at home, and now as I sit in my living room with unopened boxes all around me waiting to be unpacked, I realize that I'll have to wait a little longer yet before that settled in feeling might begin. Again, it strikes me that there will always be a "next stage" to wait for. If not the unopened boxes waiting patiently for me to set everything in its proper place, it will be something else, someone else, I will need to wait for or on.

What's really beginning to settle in, inside of me, is the feeling that the "present" moment is the point. The experiences I have had within this period of waiting for things to settle down have turned my world around completely. A new job, a new town, new friends, and new experiences have offered me a new way of being in the world, opportunities I might have missed had I spent my time trying to "accomplish" a transition instead of waiting for it to come. Every moment in the last year of waiting has forced me to concentrate on the present time: indulging in lunches and dinners, listening to new friends tell their stories; driving around a new area of town really looking at the homes, getting a feel for the lives that were being lived within them; participating in flower shows and home and garden shows, concerts and theater

events, helping to steep me in the culture of the place that is to be my home. All of it matters. All of it helped me to "settle in" far more than just surrounding myself with recognizable furniture and knick-knacks. Living within the present makes the anticipation of the future, a future with my family with me, all that much more meaningful and hopeful.

Advent gives us a new chance, every year, to practice living in the present moments of our lives, while we wait with eager anticipation for the future of the world. Knowing that our pasts and our futures are lived out within our present moments means that every moment is part of the whole of things and is packed full of new opportunities to really live life, rather than spending time in regret of what was, or fear of what might come. Every moment is a transition, a step in becoming most fully who we are called to be, and that definitely seems worth the wait.

This Advent season we will be spending our present time with four great "wait" trainers: Isaiah, Mark, John and Samuel from our scriptures, who will help us embrace our pasts, imagine our futures, while we live gracefully in our present moments. Our sermon series and small group discussion resources are a collaborative effort with Rev. Greg Glover and Southminster Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, IN. Pastor Glover has written a resource guide for us to use throughout this series, while Darkwood Brew guided episodes on the sermon series will be seen and discussed by the folks at Southminster. Both congregations will be practicing their "wait" training together.

Small groups are forming yet again, and are a great way to participate in a present opportunity. So stop by the table in front of our church office and sign up for a group that suits your schedule. New voices within the conversation are always a welcome addition.

Enjoy Advent, it's a great place to be at the moment.

Chris Alexander

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.

Family Activities Committee plans to go caroling with church members on Sunday, December 4. They will be meeting for supper at 6:00 p.m. in Memorial Hall, followed by caroling throughout the city.

Countryside's Food Pantry Committee will meet on December 7 at 5:30 p.m. in the Commons. Contact Molly & Anthony Britten-Campbell at foodpantryidea@yahoo.com if you are UNABLE to attend.

Friend to Friend will meet on Thursday, December 8, 11:00 a.m. in the Moderator's Room kitchen.

Young at Heart will meet on Thursday, December 8, at Noon in the Moderator's Room. Lunch will be provided by Friend to Friend. Please RSVP to Martha Sherman at 402-691-0291.

SOS will meet on Sunday, December 11, at 12:30 p.m. at the Old Country Buffet, 145th and Center. Call Virginia Bigelow at 402-334-2431 with questions. Newcomers are welcome.

Food and Fellowship committee will meet on Tuesday, December 13, 6:30 p.m. in the Conference Room. RSVP to marybeth@countrysideucc.org if you are UNABLE to attend.

Mothers & More will meet Wednesday, December 14, for their shopping day.

ETC members will meet for their holiday party on Thursday, December 15, at 6:00 p.m. at the home of Joan Allen. RSVP with REGRETS only to Mary Beth at 402-391-0350 ext. 112.

20-30 Somethings group is open to anyone who is single, in a relationship or married, 21-35 years of age. They meet monthly for supper and/or various social activities. For more information, contact Mary Beth Link at 402-391-0350 ext. 112.

Small Group Management Team will recess until Monday, January 9, 2012, 6:30 p.m. in the Moderator's Room.

Membership Class is Coming up Soon

Are you interested in joining Countryside Church or exploring Countryside more deeply? Then consider joining us for the next membership class on Saturday, January 7, 2012, from 8:30 a.m. until noon. Staff members will be present, and you'll have an opportunity to learn more about Countryside. The second aspect of membership is to sign up for a small group which will study The Phoenix Affirmations (12 principles for loving God, neighbor and self), so you'll get to know yourself and God better, too. Multiple groups of 8-12 participants will be formed from the new member group, and you'll be able to choose yours based on your own time schedule. The commitment is four weeks, after which time you have the option of continuing with the group for another eight weeks at your discretion. (Continued participation is NOT a requirement for membership.)

