



COUNTRYSIDE CURRENTS



The monthly newsletter of Countryside Community Church

Introducing Countryside's New Senior Minister

Rev. Dr. Jennifer Shultz-Thomas

A new era of faith, compassion and community is on the horizon for Countryside Community Church.

After a 19-month journey of soul-searching, the congregation on Sunday voted overwhelmingly to welcome our new Senior Minister – Rev. Dr. Jennifer Shultz-Thomas.

Her arrival promises a fresh perspective, innovative ideas, and a dedication to the values that define our congregation.

Rev. Dr. Shultz-Thomas brings a wealth of experience to our congregation. She's a fully ordained United Church of Christ (UCC) minister who has dedicated more than 15 years to progressive faith communities, always working at the intersection of social justice, spirituality, and community building. Her ministerial path includes serving as Senior Pastor for two large, progressive UCC congregations: First Plymouth Church, UCC in Denver, CO, and Community UCC in Raleigh, NC.

One of her notable achievements during her time at United Church of Chapel Hill in Chapel Hill, NC, was the development of innovative programs that had a profound impact on the congregation's youth and young adults. Her commitment to engaging young people and families and making the Church a relevant voice in the post-COVID era underscores her dedication to the future of our faith.

Rev. Dr. Shultz-Thomas holds a Doctorate of Ministry degree in Biblical Proclamation from Emory University Candler School of Theology, a renowned progressive theological institution. Her doctoral research explored the impact of the Maker Movement on congregational vitality, with a specific focus on worship and community engagement. Her belief in the transformative power of creativity and Maker Culture in Christian worship promises to invigorate our spiritual journey.

In addition to her ministry, Rev. Dr. Shultz-Thomas has a background in non-profit work, most recently serving as the executive director for The ArtsCenter in Carrobo, NC. This experience broadened her perspective on

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Rev. Dr. Jennifer Shultz-Thomas

HELLO
October

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**Classes
Forming
Soon!**

**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.



A Trio of All-age Halloween Events Await at Annual Spooktacular Celebration

As the leaves change color and the air turns crisp, it's clear that Halloween is just around the corner. On October 29, Countryside will come alive with a series of delightful Halloween events that promise to bring joy and spookiness for everyone!

Trunk-or-Treat Extravaganza (1-3 p.m.)

Kicking off the Halloween festivities is the eagerly anticipated Trunk-o-Treat event hosted by the Board of Christian Education. From 1-3 p.m, families are invited to gather in the parking lot, where car trunks will be transformed into creative, candy-filled wonderlands. Children can don their costumes and go from car to car, collecting treats in a safe and enjoyable environment. This event offers a fantastic opportunity for kids to show off their costumes and for parents to snap some adorable photos.

Chili, Mac and Cheese, and Cinnamon Roll Feed (2-4 p.m.)

For those who've worked up an appetite after the candy rush, the Board of Life Ministries has a treat in store. From 2-4 p.m., head into Common Grounds for a mouthwatering feast of chili, mac and cheese, and delectable cinnamon rolls. Best of all, this event is absolutely free - no one leaves hungry. It's a fantastic way to warm up on a cool (!) autumn day and share a meal with friends and neighbors.

Halloween Organ Concert (4 p.m.)

As the day draws to a close, the Board of Arts Ministries invites everyone into the Sanctuary at 4 p.m. for a hauntingly beautiful Halloween Organ Concert. Music Director Alex Ritter will take his place at the Countryside organ to fill the sanctuary with spine-tingling melodies and eerie tunes, setting the perfect mood for the upcoming Halloween festivities. Whether you're a music enthusiast or simply looking for a unique and atmospheric way to celebrate the season, this concert promises to be a memorable experience.

The congregation and community are sure to find something to enjoy on October 29. Whether you're

collecting candy at Trunk-or-Treat, savoring a delicious meal at the chili feed, or immersing yourself in the eerie melodies of the organ concert, this Halloween promises to be a day of fun, food, and frights. Mark your calendars and get ready for a spooktacular time!



Halloween Celebration

Sunday, Oct. 29, 2023

Trunk-or-Treat: 1-3 p.m.

Chili, Mac & Cheese Feed

2-4 p.m.

