

COUNTRYSIDE CURRENTS



THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Podcast Reflection Group Exploring Israel-Palestine Perspectives



By Ecrusized, influenced by user Rr016. - Own work, Israeli military presence in Gaza Strip citing Institute for the Study of War & Critical Threats Project. Maximum Palestinian advance citing NYT & WSJ. Made using OpenTopoMap data., CC BY-SA 4.0. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=138592589>

As the Countryside community continues to learn more about conflict in the Middle East, we also learn how we can faithfully listen, learn and respond, especially regarding the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian war.

During the first three weeks in March, Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas and

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones will co-host a short podcast reflection group. Each week, participants will listen to a podcast that focuses on either history or commentary about Israel-Palestine and then gather for a 45-minute session to reflect on what was presented in the podcast.

The group will meet on Zoom, Mondays at 6:45 p.m. on March 4, 11 and 18.

The first podcast selection is from The Ezra Klein Show, *The Sermons I Needed to Hear Right Now: A tender conversation with Rabbi Sharon Brous about Jewishness and the Jewish State.*

WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE?

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- Lenten Season Calendar ~ 8*

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The Box: March



The Board of Christian Outreach has designated Voices for Children in Nebraska as the recipient of both our Easter Offering and the March Box donations.

Voices for Children provides a strong voice for the wellbeing of Nebraska's children by fearlessly advocating at every level of government and in the public square. They use fact based research to offer best practices recommendations impacting our most vulnerable young citizens. Their focus is on general welfare, health, economic stability, education and juvenile justice for those children who cannot speak for themselves.

We are asking that you re-direct your usual Box gift and combine it with our Easter Offering. Voices for Children, as a trusted advocate in the halls of decision makers, strives to assure Nebraska's children the best support we can provide! Donate at countrysideucc.org/give.

Volunteers Needed to Help Host 2024 JAM at Countryside



The United Church of Christ (UCC) is made up of the local churches. The local churches are organized by Associations, and Countryside is part of the Living Waters Association. The Associations are organized by Conferences of which

the Living Waters Association and two other Associations make up the Nebraska Conference. The Nebraska UCC Conference shares an Executive Conference Minister and supporting staff with the Iowa and South Dakota UCC Conferences. Every other year the Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota Conferences hold a Joint Annual Meeting (JAM). JAM this year will be held at Countryside, Sept. 27-28. The keynote speaker will be the newly elected General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson. Rev. Thompson will also preach at Countryside on that Sunday, September 29. We are creating a team of Countrysideiders to help host JAM. If interested in being part of this team, please contact Dan Loven-Crum, danl@countrysideucc.org.

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PODCAST REFLECTION GROUP: EXPLORING ISRAEL-PALESTINE PERSPECTIVES


Ezra Klein is a well-known journalist, columnist and political commentator who covers a wide range of topics, including politics, philosophy and culture. Klein often interviews influential figures in various fields, providing in-depth discussions and insights into contemporary issues.

The group will also listen to an episode of [Lever Time with David Sirota](#), featuring author and Washington Post editorial board member Shadi Hamid.

Lever Time with David Sirota is a progressive podcast hosted by journalist and political commentator David Sirota. He covers a wide range of topics, including politics and social justice and is known for his sharp analysis and ability to connect the dots between seemingly unrelated events. He often interviews guests who are experts in their fields, and isn't afraid to challenge conventional wisdom.

The podcast is a great resource for anyone who wants to stay informed about the latest news and trends. Sirota is a gifted storyteller, and he has a knack for making complex issues easy to understand. He is also a passionate advocate for progressive causes, and he is not afraid to speak truth to power.

You can find The Ezra Klein Show on various podcast platforms such as Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts. The Lever Time podcast is also available on a variety of platforms, including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. Simply search for The Ezra Klein Show or Lever Time in your preferred podcast app to listen to episodes and subscribe for updates.

You must be registered to take part in this important reflection group. Be sure to [register now!](#) For more information, [email Sarah](mailto:sarahrj@countrysideucc.org) at sarahrj@countrysideucc.org. 