Small group days and times will be announced at the class—you'll be able to sign up for the group that best fits your schedule.

Indicate your interest by signing up on the sheet at the Information Station on Sunday mornings. Or call or email Patti Tu at 402-391-0350 ext. 103 or pattit@countrysideucc.com.

We'd love to have you join the Countryside family!

OUR NEWEST CHURCH MEMBERS JOINED THE CHURCH IN WORSHIP ON OCTOBER 30. WE EXTEND A COUNTRYSIDE WELCOME TO:

Chris and Jess Buike; Myrle and Paula Buzzell; Melinda Flowers, spouse Eric Sawtelle and children Lucy and Harrison Sawtelle; Morris Jones; Julie Lutz; Ellie McKiernan; Chris and Leslie Murrell, children Maximilian and Lucy; Bill Newman; Shawn Rediger; Mark and Katie Shearer; and Dean and Kimberly Stamp, children Kali and Kaleb.

Countryside Worship

December 4, 2011

Second Sunday of Advent
Communion
"Advent Wait Training, Part 2: Isaiah"

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

December 11, 2011

Third Sunday of Advent
"Advent Wait Training, Part 3: Mark"

9:00 a.m. Classic Worship
11:00 a.m. Jazz Worship
Rev. Chris Alexander preaching

December 18, 2011

Fourth Sunday of Advent
"Advent Wait Training, Part 4: Samuel"

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

December 24, 2011

Christmas Eve Worship
5:00 p.m. Family Jazz
11:00 p.m. Candlelight Service

December 25, 2011

Christmas Day
11:00 a.m. Classic and Jazz Mix
Dr. Eric Elnes preaching

January 1, 2012

New Year's Day
9:00 a.m. Classic Worship
11:00 a.m. Jazz Worship
5:00 p.m. Darkwood Brew

JAMES HICKS MEMORIAL LIBRARY

By Sheila Hargreaves

As we move into the hectic Christmas season, here is a book to remind you to slow down and remember what really matters during the season. A busy man's elderly great aunt invites him to visit for a chat and **A Cup of Christmas Tea** (written by Tom Hegg and given to the Library in memory of Ruth Johnston) if he can find the time. She knows he's very busy and will understand if he can't come. He doesn't want to go, but he does and this poem tells you the rewards of that visit. The book is written as a poem and could be read in a short time while you sit in one of the comfortable chairs or stand at one of the bookcases in our Library in Memorial Hall.

I'm pretty sure that a number of you listen to Krista Tippett and her program "Speaking of Faith" on your car radio on your way to or from church on Sunday mornings. But did you know that in 2007 she wrote a book also entitled **Speaking of Faith?** Did you know she's a former diplomat and a graduate of Yale Divinity School? Quoting from the inside flap of the cover of this book, Tippett observes that "faith is as much about questioning as it is about certainties, and faith has a tremendous capacity to nourish our lives and communities, if we can learn how to speak of it meaningfully." You may find this book helpful in learning how to speak of your faith meaningfully with those of your own faith, but more importantly, with those of other faiths.

Pastoral Care

Countryside's Stephen Ministry Program

Stephen Ministry is an active lay ministry program within our church that provides confidential Christian support to those who are facing difficulties in their lives. Stephen Ministers have received special training to become good listeners and to provide caring support to others as they work through a difficult transition.

If you choose to have a Stephen Minister, you work together to decide how your relationship will work best. Some choose to meet weekly for coffee, while others find that having someone check in with a phone call works best for them. We have a current match that likes to walk together while they talk. Our Stephen Ministers are here for you... whatever your schedule.

At certain times, we all need comfort: family crisis, death, divorce, illness, loss of job, or simply an unexpected lifestyle change. When we open our hearts to the compassion of another, we feel less alone. If you or anyone you know would benefit from talking with a Stephen Minister, or would simply like more information, contact Margie Bolte at 390-3153 ext. 117.

SYMPATHY

(Please remember in prayer the families of the following Countryside members)

Elaine Westering (Charter Countryside Member)

– Elaine passed away October 31 here in Omaha. Elaine's son and daughter-in-law are John and Chris Westering and grandchildren are J.D., Katelyn and Libby. A private graveside service was held November 4, officiated by Dr. Eric Elnes.

