



COUNTRYSIDE CURRENTS

The monthly newsletter of Countryside Community Church

Embracing the New Year

A Journey of Awe, Gratitude and Epiphany

Rev. Dr. Jennifer Shultz-Thomas

"For everything, there is a season and a time for every purpose under heaven..."
Ecclesiastes 3:1a



Happy New Year!

It's hard enough for me to grasp all the changes that have accompanied our family over the last year: a cross-country move, new jobs, new schools, new church and community, selling and buying homes, and now here we are, looking at 2023 in the rearview mirror.

Like many of yours, Advent and Christmas are traditionally the busiest times in my family's life, but January is a close second.

We celebrate two birthdays and a wedding anniversary in the first two weeks of the year. Sage always feels a little dissed when January 14 rolls around because either everyone is too broke or too tired from all the holiday shopping, so they re-gift him their kids' least favorite present or like my grandma did growing up, send a box and say "it's for Christmas and your birthday!"

My firstborn is about to turn eleven years old. I still can't quite comprehend what that means. When Sage was little, I used to think about his current age, at "3" or "4," and then multiply that number until I hit 18. So, at three years of age, I knew I would get to spend six times (6 x 3) that amount of time with him again before he would be off to change the world. When he turned 9, it wasn't a fun game anymore. In these tween years, however, there's a reason their feet and bodies begin to emit toxic odors. "For everything, there is a season."

I still remember the morning of his 6th birthday; I took a single cupcake lit with firetruck red candles upstairs and entered his room gently singing, "Happy Birthday to you..." His little eyes struggled to open, but at the sight of the flames, he remembered that it was his birthday. He shot out of bed and immediately

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Monday
January 15, 2024

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

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

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

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

Shari Garder, Financial Secretary
sharig@countrysideucc.org

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

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

Ashlee Gibson, Administrative Assistant
ashleeg@countrysideucc.org

Steve Gomez, Administrative Assistant
steveg@countrysideucc.org

Doug Bloomquist, Building Property Coordinator
dougbl@countrysideucc.org

Diane Scott, Engagement Coordinator
dianes@countrysideucc.org

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

Emma Boyd, Youth Programming Coordinator
emmab@countrysideucc.org

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

Tyler Gruttemeyer, Youth Music Director
tylerg@countrysideucc.org

Adam Witte, Choir Director
adamw@countrysideucc.org

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A Journey of Awe, Gratitude and Epiphany

ran over to the giant wall-sized ruler that hung near his bed and said, "Mommy! Come measure me!!" He was sure he had grown a foot between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m.! He groaned when I pointed to the number, asking, "When will I be big?"

Then, he relented and ate his cupcake.

As children, we often wish our lives away with anticipation. We want to be bigger and brighter and enjoy more freedom than our age allows.

As middle-aged adults, often stuck on the hamster wheel of parenting and career demands, we are doing well to keep up with the harried life that is living us. Forget tomorrow; we want to get through the day.

As older adults, we slow down and sometimes wish we could turn the clock back. Many of us ask, "How will people remember me?" Or "What has my life been about?"

Time is deceiving as it promises something we can never truly have: more time. Albert Einstein famously said, "I never think of the future. It comes soon enough." No matter how we enter the world or who we are upon our arrival date, time is always consistent. It carries us from one day to the next, never stopping or changing; it doesn't speed up or slow down to meet the needs of an ever-changing world and more complex people. Time is the great equalizer, promising us one moment after another but never skipping one day to get to the next.

Every time Sage turns another year older, I am reminded that I, too, will soon have another candle atop my cake, as my birthday is just four days past his. When I consider all the changes still settling into my soul this year, I am in awe as I think about the experiences of my life that have ushered me along from one new horizon to the next. Really—awe!

There is a gentleness about finding oneself in a place, in time, that is neither more about the past nor the future but so abundantly rich in the present that one cannot look away.