(And Cinnamon Rolls!)



Spooky Organ
Concert: 4 p.m.

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Rev. Dr. Jennifer Schulz-Thomas

intersection of artistic expression, education, and social justice, providing valuable insights into the work the Church needs to engage in to make a meaningful impact.

Rev. Dr. Shultz-Thomas is a lifelong learner. "I am forever a student," said Shultz-Thomas. "I believe the sacredness of our minds requires the company of those around us to become as fully formed as we might be."

She is passionate about encouraging others to embrace their sacred worth. Her commitment to nurturing spiritual growth is evident in her creation of the Theologian in Residence program during her time at First Plymouth, which transformed the church into a teaching congregation for seminarians.

Shultz-Thomas is dedicated to interfaith projects and initiatives. She's worked with both the Triangle Interfaith Alliance in North Carolina and the Progressive Interfaith Clergy Network. "I am passionate about building sustainable relationships with people across the spectrum of human diversity," she said, "and I am passionate about empowering others who would join me."

Rev. Dr. Shultz-Thomas has worked extensively in social justice, anti-racism and creation justice ministries. Her advocacy for climate justice at previous posts garnered awards and recognition for environmental and sustainable activism.

Shultz-Thomas holds a deep, abiding love for the natural world. "I believe the 21st century church is called and equipped to lead the world through, what Pope Francis calls, an ecological conversion," she said.

"I firmly believe that the church, and faith leaders, are poised to invite others to this conversation, the one that exists outside of any sector in which we

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Top, from left: Rev. Shultz-Thomas's wife, Shannon, and Rev. Jenny. Below, from left: daughter Quinn, 8, and son Sage, 10.

Raindrops on roses ...

These are a few of Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas' favorite things:

- Walking hand-in-hand with my children as we hike and play in God's beautiful creation
- Running outside under a gentle rain
- Standing next to my dad, fishing along the bank of a trout stream
- Parading a sign, elbow-to-elbow, neighbor-to-neighbor, standing up for peace and justice
- Exploring innovative solutions to ordinary and mundane problems
- Encouraging others to embrace their sacred worth
- Arming the voices of young people in a culture where opportunities and obstacles are far too close together
- Speaking truth to power
- Preaching peace and non-violence, with courage, despite it being unpopular



*In Conversation***Rev. Dr. Shultz-Thomas on covenants, the place of the Church in modern society and her call to ministry****On Covenants**

“Covenants remind us of God’s faithfulness even in the most challenging times and call us to an enduring faith in God, and each other. The same is true within our denominational structures and religious bodies of governance. Covenantal partners: the national church, the state, and regional offices, the local church, authorized ministers, lay leaders, and members, are held accountable to one another, just like a married couple surrounded by a community of witnesses when they say, “I do.” In Covenant, we are invited to commit to being with and for one another for the good of Christ’s Church rather than for the good of any one individual. To be part of such a relationship requires trust, openness, and spiritual maturity. To covenant together is to listen to one another, to be held in mutual accountability, to welcome and value the insights and wisdom of the other. When Covenantal Partners embark on this faith journey together, they do so, expecting to be changed.”

On the Church in Today’s Society

“I am deeply passionate about leading the church to rediscover ourselves as people of a profound and distinguishable faith. I am not naive enough to believe that our post-modern, western society will continue to allow the church to permeate the public

square as she once has, but I am passionate about “resurrecting” our voices to the table. I am passionate about dialogue, and about approaching the complex “commons” as a laboratory for transformation.

On Being Called to Ordained Ministry

“I was nine-years-old when I first sensed the call of God on my life to vocational ministry. Though I wasn’t sure what that meant at the time, I had a deep spiritual yearning to discover how I might serve God with my life. Over time, I have come to understand “call” as not only that which beckons us to respond to God in the present, or even which leads us into the future but that which draws us closest to childlike faith, curiosity and wonder. This call is what inspires us to be, as Thomas Merton said, “the persons we were born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given us at birth by God.” My call to the local church has grown out of this childlike curiosity and has grown into a deep love for God and God’s creation. As a Pastor, I am blessed to walk with others on the journey, to bring to light the truth of the gospel, to reflect the radical in-breaking of God’s love, with an orientation towards justice for all people. Though it is the Church that authorizes persons for ministry, it is God who calls each of us to a vocation of servanthood.”