Robert Eastman Denton - Robert passed away here in Omaha on November 3. Robert's wife is Joan Denton and children are Marianne & James Willie, Lynn Kahl and Robert Denton. A memorial service was held here at Countryside on November 12, officiated by Rev. Chris Alexander.

CONGRATULATIONS

Jack and Lucille Brawner celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on October 29! What a wonderful milestone...congratulations Jack and Lucille!

Brooke and Luke Wentz welcomed their first child, Carson Bentley, on October 31. Many blessings to the entire family!

2011 Contributions

Please don't wait until the last day of the year to get your final contributions of the year submitted to the church. The IRS looks closely at charitable giving, and we want you to understand that in order for your contribution to be deductible in 2011, your contribution must be postmarked or physically received at the church office by December 31, 2011. Please note that your check date alone will not control which year your contribution applies to.

Stephen Ministry Training Starts Soon!

A new Stephen Ministry training class will begin in January. If you are interested in being part of this wonderful ministry, or would simply like more information, contact Margie Bolte at 391-0350 ext. 117.

Ministry of Music

December 4 All-church Christmas Caroling

All are invited to participate in Countryside Christmas Caroling on December 4. Countryside Youth are inviting everyone to enjoy dinner at 6:00 p.m. in Memorial Hall. At 6:45 p.m. we will load buses and head out for various retirement/nursing facilities and other Countryside shut-ins to share in singing the songs and carols of the Christmas season.

Dinner will be \$4 for adults and \$2 for children under 10 years old. Please RSVP to Patrick Collins, Director of Youth Ministries at Patrickc@countrysideucc.org. Or stop by the Information Station on Sunday mornings to sign up or call the church office. You may also come for just the caroling. If so, please RSVP to Jim Larrabee, Minister of Music at jiml@countrysideucc.org. This will help ensure we have adequate transportation for all. Come join the fellowship and singing!

Christmas at Countryside

**Saturday, December 17, at 6:30p.m. in the Sanctuary
7:30 p.m., Dessert Bar in the Commons**

All of Countryside's choirs – children, youth and adults – will present a choral concert to celebrate the birth of Jesus the Christ child. Accompanied by string quintet, harp, oboe, flute, piano and organ, the choirs will offer music for both the Advent and birth of the Messiah. This is a ticketed event in order to help pay for the instrumental ensemble. Tickets will be available after Sunday services in the Foyer or in the church office. Tickets are \$7.50 for adults, \$4 for children 12 and under, or \$20 for a family of four or more. The choirs are working diligently on the music. Choirs will sing individually and in various combinations, ending the program singing together on *Go, Tell It on the Mountain!* Then at 7:30, directly following the concert, you are invited to attend a delicious holiday dessert feast in the Commons provided by our own Countryside family members. Invite friends, family and neighbors to enjoy this enjoyable holiday musical experience.



Christmas Eve Worship

5:00 p.m. Family Worship – this service will be family oriented with the singing of familiar carols, accompanied by Countryside Jazz and a short dramatic story entitled “Matt and Lucy’s Version Birth.” This will be a service for families of all ages to enjoy and celebrate the birth of Jesus.

11:00 p.m. Traditional Candlelight Worship – this will be a service of carol singing, anthems by the choir, pastoral message and the lighting of candles to the singing of *Silent Night*, ending with the singing of *Joy to the World*, the Lord has come!

Christmas Day – Sunday, December 25

There will be one service at 11:00 a.m., combining both classical and jazz musical accompaniment to carols and choir anthems, accompanied by a pastoral message to celebrate the birth of the Messiah. It’s not often that Christmas falls on a Sunday! Celebrate the Good News!

Christmas Choir Invitation

Every year, an open invitation is extended to the congregation, family, friends and college students to join the choir for Christmas Eve. The choir is open to all who would like to join the symphony of voices celebrating the birth of Jesus. This year, this invitation is extended to include the choir for Sunday, December 25 – Christmas Day! The schedule of rehearsals is as follows:

Wednesday, December 21 – 6-8 p.m.

Friday, December 23 – 6-8 p.m.

Saturday, December 24 – 9:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 25 – 9:45 a.m.

If you would like more information, call Jim Larrabee, Minister of Music, at the church. Otherwise, simply show up to rehearsals in the choir room on the lower level of the building and join the chorus!

Countryside Intergenerational Christmas Band!

Join a “pick-up band” to play some Christmas carols prior to the Christmas at Countryside choir program. Under the direction of church member Tony Snyder, The parts will be very accessible to all levels of playing ability. For more information or to express your interest, please call Tony at 402-391-6329 or Jim Larrabee, Minister of Music at the church – 402-391-0350.