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**The office will be closed Monday, Jan. 15
in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**

In Memoriam

Remembering those we've lost in 2023

We remember and honor the cherished Countryside friends and family who departed in 2023. Let us find solace in the shared memories that weave a tapestry of love and connection.

Each of these beloved souls left an indelible mark on our community, enriching our lives with their kindness, compassion and unwavering faith. Their spirits linger in the sanctuary of our hearts. The memories we hold dear are the echoes of their presence, the enduring legacy of love they leave behind.

May the warmth of their smiles, the gentleness of their words, and the strength of their convictions continue to inspire us. In the tapestry of our shared experiences, they live on, immortalized by the impact they had on our lives.



Darwyn 'Tony' Snyder
Jan. 1, 2023



Barbara Barchus
Jan. 8, 2023



Todd Pettigrew
Feb. 24, 2023



Andre 'Andy' Smith
March 2, 2023



Susan Carne
March 6, 2023



Rodgers 'Rodge' Bickerstaff
March 15, 2023



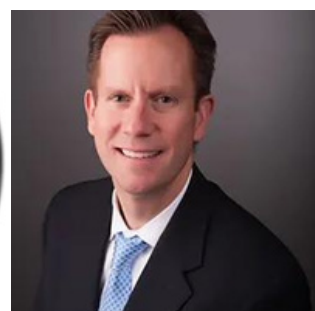
Patricia Walstrom
March 21, 2023



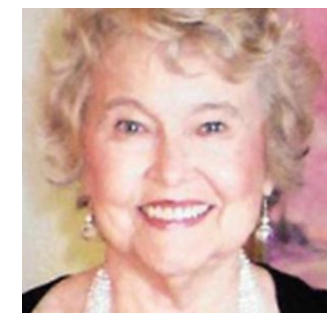
Virginia 'Ginny' Bigelow
April 13, 2023



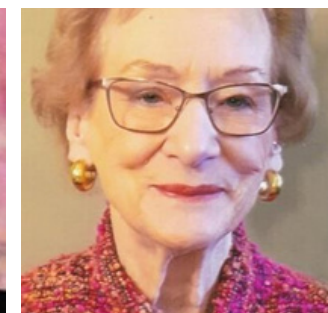
Joann 'Jo' Poole
April 18, 2023



Douglas Krenzer
May 15, 2023



Louise 'Lou' Way
June 10, 2023



Joan Denton
Aug. 8, 2023



Mary Lueder
December 14, 2023



Benne Rae Beins
Dec. 23, 2023



Book Reviews

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

Better: Waking Up to Who We Could Be

by Melvin Bray

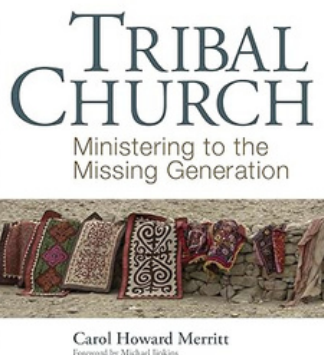
What if we could actually change the world by telling better stories? What if the world we have—with its racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, religious hatred, ecological disregard—is exactly the world we have spun into existence through the stories we have told? Melvin Bray insists that a better world is possible if the stories around which we organize our lives begin to match the beauty we imagine is possible. (Christianity: 261.09 BRA)



Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation

by Carol Howard Merritt

Carol Howard Merritt, a pastor in her mid-thirties, suggests a different way for churches to be able to approach young adults on their own terms. Outlining the financial, social, and familial situations that affect many young adults today, she describes how churches can provide a safe, supportive place for young adults to nurture relationships and foster spiritual growth. (Christianity: 259.25 MER)



January 18 Screening & Discussion

A Time for Burning



On January 16, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Countryside Community Church, Temple Israel and the American Muslim Institute will come together to address the critical issue of racism in our community. *This event is reserved for members of the Tri-Faith Community.*

A Time for Burning is a compelling documentary that explores the historical and contemporary layers of racism in Omaha. Attendees are encouraged to arrive at 6 p.m., ensuring a prompt start to the event. Following the documentary, we'll move into facilitated small-group discussions.