Rev. Dr. Jennifer Schulz-Thomas

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have tried to house it. It exists in institutional life, yes, but it must exist in the sacred places where our coffee is brewed, our clothes are sewn, our laws are debated and passed, our children are schooled, our assets are held.”

Her former colleagues, senior pastors, and congregation members have described Rev. Dr. Shultz-Thomas as bold, forward-looking, strategic, compassionate, and a rising star in the UCC. Their

comments reaffirm the congregation’s decision that she possesses the qualities and vision to lead our congregation into a future defined by faith, openness, inclusivity, and community impact.

As we await Rev. Dr. Jennifer Shultz-Thomas’s arrival, we invite you to join us in embracing this new chapter in the rich history of Countryside Community Church. Together, under her guidance, we will continue to grow as a congregation that radiates love, compassion, and progress.



The Countryside library is taking shape as we expand our collection in the areas of Anti-racism, world religions, banned books, disabilities, spiritual and contemplative practices, and Christianity. We're still accepting donations of books in these areas. If you have books you'd like to gift to the library, please feel free to put them in the basket in the Library. If you have any questions, please [email](mailto:Ann.Huxtable-Scates@cox.net) Ann Huxtable-Scates at Ann.scates@cox.net.

Banned Books Week this year is October 1-7. The title this year is: *Let Freedom Read*

Banned book weeks celebrates the freedom to read and spotlights current and historical attempts to censor books in libraries and schools. For more than 40 years, the annual event has brought together the entire book community – librarians, teachers, booksellers, publishers, writers, journalists, and readers of all types – in shared support of the freedom to seek and to express ideas, even those some consider unorthodox or unpopular. The books featured during Banned Books Week have all been targeted for removal or restriction in libraries and schools. By focusing on efforts across the country to remove or restrict access to books, Banned Books Week draws national attention to the harms of censorship. (Ala.org)

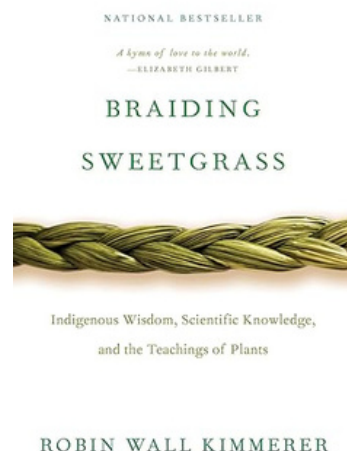
Get involved! Contact your local school district, go to your local library or bookstore and search ala.org to find ways you can make a difference.



Book Reviews

The books reviewed below by supersummary.com can be found in the Countryside library.

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer
This work examines modern botany and environmentalism through the lens of the traditions and cultures of the Indigenous peoples of North America. Through a series of personal reflections, the author explores the connection between living things and human efforts to cultivate a more sustainable world.



The Librarian of the Burned Books by Brianna Labuskes
The Librarian of Burned Books is a captivating WWII-era novel about the intertwined fates of three women who believe in the power of books to triumph over the very darkest moments of war.

The Hate U Give, by Angie Thomas
Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer.



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!



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!

Team Up to Clean Up

There is still an opportunity to volunteer with Anti-Racism group member Cindy Cronn for the Team Up to Clean Up neighborhood cleanup challenge! on Oct. 28. For more info, [email Diane](#) at dianes@countrysideucc.org. You can also text her at 402-707-1556.

VOLUNTEER
#communitycleanupchallenge
Help out at a neighborhood cleanup held on the following Saturdays @ 9 AM!

TEAM UP TO CLEAN UP

- March 25th
- April 29th
- May 20th
- June 24th
- July 29th
- August 26th
- September 30th
- October 28th

Take Action!

- Pick up trash
- Recycle items
- Compost organic matter
- Clean up weeds
- Mow a vacant lot
- Get creative with a task that makes a positive community impact!

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP GROUP OMAHA
GLOBALLEADERSHIPGROUPOMAHA.ORG
3118 N 24th Street GLG Community Garden

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](#).

Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group

The Sunday morning Racial Justice Book Group resumes its discussions Sunday, Sept. 10 at 8 a.m. via Zoom. We meet each Sunday from 8 - 9 a.m. The Zoom link can be found on the [church calendar](#). We'll discuss *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* by Clint Smith (keynote speaker at this year's Tri-Faith Conference) All are welcome!



Adult Forum

The Adult Forum's new lecture series is *How Jesus Became God*. We'll watch Great Courses videos on the topic: If Jesus never called himself God, how did he become one? If you can't join us in the Deborah Room, you'll find a Zoom link on the [church calendar](#).

Ready for some
FOOD, FRIENDS & FUN?
Call or text Sherryl
402-658-7416

Interested in Small Groups for Food Lovers?

Food is a great way to connect with one another! Three current groups meet monthly to dine at area restaurants, each with its own unifying flair:

- **First Thursday Singles** If you're solo and want some like-minded company for delightful dinner experience, this group is for you!
- **Second or Third Thursday Couples:** Kinda self-explanatory!
- **Last Thursday Sushi!** Yes, there are 38 sushi restaurants in Omaha – it would take us three years to visit every one of them!

Interested in something you don't see here? Why not start your own?! You could start a limited series to try it out. Contact Sherryl at 402-658-7416. All are welcome!

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



 **Countryside**
Community Church

Blessing of the Pets: Sunday, October 8



Countryside pet parents and families are invited to bring their furry family members to the Pet Blessing service on Sunday, Oct. 8 at 2 p.m. The event will be held on the downstairs lawn. In case of inclement weather, the event will be held on the lower level in the activity center.

All animals are welcome as long as they are either on a static, not retractable, leash or caged. Please leave treats at home, but feel free to bring a lawn chair! You don't need to be a Countryside member to attend, so invite your neighbors and friends the next time you are out walking your dog!

We understand some pets aren't comfortable in a group setting with other animals, but you can still participate by bringing a picture of your pet with you to the Pet Blessing. We also encourage those families who have experienced the loss of a beloved furry family member to bring a photo of their pet to be honored during the ceremony. Let us know if you can make it by [registering](https://countrysideucc.org/register) at countrysideucc.org/register.

The Season of Giving



Countryside Community Church Stewardship Campaign 2024

Countryside Community Church has a rich history of unwavering generosity. For years, our dedicated members have stood at the forefront of community support through numerous outreach programs.

The essence of Countryside's mission, encapsulated in the theme for the 2024 Stewardship Campaign, "Because of You, Our Church Changes Lives," reflects the heart and soul of Countryside.

The Box: October



Countryside's youth have chosen Completely KIDS as the recipient of October's Box donations.

When Omaha families find themselves in chaotic times the children are often in need of special services and care. Completely KIDS supports over 2,000 kids and their families every year via school, shelters and other care agencies. They provide clothing, nutritious meals, education support, ESL, mental healthcare and parenting classes.

Completely KIDS is in need of new winter coats in all sizes: youth small to adult large. [Click here](#) or scan the QR code above to visit the Amazon Wish List.

The Board of Christian Outreach encourages you to support COYO's choice of Completely KIDS by purchasing a new winter jacket for a child in need. The Box is located in the front entry to church.



UCC Creative Justice Webinar: A Plea from the Pope

Oct 11, 2023, 12 p.m. CDT

The United Church of Christ will present a panel discussion on Oct. 11, addressing Pope Francis' follow-up environmental document to the 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*. The papal exhortation will be released on Oct. 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

The new edition of the encyclical provides an update to confronting "the senseless war on our common home" and address issues such as climate change, care for the environment, and the defense of human life and dignity. It enjoins all Christians to join together in committing to care for creation as a sacred gift from the Creator.

Rev. Dr. Brooks Berndt, Minister of Environmental Justice for the UCC and Rev. Michael Malcom, Executive Director for Alabama Interfaith Power & Light and the People's Justice Council, co-host this United Church of Christ webinar.