To listen to podcasts like The Lever Time or Ezra Klein's podcast, you have several options:

Podcast Apps: You can use podcast apps available on your smartphone or tablet. Some popular options include:

- Apple Podcasts (for iOS devices)
- Google Podcasts (for Android devices)
- Spotify
- Pocket Casts
- Overcast
- YouTube

Search and Subscribe: Once you have downloaded a podcast app, you can search for the podcasts by typing in their names ("The Lever Time" or "Ezra Klein") in the search bar. Once you find the podcasts, you can subscribe to them. Subscribing ensures that new episodes are automatically downloaded or added to your library when they are released.

Direct Links: If you prefer to listen on a computer or directly through a browser, many podcasts also have websites where you can stream episodes. You can visit the websites for "The Lever Time" or "Ezra Klein" and find links to individual episodes.

RSS Feeds: Some podcast apps allow you to manually add podcasts using their RSS feeds. If you have the RSS feed URLs for "The Lever Time" or "Ezra Klein," you can paste them into your podcast app to subscribe.

Staying Connected with Countryside There's an App For That!

Discover Countryside's new app launching March 1, connecting our members to upcoming events, live worship, and more. Easily register for programs, check in to events, and access the monthly newsletter.



**MICHAELA
FRICKE**
DATABASE &
COMMUNICATIONS
ASSISTANT



Beginning March 1, Countryside will have a new app available to all our members. The app will have several options for you to connect deeper with Countryside through easy access to upcoming events and happenings, the monthly newsletter, live worship and more.

Throughout the year, Countryside has numerous engaging events and programs available to its community in order to provide opportunities for people to connect, learn, and have fun. The app will allow church members to easily keep up to date on what is going on at Countryside and register for

any upcoming events.

On the event registration page you'll be able to see a list of all upcoming events, dates/times, and descriptions of the events. You can register for an event in just a few quick taps. Registering for upcoming events is helpful so you can ensure you have all important and updated information that you may need for that event including location, meeting place, and any additional links needed.

Registering for events also helps us know what to expect for events in terms of attendance. It also helps us evaluate what events and programs our members are

enjoying so similar events/programs can be organized in the future.

Registrations will be available for events and programs, group meetings and volunteer opportunities. You can even signing up to receive a digital copy of a devotional! Registrations have already been available through the church website or links that are found in newsletters, emails, or any QR codes throughout the church. The app will give members another accessible and paper-free option for further engagement with Countryside.

There will also be a "Check-in" page. On this page you'll

Adam Witte Named Guest Conductor for Omaha Symphonic Chorus



ADAM WITTE

Omaha Symphonic Chorus has named Countryside's Adult and Handbell Choir Director Adam Witte as their new guest conductor.

Adam is a sought-after choral conductor, singer, clinician, and collaborative pianist, and an adjunct instructor in the music department at Creighton University. He also leads the university's Chorus and Chamber Choir.

He also serves as assistant conductor and ensemble section leader at Résonance, a premier semiprofessional choral ensemble, where he collaborates with accomplished vocalists to create captivating performance experiences.

As if that's not enough, Adam is the River City Mixed Chorus' assistant artistic director, where he conducts the River's Edge ensemble, which emphasizes outreach and community engagement. The ensemble will perform a featured concert at the international GALA Festival of Choruses in Minneapolis in July 2024.

Adam brings to the Omaha Symphonic Chorus a wealth of experience, a passion for education, and a commitment to the transformative power of choral music, promising a meaningful musical journey for performers and audience alike. Congratulations, Adam! 🎵



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Staying Connected with Countryside There's an App For That!

be able to see all programs and events you are registered for, including Sunday worship. Instead of writing down each of your family members name on the pew sheet, just open the app to check in you and your family with a simple few taps. The check-in function is also available to groups that meet regularly, like book clubs, boards and social groups. Checking in on the app can also be a great way for Countryside members to keep track of attendance in the groups they lead. It can also reduce paper waste.