FAM*li* LIFE

Fellowship Opportunities

Wednesday Night Alive was a great success!! A special thanks goes out to Karla Friesen for coordinating and preparing the yummy meals, and to Lori Waterstraat for coordinating the WNA Children's Activities. Thanks to all the families who participated in the Family Suppers and to the children who shared their time with the RESPECT group.

Mark your calendars, as WNA will resume the first 3 weeks in February, 2012. We will be offering ALL CHURCH SUPPERS on Wednesday evenings, February 1, 8 & 15, served from 5:00-6:30 p.m. in Memorial Hall. Cost for supper is \$5.00/person, \$3.00/children 3 and under.

Directly following supper, Wednesday Night Alive Children's Activities will begin in Memorial Hall from 6:30-7:30 p.m. The actors from RESPECT will return to facilitate this three-week class. Cost for new participants in the class is \$25/child. Sign-ups are available today at the Information Station or by contacting Mary Beth at marybethl@countysideucc.org.

E.T.C. (Encouraging True Commitment), Countryside's multi-generational small group, is currently inviting new members into their group. Their mission statement is: "Encourage commitment to making church a priority through active participation in fun, faith, and fellowship events." They are responsible for the golf tournament, BeDazzled!, Chili/Chocolate contests, Gentlemen's Hors D'oeuvres and much more. If you enjoy team work, event planning and social events, then this group is for you! Contact Mary Beth at 402-391-0350 ext. 112 or at Marybethl@countysideucc.org for additional information.

MANY THANKS to all the dedicated Countryside members and families who volunteered their time and effort for the following special events:

- Salvation Army bell ringers – 26 families/members
- Salvation Army Thanksgiving meal delivery – 20 families.
- To the multiple families and individuals who provided a "warm Holiday" by donating to the Together "Wrap Up" event.

Reel Faith will meet on Friday, December 9, at 7:00 p.m. in the Chapel to view *Nativity–This Christmas*, primary school teacher Paul Maddens is charged with producing the school's nativity play. Competing against the posh rival school for the honor of best reviewed show in town, the stakes are raised when Paul idly boasts that his ex-girlfriend Jennifer, a Hollywood Producer, is coming to see his show with a view

to turning it into a film. The only trouble is, they haven't spoken in years. With eccentric assistant. Mr Poppy fueling his "little white lie," Maddens suddenly finds himself a local celebrity and at the center of quarreling parents and over-excited children desperate in their bid for fame and fortune. Maddens' only hope is to get back in touch with Jennifer and lure Hollywood to town so that everybody's Christmas wishes come true.

This group meets on the SECOND Friday evening of the month. 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. For additional information on the group, please contact Molly Anderson at merander@cox.net or Ed Huddel at 402-707-2437.

CALLING ALL BAKERS! Sunday, December 17, is Countryside's All Choirs Christmas Concert beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Directly following the concert, you are invited to attend a delicious holiday dessert feast in the Commons. We are looking for all types of desserts to be shared. If you have a holiday sweet you'd like to donate to the cause, please contact Mary Beth at 402-391-0350 ext. 112 or marybethl@countysideucc.org ASAP.



December Month of Meals

You 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 December 11:

1 Box Instant Potatoes, 3 Cans Vegetables, 1 can cranberry sauce, 1 Lg. Box Stuffing Mix, 1 Lg. Can Sweet Potatoes, 1 Lg. Box Jell-O, 1 Pkg. Marshmallows, 1 Pre-made Pie crust, 1 can fruit filling and/or

\$10 check for a Ham Voucher

(Make Checks payable to Together Inc.)

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

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

NO Sunday School December 25. Nursery care only for infant - 2 years.

Celebrate Christmas!

Christmas Eve Family Jazz Service is Saturday, December 24, at 5:00 p.m.

“Matt & Lucy’s Version Births”

Please bring an UNWRAPPED gift to this service for a child of any age, to be donated to Together Inc. The children will take the gifts up to the Chancel during the service.

Kindergarten-6th grade children will have the opportunity to sing at this service. If your K-6th grade child is currently in choir, they will be practicing the songs for the Christmas Eve service during choir. If your child is not in choir, they may also participate. We will be holding practices on Sundays for all children during Sunday School at both the 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. services as well as between services. If you would like your choir/non-choir child to participate, your child must be available for ALL rehearsals, dress rehearsal and Christmas Eve. Here is the rehearsal schedule:

December 4 - 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. Sunday School, come to either

December 11 - 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Sunday School, come to either

December 18 - Between services, 10:15-10:45 a.m.

