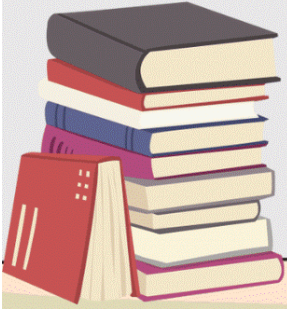


BOOKS CHANGE LIVES

Be a friend of the Countryside Library!

Help build the new Anti-Racism
Section by donating a book!

For more information, text Diane at
402-707-1556 or email
dianes@countrysideucc.org



PLAYBILL®

Countryside Community Church
OMAHA, NE

Save the date!!!!

Countryside's Annual

**ICE CREAM
FESTIVAL**

Sunday, Aug. 27

**SMALL GROUP
FAIR**

Sunday, Aug. 27

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a large ice cream cone. The cone has three scoops: a vanilla scoop on top, a pink raspberry-flavored scoop in the middle, and a green mint chocolate chip scoop at the bottom. The cone is in a waffle shell with a purple and white polka-dot paper liner.

COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH

13130 FAITH PLAZA | OMAHA, NE 68144 | 402-391-0350
COUNTRYSIDEUCC.ORG

REV. DR. KEITH HERRON



Summer Sermon Series

GENESIS

THE FIRST
STORIES

God of the Outcasts
June 25, 2023
Genesis 21:8-21

A scenic photograph of a rocky, hilly landscape. The foreground is filled with large, brown rocks and some green vegetation. In the background, there are rolling hills and a cloudy sky with a bright light source, possibly the sun, breaking through the clouds.

SYNOPSIS

It was at this time that the Voice once again made the promises to Abram that had been made years before. Nearly a century old and the same promises he received in Haran were reaffirmed as before: a promised land they could call their own; a family whose lineage would bless the world throughout time; a name that would be remembered forever; and the presence of God to lead them and guide them. When God laid it all out for Abraham, he fell on his face and laughed at the prospect of such a long shot for two as old as they. He laughed because the promise had been made 25 years earlier when perhaps it might have been possible. But now, after all those years, he couldn't help but laugh.

The key to understanding this text features the heartbreaking plight of the infertility of Sarah as opposed to the fertility of Hagar, Sarah's slave girl who bears Abraham's first-born son.

The crisis in the story of Father Abraham and his two sons is complicated at best and the drama of the two sons, half-brothers by different mothers, has been reenacted through the centuries even until today in the on-going Jewish-Arab conflict in the Middle East.

This crisis of lineage and blessing keeps repeating itself in some endless loop of conflict that gets its start here in Genesis 21 as Sarah clearly sees the problem of primogeniture (first-born son) as Ishmael is Abraham's first-born son and inheritor of his family name and consequently the inheritor of the promise from God.

In its simplest truth, Hagar was a slave and not a part of the family. She was the servant to Sarah and knew she had to do whatever was asked of her, even if asked to bear Abraham's child. It's easy to lose track of the simple fact that Hagar was Sarah's slave girl and was forced to comply.

But let's be honest. We love this particular kind of comedy ... laughter that comes from watching someone slip on a banana peel or some other accident we can't help finding humorous. Comedians have long understood the connection between pain and comedy. Most of the comedians understand that humor is based on anger and anguish. John Larroquette once observed, "... comedy and pain are inseparable. (And) the best comedy comes from angst."

Sarah and Hagar are both victimized by this kind of tragedy masquerading as irony. A footnote not to miss: God takes care of the two sons and their mothers as a sign of God's providence.

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Lou Way died on the evening of Saturday, June 10. Please keep **Deb (John) McCollister** and their family in your prayers during this time of grief. Her funeral service will be held on Saturday, August 5 at 11:30 am here at Countryside.

Larry (Mary Jo) Weiss had a biopsy on his lung Thursday morning. The procedure went smoothly and now we will pray for their strength and comfort as they await results.

We continue to pray weekly for the Pastoral Search Committee, as they continue in their discernment towards calling Countryside's next Settled Pastor. We appreciate all the time and effort the PSC is putting into this process, and we continue to hold them in prayer.

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Join us as we pray for our congregation members and their loved ones who are on our Joys and Concerns list every week on Thursdays at 9:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary. If you have someone who would benefit from prayer, want to share a joy or be included on the bulletin list and or on Countryside's Prayer Chain, contact Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones at 402-391-0350, ext. 225 or [sa-
rahrj@countrysideucc.org](mailto:sarahrj@countrysideucc.org)

JOYS:

Please lift these joys with prayers of celebration and praise!