A panel of climate faith leaders will reflect upon Pope Francis's plea for climate action. Panelists will include Susan Hendershot, the President of Interfaith Power & Light and Dan Misleh, founder of Catholic Climate Covenant. Even if you can't make the webinar at its scheduled time, still sign-up, and we'll send you a link to a recording.

[Register here!](#)



Board of Life Ministries

Creative Spiritual Practices

The Board of Life Ministries is offering two spiritual practices sessions, Wednesday Oct. 4, and Wednesday Oct. 11, from 10 – 11:30 a.m. Both sessions will be held in the Chapel. There is no fee for these sessions. Registration is through the church website: countrysideucc.org.

Spiritual Collage

Oct. 4, 2023, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

We wear many masks as we adapt to living, but behind the mask lies our True Self. This simple spiritual practice of "cut & paste" to create a collage can be a way to discover the Divine Mystery of who we are. Through guided discussion we let our True Self begin to speak. It's also fun and creative. The session will be led by Spiritual Director Rita Otis.

[Email](#) Rita for more information at RMOtis@outlook.com.

Creative Contemplation with Neurographic Art

Oct. 11, 2023, 10 – 11:30 a.m.

As a spiritual practice, Neurographic Art can be "meditation in motion" quieting our minds and engaging our heart and body through our senses. There is a slowing and softening in this creative meditation practice. We become more present to ourselves making space for inner listening and deeper awareness of the Divine. NO art or creative experience necessary. The session will be led by Spiritual Director Terri Storer. For more information [email](#) Terri at Tstorer@neb.rr.com.



Discover the Stephen Minister Within You!

Are you ready to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others? Consider becoming a Stephen Minister! Our upcoming Stephen Ministry training is just around the corner, and we invite you to embark on this transformative journey.

In times of distress, having a compassionate presence can make all the difference. Stephen Ministers are dedicated individuals who offer unwavering support to those facing life's challenges. They are trained to listen, care, and encourage others in a confidential and non-judgmental manner.

At Countryside, becoming a Stephen Minister holds immense value. They offer solace, hope, and companionship, allowing both the minister and the recipient to experience personal growth and deepened faith.

Discover the power of compassionate listening, empathetic care, and spiritual support. Classes will be forming soon – watch for dates in an upcoming C-10 newsletter. Join us in becoming a beacon of hope and healing within our congregation. Together, let's make a lasting impact on those in need.

For more information, contact Rev. Sarah at 402-884-8025, or email sarahrj@countrysideucc.org.

Free Climate Ambassador Training October 28

There's still time to register for the free climate ambassador training on October 28!

Did you know more than 70 percent of people in the U.S. say they are concerned about climate change and more than 40 percent say they are very concerned, but think only 14 percent around them are very concerned? You, as a person of faith, can help others see they're not alone in their concern and invite them to take action.

Blessed Tomorrow Ambassador Training is practical, inspiring, and backed by science and will equip you with the knowledge, hands-on experience, and

Get to Know Countryside at *The Inside Story*, October 8

Interested in finding out more about Countryside? The Inside Story, Oct. 8 at 11:15 a.m., is for members, visitors and those considering membership. All are welcome! Meet Pastor Keith, children welcome, lunch served.

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

New Member Events

October 22 11:15 a.m. *Membership Meeting* For those that have made a decision to become a member of Countryside Community Church, childcare provided, lunch provided

November 5 *New Members Sunday* Join us after the service for a casual reception for new members. This is a great opportunity for members to introduce themselves and welcome them to the Countryside family!

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



resources to speak and take action on climate change in your home, neighborhood, place of worship, community, with policymakers, and beyond.

[Register now](#) for this live, virtual Climate Ambassador Training on Oct. 28, 2023 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. CT.

This training will be recorded and will be provided to all who attend. Individuals interested in becoming Blessed Tomorrow Ambassadors must attend live or complete the online, self-paced version and then sign the pledge. Closed captioning will be provided. If you have any questions before registering, please contact FaithAmbassadors@ecoAmerica.org

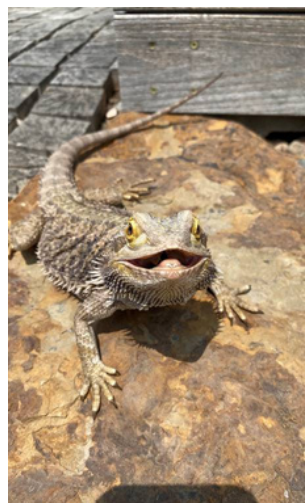


Kindernook Alphabet Weeks!