Speaking of checking in to Sunday worship services, did you know Countryside streams worship services online every Sunday? Now you can access those services and past services through the app!

The live worship page takes you directly to Countryside's YouTube page where all Countryside services are hosted. If you can't be at service in person, tune in to a live Sunday service live through the app.

In case you missed one, the Countryside YouTube channel also hosts all previously recorded services.



Support through your app!

If you or someone you know needs pastoral care or support, you can submit a request through the app. You can also submit an anonymous prayer request.

The new app is a great way to keep up to date on what is happening at Countryside and to help keep you connected not only on Sunday but also throughout the week.

Not registered yet in TouchPoint? Visit my.countrysideucc.org and click on the link next to *need an account?* You'll be asked to enter the email address on your member record in TouchPoint.

When TouchPoint finds your matching email address, it will send an email with your

username and a one-use link so you can create a preferred password. You'll then be instructed to click the logo to proceed to your record. If you encounter a challenge when registering for TouchPoint, please call the church office during business hours at 402-391-0350. (For full instructions on registering on TouchPoint, go to countrysideucc.org/register and scroll to the bottom of the page.)

If you're registered on TouchPoint and want to try out the app, search for Countryside Community Church in the Apple App or Google Play stores and look for the Countryside logo.

Need help downloading the app? Email [Michaela Fricke](mailto:michaelaf@countrysideucc.org), michaelaf@countrysideucc.org.



Book Reviews

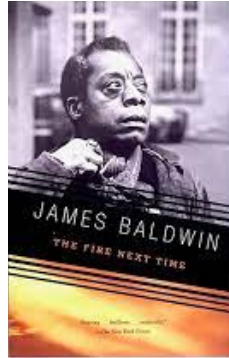
The books reviewed on this page can be found in the Christianity section of the Countryside library. All reviews taken from Amazon.com.

The Fire Next Time

By James Baldwin

Review by Jeri Lundblad

Baldwin was born in Harlem in 1924, and he died an ex-pat in France, in 1987. He published essays, novels, poems, plays, and non-fiction books in his prolific lifetime. This book is a work of non-fiction and autobiographical. He was a gay Black man who eloquently discussed issues of prejudice, discrimination, religion, politics, economics, and sexuality. He has completed in-depth examination about issues of his day with only a high school education. His works stand the test of time, accruing even greater relevance with our current injustice and discrimination with racial and LGBTQ+ issues. In his words, "God gave Noah the rainbow sign, No more water, the fire next time!"



The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness

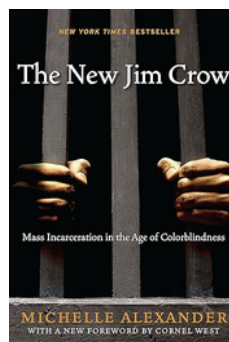
by Michelle Alexander

Review by Cynthia Cronn

Alexander, a highly acclaimed civil rights lawyer, advocate, and legal scholar, argues that mass incarceration is "a stunningly comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow."

Through each chapter, she demonstrates how race is used to victimized people of color through a complexity of ways, including racial profiling, biased sentencing policies, political disenfranchisement, and legalized employment discrimination that "trap African Americans in a virtual (and literal) cage."

"The New Jim Crow is a grand wake-up call in the midst of a long slumber of indifference to the poor and vulnerable." ~
From the forward by Cornel West



Anti-Racist Designation Committee **Recommended Reading**

The Sum of Us, Heather McGhee

How the Word is Passed, Clint Smith

Review by Sharon Royers

The Antiracist Designation Committee would like to thank the many congregants who participated last year in our all-church book read. This year we suggest two books for individuals and journey groups to read April-May. The first is *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We can Prosper Together* from Heather McGhee. In this timely book, "McGhee marshals economic and sociological research to tell an irrefutable story of racism's costs, but at the heart of the book are the humble stories of people yearning to be part of a better America including white supremacy's collateral victims: white people themselves."