Thank you to the Board of Arts & Music for updating the sanctuary decorations for PRIDE. We are grateful for all the ways that our BAM members help us to experience worship through creative and beautiful visuals!

CONCERNS:

Please join in praying for the following new and ongoing concerns:

Jody Hobson had surgery at Nebraska Medical Center this past Tuesday and is recovering well. Please continue to pray for a complete healing for her.

David Palmer's nephew was diagnosed a few weeks ago with Stage 4 cancer in the colon, liver and lungs. He is in his early 40's and has two young daughters. The medical team is being very aggressive in their treatment with six stringent weeks of chemotherapy and radiation. Please pray for God to give all of the family the strength to deal with this horrible situation, and especially his children, wife, mother and siblings.

Glenn (Margie) Phillips had knee surgery on Friday, June 23. Please keep him in prayer as he recovers!

Kathleen (Todd) Samland has asked that we keep her parents in our prayers. Her mom is in rehab recovering well from a fall and her dad is at home and has now fallen twice.

Dee Schlautman is in Acute Care at Madonna in Lincoln. She requests prayers and support for her rehabilitation.

CAST AND SCENES

CAST

ISAAC, THE SON OF ABRAHAM AND SARAH

HAGAR, THE SERVANT OF SARAH

ISHMAEL, ABRAHAM'S SON WITH HAGAR

UNNAMED EGYPTIAN WIFE FOR ISHMAEL

SCENES

THE DESERT OF BEERSHEBA

THE DESERT OF PARAN

FOR DEEPER THOUGHT

Psychologist Robert Johnson describes "the slender threads" of life that are mysterious and active in shaping the direction we take in life. "The slender threads" in this story are observed in the providential care God offers to these late-in-life sons who are born. Discuss how you see the slender threads at work in Ishmael and Isaac's lives.

Can you describe how something that looks like a tragedy in the making, turns out to be positive and life-giving?

Do you call the slender threads of God's will providence, or luck?

Order of Worship

Gathering

Prelude:

Minority - Gigi Gryce

Words of Welcome / † Mission Statement

Rev. Dr. Keith Herron

Announcements

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

Examen

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

Call to Worship

Dave Lundblad

Hearing God's Word

Baptism:

Adelaide June Summers daughter of
Vanessa and Kellen Summers

Children's Church

Margaret Gilmore / Jeremy Wadhams

Musical Reflection:

Clocks -

Guy Berryman/Jim Buckland/Will Champion/Chris Martin

Scripture:

Genesis 21:8-21

Dave Lundblad

Reflection

Rev. Dr. Keith Herron

Musical Meditation:

Everybody Hurts - R.E.M.

Responding to God's Word

Communion

Rev. Dr. Keith Herron

Pastoral Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

The Basket

Rev. Dr. Keith Herron

Musical Reflection:

Fire and Rain - James Taylor

Countryside Blessing

Charlotte Wadhams

Postlude:

Watersign - Jeff Lorber

OUR WORSHIP HAS CONCLUDED.

NOW OUR SERVICE BEGINS.

† Indicates those places where those who are able
are invited to stand.

Julia Olynyk, vocalist - Matt Wallace, sax - Rick Avard, piano
Carlos Figueroa, drums - Steve Gomez, bass

stephen
MINISTRY.

Learn, Grow, and Serve by Becoming a Stephen Minister

Would you like to be part of a ministry that gives people care and support when they need it most—while making a difference in your own life? Consider becoming a Stephen Minister!

Stephen Ministers are members of our congregation who provide one-to-one caring ministry to people experiencing grief, divorce, loneliness, job loss, hospitalization, and many other life difficulties.

As a Stephen Minister, you'll be equipped to provide a very high level of care. After your training, our Stephen Leaders will match you with someone in need of care—men are matched with men, women with women. You'll meet with that person once a week to listen, care, pray, encourage, and reflect Christ's presence in his or her life. Stephen Ministry is life-changing for both the care receiver and the Stephen Minister. As an added bonus, your Stephen Minister skills can enhance relationships in other areas of your life as well.

Visit www.stephenministries.org/SM to learn about others' experiences in serving as a Stephen Minister.

If you'd like to learn more about becoming a Stephen Minister, contact a pastor or Stephen Leader.



Sunday Flowers This Week

Flowers were given today by Lou Way
remembering Bob Way on what would have been
their 75th anniversary.