This collaborative effort between Countryside, Temple Israel, and the American Muslim Institute underscores the power of community and the belief that change begins with open dialogue. [Register here](#), scan the QR code above or visit countrysideucc.org/register. For more information contact [email](mailto:sharon.royers@ccch.org) Sharon Royers or call her at 402-319-2272.

Honoring the Divine Spark

The Board of Life Ministries in January will offer online sessions that honor ourselves and others through the Enneagram on Friday, Jan. 19 from 7-9 p.m. and Saturday, Jan. 20, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Enneagram is a tool to use as part of our spiritual practice. We will explore the personality types of the Enneagram and begin to understand how we hinder becoming all God creates us to be.

for more info and to prep for the Enneagram event please listen to this Enneagram podcast [here](#) or watch the short YouTube video from Suzzane Stabile [here](#).

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



Board Restructuring

Preparing for What's Ahead



Given the significant changes Countryside has experienced over the last five years—from relocating to the Tri-Faith Commons to the departure of tenured clergy to the impact of the pandemic—members of the Church Council set priorities for 2023 to ensure a vibrant, healthy Church. The priorities included connecting with new and existing members, exuberantly welcoming visitors and friends, and thoroughly reviewing our governance structure.

On February 23, 2023, members of the Church Council took action to establish an independent task force to evaluate our current board structure and recommend changes, if appropriate, to enhance the effectiveness, adaptability, and alignment of the church's governance structure with its mission and goals. The council's action followed the work started by another committee in 2018 before our relocation to the Tri-Faith Commons. This article summarizes the task force's key findings and recommended board structure.

The 2023 Board Restructuring Task Force included five members and one staff liaison: Mary Johnston, Mary Beth Link, Margie Bolte, Jane Frey (Chair), and Dan Loven-Crum (Staff Liaison). The members brought great knowledge, organizational experience, and understanding to the task. Each served on various boards and committees; two members were Church employees, and all are actively engaged with Countryside. The task force met weekly from March through September. Their research comprised historical data, such as the timing of each board's formation and the number of board members required, as well as the membership roll, feedback from the Nominating Committee, current board functions, and the findings from the previous committee.

Key Findings

- The number and types of boards correlate to the membership roll (number of members) and staff.
- Initially, there were four boards, Deacons, Christian Education, Benevolence, and Trustees, and the membership was 135.

- The Church Council was added in 1954.
- In 1978, there were four boards—Deacons, Christian Education, Trustees, and Christian Outreach—plus the Church Council, with 1,494 members.
- Between 2006 and 2012, four boards were added: Arts Ministry, Youth, Pastoral Care, and Life Ministries. The membership ranged from 1,721 members in 2006 to 1,474 members in 2012, and there were at least two called ministers and 12 full- and part-time programming employees on staff.
- Currently, there are 1,090 members of record, and the staff includes one minister and seven programming staff, three of whom are part-time employees.
- The church comprises eight boards with at least 82 seats, varying in membership from six to 24 individuals per board.
- The Nomination Committee must fill at least 33 board seats annually, excluding youth positions and vacancies. In 2022, they successfully filled 47 board seats.
- Board members must be church members, serving on only one board at a time. Members are reluctant to commit to three-year board terms, making filling board seats and maintaining board membership difficult.
- Board members play crucial roles in governance and are primary contributors to volunteer work within the church.
- There is a common assumption that to contribute to a board's work, one must be a board member. This leaves little room for non-board members, visitors, and friends to participate in the work of the Church.
- Staff members often serve as liaisons for multiple boards, increasing their workload and burdening their after-hours schedule.

Summary of Findings

The history illustrates a pattern of board expansion and adjustment in response to membership fluctuations, with modifications in the number and types of boards over the years. Currently, the church operates with a smaller membership base and a scaled-down staff compared to previous periods.