L Stands for Lemonade Stand!



This year Kindernook is celebrating each letter of the week with school and/or community events. During L Week (Sept. 11-15), the Orange Room hosted a Lemonade Stand. The children practiced interacting with each other by saying: "Would you like a lemonade? That would be one dollar bill, please. Thank you for coming!" and then went out to try it on some real customers! Each lemonade did indeed cost a dollar bill, but the customer chose the domination. We ended up making almost \$200! This money will go towards more letter of the week activities. During F Week each classroom got to know our school pet, Frisky (the lizard!) a little better. We purchased food with some of the lemonade stand earnings, gave her a bath, and took her outside for some sunshine in her new playpen! We plan to purchase quilt squares for Q week!



Mark Your Calendar, November 5

Kindernook Lantern Walk

Kindernook would like to invite the Countryside Community Church to participate in our annual **Lantern Walk** on Sunday, Nov. 5, 5-6:30 p.m. Our Lantern Walk serves as a celebration of the end of daylight savings time and a time to reflect on the beauty surrounding us. Meet us in the church's backyard at 5 p.m. to chat and play. As the sun sets, we'll "light" our lanterns and walk around Abraham's Bridge.

Youth & Family Ministries

[Rebecca Morello](#), Director of Youth & Family Ministries, rebeccam@countrysideucc.org, 402-884-8036
[Emma Boyd](#), Youth & Family Ministries Program Coordinator, emmab@countrysideucc.org, 402-884-8035

Children’s Ministries

Pre-K – 6th grade, Sundays.

- Oct. 1:** Children’s Church
- Oct. 8:** Community Worship
- Oct. 15:** Children’s Church
- Oct. 22:** Community Worship
- Oct. 29:** Children’s Church

Wednesday Wonderers, Core 56

Wednesdays, 6–7:30 p.m.

- Oct. 4:** Jacob Wrestling the Angel
- Oct. 11:** Samuel: Boy to Prophet
- Oct. 18:** David & Goliath
- Oct. 25:** Wisdom of Solomon
- Oct. 29:** Special Family Event!
Trunk or Treat, 1–3 p.m. Chili, Mac & Cheese, 2–4 p.m. Halloween Organ Concert, 4–5 p.m.

Confirmation

Sundays, 4 – 5 p.m.

- Oct. 1:** Affirmation 3
- Oct. 8:** Affirmation 3
- Oct. 15:** Service Opportunity, Countryside
- Oct. 22:** Affirmation 4
- Oct. 29:** Affirmation 4

Jr. High Youth Group

Sundays 5–6 p.m. Youth Room.

- Oct. 1:** The Universal Language: Creating a Jr High Spotify Playlist
- Oct. 8:** Movie Night, *Nightmare Before Christmas*
- Oct. 15:** Hide & Seek
- Oct. 22:** Halloween Crafts & Creations
- Oct. 29:** Scary Stories & S’mores

Sr. High Youth Group

Sundays, 6–8 p.m., Youth Room

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

Oct. 1: Spotlight: how our church works, upcoming changes! How do we make decisions?

Oct. 8: 13th film & discussion. Required Sunday/streaming on Netflix for parent preview

Oct. 15: Switch Night!
Oct. 22: Elkhorn Field trip, the Mark
Oct. 29: Scary Stories, S’mores

D&D group

Fridays, 5:30–8:30 p.m.

Group 1: Emotional Damage, Youth Room
 Group 2: Holy Rollers, Tamar



Above: Emotional Damage D&D Campaign Group.
 At right: Wednesday Wonderers fun!



I'm Done Being Welcoming: Raising the Bar for Interfaith Engagement



The interfaith movement, including in the Omaha community, has focused deeply on being welcoming. Welcoming others is a fantastic first step, but is really just a first step. In his latest blog, Tri-Faith Initiative Vice President of Mission Advancement Jeremy Fricke explains why it's critically important to set the bar higher for interfaith engagement.