The second book we recommend is *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* by Clint Smith. This author was the keynote speaker last year at the Tri-Faith's Race, Religion, and Social Justice Conference. This book takes the reader on a tour across America and describes in poetic detail the historic context and significance of the various sights.

Resources and opportunities to participate in book discussions will be available – look for more information in future C-10s and at the Justice Table in the Narthex.

Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Discussion Book Group

New Book in March

The Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group will be discussing *The Kingdom, The Power, and the Glory: American Evangelicals in an Age of Extremism* by Tim Alberta beginning March 3. We meet each Sunday at 8 a.m. via Zoom. The link is available on the church calendar. We have people from Temple Israel and non-church members who join us, making the discussions rich and multi-faceted. All are welcome! Contact Sharon Royers with any questions:
sroyers@centurylink.net

Lent

3rd Sunday of Lent: March 3

Worship, 10 a.m.

Wandering Heart: Praise the Mount
Matthew 16: 13-20 / Psalm 19

4th Sunday of Lent: March 10

Worship, 10 a.m.

Wandering Heart: Praise the Mount
Matthew 16: 13-20 / Psalm 19

5th Sunday of Lent: March 17

Worship, 10 a.m.

Wandering Heart: Teach Me
Matthew 14:22-33 / Psalm 22:23-31



"Lift Off" by Rev. Nicolette Peñaranda
(@nicolette.faison) | @sanctifiedart

Holy Week

Psalm Sunday: March 24

Worship, 10 a.m.

Wandering Heart: Songs of Loudest Praise
John 12:12-16

Maundy Thursday, March 28

Worship, 7 p.m.

Wandering Heart: Streams of Mercy
John 13:1-20

Good Friday, Worship, March 29

Worship, 7 p.m.

Wandering Heart: Prone to Leave the God I Love

John 13:31-38, John 18:1-11, John 18:12-18,
John 18:19-27, John 19:1-30

Easter Sunday: March 31

Sunrise Service, 7 a.m.

Worship, 9 a.m.

Brunch, 10 a.m.

Worship, 11 a.m.

Wandering Heart: And I Hope
Luke 24:1-12

Easter Morning Brunch

10 a.m.

Marys' Hall

[Register here!](#)



Poetry with the Pastor

Feb. 26-March 25

Mondays at Noon

Book: *The Hurting Kind*, by Ada Limon
[Register now!](#)

Lenten Devotional

Wandering Heart:
Figuring out faith with Peter

Available in the Narthex for a
\$5 suggested donation. [Click here](#) for an online link!

2024 Easter Offering

Voices for Children Nebraska



In this time of Lent, we slow down and reflect on our lives. We search for ways to walk closer to Christ and to live into the good news that "Heaven is already here." We have gratitude for the joy, peace and abundance we experience every day. The Social Justice and Outreach Board is asking that you share your monetary abundance with our children who face challenges every day.

Children are our greatest resource, and the decisions our political leaders make about them impact our collective future. This is why the Social Justice and Outreach Board is asking you to contribute to Voices for Children in Nebraska.

Founded in 1987, Voices for Children advocates for equitable opportunities for all children in Nebraska through research, policy and community engagement. They envision a Nebraska with strong communities, where every child has all they need to lead a healthy, secure and fulfilling life.

Please make checks payable to Countryside Community Church with memo: Easter Offering 2024. We're only able to track and attribute credit for your donation if the check is made out and sent to Countryside. You can also donate online at countrysideucc.org/give.



Sunday Morning Racial Justice Group

Book Reviews

The Sum of Us, Heather McGhee
Review by Deb McCollister

Policy researcher Heather McGhee presents compelling stories illustrating why our nation's economic health is NOT a pie: "if you get a slice, there will be less for me." She debunks the myth that our economy is a zero-sum game, the idea that progress for some of us always comes at the expense of others.

McGhee asks why the U.S. lags so far behind other developed countries when it comes to public goods (like infrastructure, healthcare, and public education) and quality of life (including wages, life expectancy, and violence). Us vs. Them thinking may be our default view of the world.