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Pastoral Search Committee (PSC)

Our Heartfelt Thanks



The PSC would like to thank the congregation, staff and lay leaders as we conclude our sacred journey that brought Pastor Jenny to us.

We each received a beautiful Cosanti Windbell on Sunday, Dec. 17, in recognition of the work we accomplished together. The sound of the windbell will continually remind us of the love and support we received from all of you.

We feel blessed to be a part of such a strong faith community and we are so hopeful about the bright future for us at Countryside Community Church.

Kris Hess, Mark Draper, Mallis Bonner, Shelley Boyd, Bob Davis, Mimi Goings. David Hubbard, Cathy MacInnes, Sharon Royers, Adam Steinbach, Elaine Wiles

The Box: January Countryside Community Cupboard



The Board of Christian Outreach has chosen Countryside's own Community Cupboard as

the Box recipient for the month of January. Please add a few items to your grocery list to help food insecure folks who patronize our monthly Cupboard project. Canned/packaged meats, stews, chili, peanut butter, tuna, chicken, salmon and any other shelf-stable protein rich foods are suitable.

With the great demand on food pantries in Omaha we want to help our patrons feed their families and themselves. The first Saturday morning of every month the Cupboard is open until all the available food is distributed.

Your gifts can be put in the Box by the front door of the church. Thank you for helping maintain this ministry.

Meals on Wheels Well-Deserved Kudos!

I would like to take a moment to thank **Sandy Sueper** and **Mary Dircks** who have represented Countryside for many years delivering hot meals to 10-15 elderly clients through the Meals On Wheels program organized through the Eastern Nebraska Office of Aging (ENOA).

Michele Brandenburg joined our group a few years ago and we all take turns delivering Wednesdays throughout the year and add Fridays during the Fall and Winter months. I appreciate the continued dedication of my MOW Team and wanted to recognize each of them during this special time of the year! ~ Mimi Goings

EPS Recycling Open Through January 14

The drop-off site for hard (EPS) Styrofoam is open through Jan. 14, 2024. EPS Styrofoam is the white, unbendable Styrofoam packaging and coolers used for perishables. If it's flexible, it's not EPS.

Who's looking to recycle their Styrofoam™ (EPS)?

EPS: Expandable Polystyrene
It's the hard white packaging foam used to transport goods like televisions, appliances, glass items, temperature sensitive medications and perishables

If it *BENDS*, it's NOT our friend!

- No Tape
- No Labels
- No Flexible Foam
- No Food Containers
- No Packing Peanuts
- No Foam Sheets

What happens to my recycled #6 EPS foam?

It is recycled into construction material, surfboards, picture frames, packaging and so much more!

If you can't make it to our drop off event, you can recycle 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at:



Common Grounds Ministry Update



Common Grounds has a long history at Countryside and continues to be a favorite gathering space, especially on Sunday and Tuesday mornings and during special events.

With your generous donations, 2023 became the first year of it becoming self-funding, taking no money from the church budget.

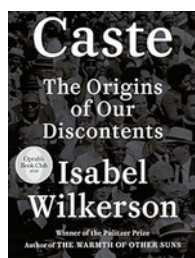
In addition, mid-year, the Common Grounds budget

began supplying all of the compostable products for all church events.

With all of you, and the dedication of Shannon Avard, Bill Bolte, Amy Stoddard and Pam Govier, this Countryside ministry continues to grow in ways we could not have imagined. Looking forward to 2024 to see what it brings! Common Grounds will be open Tuesday mornings for Barista on Board! from 8:30-11 a.m.