By Jeremy Fricke, Vice President of Mission Advancement

I'm done being welcoming.

"All are welcome to join us."

"We welcome all visitors."

"Welcome to our space."

One of the challenges of engaging with communities of different religious backgrounds is the invisible boundaries that are created between communities. The interfaith movement, including in the Omaha community, has focused deeply on being welcoming. Welcoming others is a fantastic first step, but is really just a first step.

What I really mean is – we need to move past welcoming into a place where people truly belong.

Focusing on how we can help others feel comfortable often puts the responsibility of comfort on the guest. Yes, the hope is that the visitor enjoys their time, but being welcoming is woefully empty for many well-intentioned communities. It often consists of words of welcome, and maybe some food and drink. There's nothing wrong with kind words and coffee – but to make a serious change in the way we engage with people, we must do more.

What if we became more introspective about the way we engage with others? Rather than putting the responsibility for feeling comfortable with difference on the guest, what if we focused on a responsibility to prepare ourselves for difference? What if we focused more on learning how to be a better guest? Or how to feel more comfortable with guests?

Religious communities – especially those that are socially privileged in some way – must reflect on what is needed to be a better visitor. What if our religious institutions taught how to be brave and humble in spaces where we are underrepresented? Significant numbers of people who are engaged with interfaith work hope for a future where people feel comfortable in each other's spaces, while still retaining their own identities. But very few actually visit each other's spaces. It doesn't seem to matter how often the visited space mentions how welcoming they are, the visitor still seems fearful.

It isn't usually a fear of terrorism or hate or bigotry. It is a fear of offending and a fear of being the "odd one out". We are so afraid of being wrong that we would rather avoid the "other" than take the risk to build a relationship on someone else's terms.

In our religious communities, we must start to teach the responsibility we have to engage with those of different religious backgrounds. We must teach bravery, humility, and the religious responsibility to be engaged with other religious backgrounds. Bravery, to be ok with being an "odd one out." Those from marginalized religious communities are more likely to spend significant amounts of time already being the "odd one out." This is not to say that those of us from smaller communities do not have a responsibility to engage with larger religious communities, but that those from white, Christian, and/or secular communities have a particular responsibility to be brave enough to be in spaces in which they are the minority.

Humility, to be ok being corrected, critiqued, or mentored when in a new space. We don't like to be

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2023 United We Walk

Nearly 2,000 people to show up to the commons for the second annual United We Walk, including a LOT of Countrysiders! Be sure to join us next year!



Raising the Bar for Interfaith Engagement

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wrong, and we don't like to feel uncomfortable, but all of the major religious traditions have clear and repeated lessons on the virtue of humility. While we should be prepared to be a guest, we will not have all the answers, and we should recognize that even within a given community there are differences of opinion of how people should act or speak.

Finally, every religious tradition has teachings that can be understood in the context of interfaith engagement. We are not just talking about how interfaith engagement might be allowed in each tradition, but how it could be understood as a command, an expectation, or even a calling.

There is conflict and appreciation across religious lines of difference in nearly every scripture. Abraham

[donated to High Priest Melchizedek](#), Jesus was greeted by the [Zoroastrian Magi](#), the [charters of religious freedom outlined by Muhammad](#), and many, many other examples. There is an outpouring of examples of how religious diversity is appreciated, encouraged, and respected in the vast majority of traditions and our religious institutions must recognize the responsibility to belong to one another.

I'm done being welcoming, not because it doesn't matter, but because we need to move toward bravery, humility, and passion for interfaith engagement from the more passive foundation of welcoming.

If you, too, want to learn to be brave, humble, and passionate about interfaith dialogue, come to an event online or in person at trifaiith.org

Countryside Fellowship Gallery ~ September



September was a VERY busy month at Countryside! Combined with the August event, just over 200 Countrysiders attended the Conversations series that culminated on Sept. 23. A tremendous thank-you to the Pastoral Search Committee who paved the way for our new Senior Minister, Rev. Dr. Jennifer Shultz-Thomas! And more than 60 youth and adults gathered in the Sanctuary Sept. 28 to learn about raptors from volunteers from Fontanelle Forest.