December 19 - 5:30 p.m.

December 21 - Dress rehearsal at 5:30 p.m.

Check your schedule and see if this will work for your family. We need to know as soon as possible if your child will be participating so we can plan the service and assign costumes. Please email Nancy McCann at nancym@countrysideucc.org or call 402-391-0350 ext. 109. Please let Nancy know if you WILL be participating in the Christmas Eve Family Jazz service **no later** than November 30.

Thank You to everyone who donated mittens, gloves, hats, scarfs, socks, T-shirts, underwear and blankets for Together Inc. The holidays will be warmer thanks to all of you!

Sunday School Mission/Outreach

Christmas Offering

Los Chavalitos Health Clinic

In Nicaragua, a quarter can save a life!

For the month of December we are asking the Sunday School kids to support Los Chavalitos Maternal/Child Health Clinic. Children in Nicaragua are at great risk of dehydration. A quarter can make all the difference. SUERO, an electrolyte solution, costs only a quarter and can save lives. Please help by having your child bring an offering on Sundays during December. All funds raised will be donated to Los Chavalitos. This holiday season, let's support the children of Nicaragua and save lives one quarter at a time.

Thanks for your support.

Children's Ed. Dept.

“Wait Training: Heaven is the Road”

is the focus for our Advent small group sermon series. Listed below is the syllabus for this study. You may use it to enhance your understanding either as a member of a small group or for your personal study. The source of study, the Wait Training Leader's Guide by Rev. Greg Glover, Ph.D., is available at the Information Station or upon request to Mary Beth at [402-391-0350 ext. 112](mailto:marybethl@countrysideucc.org) or at marybethl@countrysideucc.org.

| Date | Wait Trainer | Focus Scripture | Skype Guest | Optional Additional Scripture |
|----------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| 12/4/11 | Mark | Mark 1:1-8 | Alexander Shaia | Isaiah 40:1-11 |
| 12/11/11 | John | John 1:6-8, 19-28 | TBD | Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 |
| 12/18/11 | Samuel 2 | Samuel 7:1-11, 16 | Janet McKenzie | Luke 1:26-28 |



This fall, the Stewardship Committee has been excitedly spreading the word to “Ask God” in relation to your pledge commitment to Countryside. We are hoping to achieve 100% pledge participation from all members of the congregation. (If you cannot contribute via pledging, please inform us of your situation so we can budget responsibly.) We are asking each of you to Ask God...listen...and celebrate your personal exceptional spiritual path with a financial commitment to the Church.

What does “Ask God” mean?

Ask God? Clear your mind of fears, personal opinions, and preconceived notions. Ask yourself, does God love me? Does God know my real situation and true condition? Faith means trust. So clear your mind of all things that do not trust God. When the thoughts stop bouncing around and feel solid and true... go for it. Ask, what would you like me to give in support of Your church this year?

- If you have submitted your pledge, THANK YOU! If you haven't pledged already, bring your pledge card to Church on Sunday and drop it off at the table in the Foyer. Or mail your pledge card to the church: (Countryside Church, 8787 Pacific Street, Omaha, NE 68124; c/o of Shari Garder). Or make your pledge via www.justaskgod.org.
- We would love for you to share your story of how Countryside has helped you find your exceptional spiritual path! Link to www.justaskgod.org and click the “Speak Out” tab.

Appreciatively,
your Stewardship Committee

Christmas Offering, 2011

BOCO is pleased to announce that the recipient of the Christmas offering is Los Chavalitos, a non-profit public health clinic in Managua, Nicaragua. Countryside Church assisted in founding this great organization which opened in 1994, and the doors will not continue to stay open without the financial help of Countryside Church now. Los Chavalitos provides high quality health care to mostly women and children under five years old. Funds raised will keep the doors open and base houses throughout the barrio operating. A minimum of \$8,760 is needed to fund this effort for one year. Often Suero, a rehydration drink, is all that it takes to save a child. The cost is 25¢. Please open your hearts to the people of Nicaragua once again.



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Countryside Community Cupboard

If you would like to become a part of this ever-growing ministry, contact Molly and Anthony Britten-Campbell at foodpantryidea@yahoo.com or Mary Beth Link at marybethl@countrysideucc.org.

We are currently accepting volunteers for the next pantry, which will be held on **January 7**.

402-391-0350 | countrysideucc.org



Merry Christmas!

From all of us,
Ministers and Staff,
at Countryside

The church office will be closed at noon on Friday, December 23, and closed all day December 26 and 27. We will resume regular hours on Wednesday, December 28.

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