Racial Justice Book Review

Caste, Isabel Wilkerson



Review by Marcia Blum

Isabel Wilkerson incorporates strong historical research with stories about the lives of people that bring the facts to life. She describes the creation of a caste system in the United States, placing white Europeans

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

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

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

MLK Day of Service January 15

Martin Luther King Jr Day of Service provides a welcome day away from work for many of us, but some view the special day as a chance to honor King's memory with service. If you are looking for opportunities to serve our community on MLK Day, here are some links that may help offered by Countryside's Anti-Racist Designation group:

- [Family Events and Volunteer Opportunities in Omaha on Martin Luther King Jr. Day](#)
- [United Way of the Midlands Volunteer Hub](#)
- [#MLK Day of Service - Points of Light Engage](#)
- [SHARE Omaha MLK Day of Service](#)

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.

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](#).

Youth & Family Ministries

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

Children's Ministries

Pre-K-6th grade

Jan. 7: Children's Church—
Epiphany!

Jan. 14: Community Worship

Jan. 21: Children's Church—John
the Baptist!

Jan. 28: Community Worship

Wednesday Wonderers, Core 56

Wednesdays, 6-7:30 p.m.

Jan. 10: Boy Jesus in the Temple

Jan. 17: Jesus and the Children

Jan. 24: Loaves and Fishes

Jan. 31: Jesus Calms the Storm

D&D group

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

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

Group 1: Emotional Damage

Group 2: Holy Rollers

Group 3: Chaos Campaigns

Group 4: One Group to Rule Them All

Jr. High Youth Group

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

Jan. 7: Ping Pong Tournament

Jan. 14: 2023 Trivia Challenge

Jan. 21: Ghost Writers

Jan. 28: Team Scrabble

Sr. High Youth Group

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

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

Jan. 7: Self-Compassion
Resolutions

Jan. 14: King in the Wilderness film

Required Sunday

Jan. 21: Hungry, Hungry...Humans?

Jan. 28: Superfight! (Easy now...it's a card game.)

Confirmation

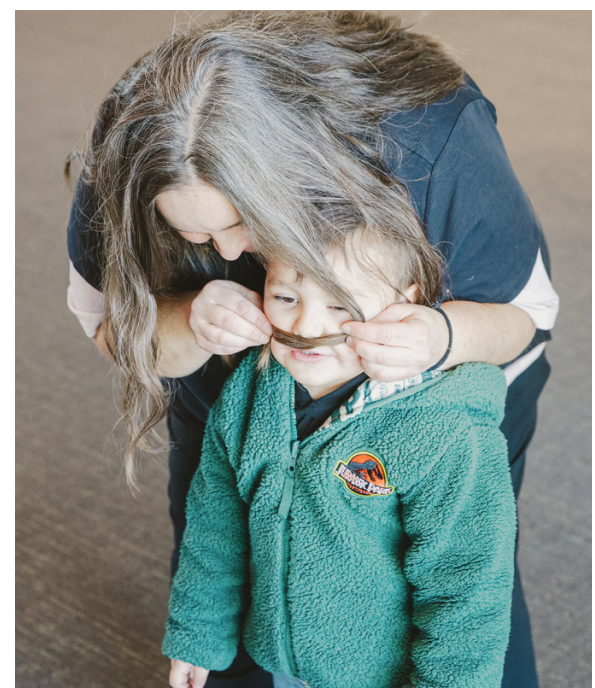
Sundays, 4-5 p.m.

Jan. 7: Review of Affirmations 3, 4, and 6/Intro to Affirmations 7, 11, and 12

Jan. 14: Affirmation 7

Jan. 21: Affirmation 11

Jan. 28: Affirmation 11



Get Connected!

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!



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. For more information on how to get involved, [email Diane](mailto:dianes@countrysideucc.org) at dianes@countrysideucc.org, scan the QR code or text her at 402-707-1556.



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 Hope Garden, Countryside Pantry and special events such as baking for and assisting at funerals, the Ice Cream Festival, United We Walk, and Pride Parade. Contact the [office](#) at 402-391-0350, or check the weekly C-10 for the latest opportunities to get connected and make a difference!



A Journey of Awe, Gratitude and Epiphany

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There is a gentleness about finding oneself in a place, in time, that is neither more about the past nor the future but so abundantly rich in the present that one cannot look away.

In this new season, in this new year, I am awestruck by how I can see threads of Spirit's hand weaving together, silk threaded, knotted, and brightly arrayed, the stories and lives of so many who have journeyed this way: Countryside Community Church, the Tri-Faith Initiative, our faith partners, our neighbors and all the souls who dance in and out of our doors. This season is about deepening our roots, strengthening our connections, and reveling in the awe and wonder of God's blessings so richly abundant when shared.

In this new year, 2024, we are immediately invited into

a new season in our liturgical calendar. Epiphany, traditionally celebrated on January 6, is a time that calls us to celebrate the manifestation of God's light in the world. Through Advent, we were preparing our hearts to welcome the gift, and in Epiphany, we journey together as gift-givers, bearers of God's light, revealing the hope and joy we find in Christ that is already at work among us.

As I prepare for our upcoming family celebrations and begin my soul's next journey around the sun, I do so with deep gratitude and awe for what has been and is slowly becoming. May this new year invite us to experience Epiphany in our lives— deepen our spiritual connection, repair relationships, and be present in our moments because "there is a time for every purpose under Heaven."

For Those Who Have Far to Travel: An Epiphany Blessing

If you could see
the journey whole,
you might never
undertake it,
might never dare
the first step

that propels you
from the place
you have known
toward the place
you know not.
Call it
one of the mercies
of the road:
that we see it
only by stages
as it opens
before us,
as it comes into
our keeping,
step by
single step.
There is nothing
for it
but to go,

and by our going
take the vows
the pilgrim takes:
to be faithful to
the next step;
to rely on more
than the map;
to heed the signposts
of intuition and dream;
to follow the star
that only you
will recognize;
to keep an open eye
for the wonders that
attend the path;
to press on
beyond distractions,
beyond fatigue,
beyond what would
tempt you
from the way.
There are vows
that only you
will know:
the secret promises
for your particular path

and the new ones
you will need to make
when the road
is revealed
by turns
you could not
have foreseen.
Keep them, break them,
make them again;
each promise becomes
part of the path,
each choice creates
the road
that will take you
to the place
where at last
you will kneel
to offer the gift
most needed—
the gift that only you
can give—
before turning to go
home by
another way.

~ Jan Richardson

Board Restructuring: Planning For What's Ahead

Continued from page 5

History also demonstrates that the number of board seats has expanded to ensure enough volunteers to support the various functions of each board. Changing the focus of boards from volunteer supply to governance could reduce the number of board seats and expand volunteerism to non-board members, friends, and visitors without the three-year board commitment. It also streamlines the decision-making process, making boards more agile and responsive to the needs of the Church.

Recommendation

On July 12, 2023, the Board Restructuring Task Force presented their findings to board and council members, with more than 60 in attendance. Their recommendation proposed a new structure:

- Reduce the number of boards from eight to five
- Align like functions to increase collaboration and operational efficiencies
- Include integral functions that align with the Church's mission, such as UCC designations, the Tri-Faith Initiative, and congregational care
- Create subcommittees, known as teams, chaired by board members and staffed by volunteers, to increase member and non-member engagement, inclusivity, and diversity of participants.

After the presentation, attendees participated in a facilitated discussion to generate initial responses to the proposed structure, identify the pros and cons, and consider the next steps, including ongoing vetting of the proposal at the board and Church Council meetings.

Proposed Structure: New Structure Descriptions

These descriptions culminate in feedback from the task force and board and Church Council members over several facilitated discussions during board and council meetings. As a reminder, members may attend board and council meetings.

Social Justice and Outreach

Members of this ministry address the needs within our church family, community, country, and the world and oversee UCC designation teams that help our congregation's action align with our mission and the UCC values. This encompasses areas as diverse as homelessness, hunger, the environment, and racial and economic issues. It includes, but is not limited to, the following Teams:

- **Designation Teams:** Includes education, book clubs, and small groups that support and deepen our understanding of the designations: Accessible to All (A2A) Team; Anti-Racist Church Team; Open and Affirming (ONA) Team, including PRIDE; Future teams (Creation Justice; Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged for Mental Health (WISE); Intercultural and Multiethnic; Immigrant Welcoming
- **Social Justice and Action Team**, such as Faith in the Environment and the Community Cupboard
- **Special Offerings Team:** select organizations to receive donations from the Christmas and Easter Offerings and select recipients of the Box and other special offerings throughout the year.
- **Community Engagement Team** provides opportunities to deepen Countryside's relationship with its Tri-Faith Commons faith partners and other organizations within the greater Omaha community.

Worship and Arts

Members of this ministry support the congregation's worship and arts experience, including leading teams that prepare and serve during worship and oversee the multidisciplinary arts programming for all ages. It includes, but is not limited to:

- **Worship Planning:** under the leadership of the Senior Minister, this team meets weekly to plan and coordinate worship services.
- **Communion,** prepare the elements and serve communion
- **Liturgists,** identify lay volunteers to read scripture, call and response, and make announcements
- **Usher Team** coordinates volunteers to serve as ushers during worship

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Continued from page 11

Worship and Arts *continued*

- Offering: collect the offering and account for the loose offerings
- Baptism: prepare the elements for baptism
- Music programs: oversee and support the choral and instrumental groups for all ages, such as Countryside Community Church Choir
- Multidisciplinary arts programs: oversees, supports, facilitates, and sustains artistic programming and coordinates volunteers
- Recruit, engage, and retain volunteers to support the worship teams and program participants

Congregational Life

Members of this ministry support the many phases and life events of our congregants. It encompasses visitor and member welcome, membership, and fellowship and provides pastoral care to members during times of stress, hardship, and crisis or as requested. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Visitor Welcome Team
- Greeter Team
- Membership Team, oversees new members and membership management in conjunction with the staff
- Care Team
- Agape Team
- Stephen Ministry
- Fellowship, including all-church events, small groups, such as Journey Groups and book clubs, social groups, and health and wellness programs
- Life Events, such as the coordination of weddings, baptisms, and funerals in conjunction with the Senior Minister and staff and the administration of baptism and confirmation in conjunction with membership management.
- Community Assistance Fund management following the policy and in conjunction with the staff liaison
- Pray groups, including text groups

Christian Education and Spiritual Growth

Members of this ministry guide, oversee, and support educational opportunities for all ages – children, youth, and adults. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Children's Education
- Youth Education, including confirmation
- Adult Education
- Lecture Series, such as Center for Faith Studies
- Management of the Church Library
- Reviews and oversees the Abuse Prevention Policy
- Oversees and supports curriculum development in conjunction with the staff
- Acquires curriculum and supplies, as needed, to support educational programming in conjunction with the staff
- Recruit and train volunteer teachers and facilitators

Finance and Operations

Members of Finance and Operations are the fiduciaries of the church, responsible for handling the church's physical assets, legal contracts, and financial assets. Responsibilities include:

- Finance and Investments, set and review financial policies and procedures, review investments with the Treasurer and investment advisor
- Stewardship, lead year-round giving and annual stewardship campaign to encourage member giving
- Contracts, review and evaluate new and renewal contracts, such as insurance policies, maintenance contracts
- Property and Building, oversee and advise capital maintenance program and ongoing repair and maintenance of the property and the building
- Charitable Foundation, nominates and selects members of the Foundation board and provides guidance regarding policy and use of funds
- Budget oversight, reviews and accepts monthly financial reports, ensures funds are used as budgeted, reviews requests for additional funds outside of the annual budget

Board and council members continue to vet the proposed structure during meetings. Members are encouraged to attend Church Council meetings to learn more about the proposed change in structure. There will also be opportunities to learn more about the proposed structure change in sessions after worship. Watch for dates and times on the announcements and the weekly newsletter, the C-10. Future articles will cover the process for the congregation to consider adopting the proposed structure and the implementation plan.