The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism, Jemar Tisby
Review by Sharon Royers

Tisby succinctly summarizes our nation's history of racism with an emphasis on the role of the white Christian church: "The refusal to act in the midst of injustice is itself an act of injustice. Indifference to oppression perpetuates oppression." He concludes the book with a call to action, with doable, practical action steps that we, the white Christian Church, can take to counter present-day systemic racism. This book opened my eyes to the church's role in perpetuating slavery, Jim Crow laws, and continued systemic racism in our country. Just as Jesus saw injustices and oppression of his day, and took action, he calls his followers to do so today.



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



Get Connected!



Countryside offers many opportunities to connect with one another and the community. Read the weekly C-10 for new and updated 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 to the right or text her at 402-707-1556.

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

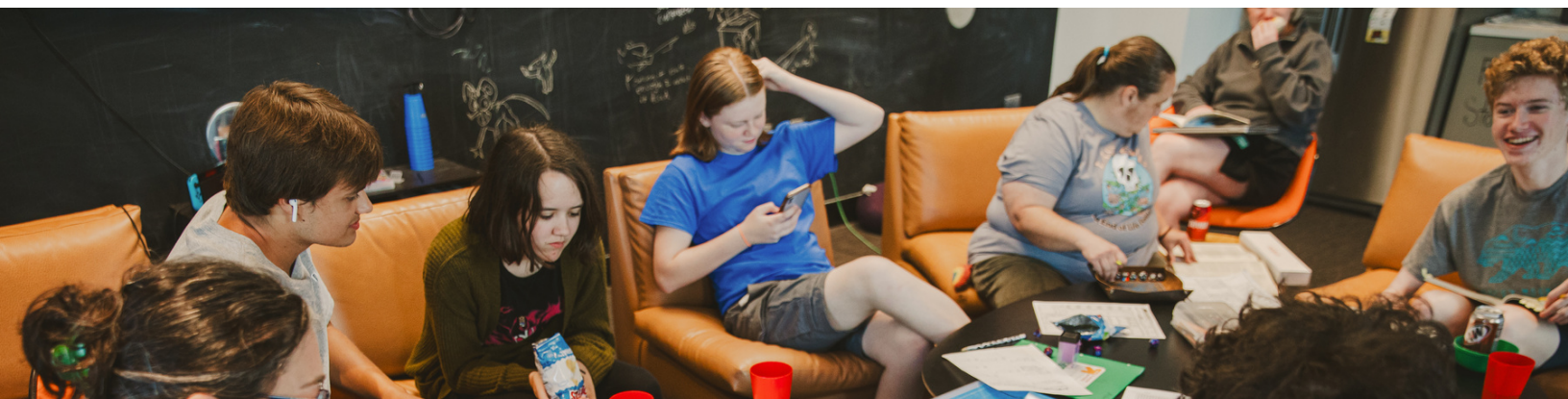
Christianity. There's even a new poetry-focused group!

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 Sartor'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!



Youth & Family Ministries

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

Children's Ministries

Pre-K-6th grade

Mar. 3: Children's Church
Mar. 10: Community Worship
Mar. 17: Children's Church
Mar. 24: Community Worship
Mar. 31: Easter! Community Worship

Wednesday Wonderers, Core 56

Wednesdays, 6-7:30 p.m.

Mar. 6: The Welcoming Parent
Mar. 13: Lydia
Mar. 20: Holy Week Traditions
Mar. 27: No class: Holy Week

D&D group

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

Our groups are full at the moment, but 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.

Mar. 3: Dictionary
Mar. 10: Screaming Vikings
Mar. 17: Defenders of the Cone!
Mar. 24: Tier Night!
Mar. 31: Easter Sunday: No youth group



Confirmation

Sundays, 4-5 p.m.

Mar. 3: Service Opportunity
Mar. 10: Affirmation 12
Mar. 17: Service Opportunity
Mar. 24: Year in Review (7th Graders last day of class)
Mar. 31: Easter Sunday: No youth group

Sr. High Youth Group

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

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

Mar. 3: Viewing: *Harriet*—required Sunday; students should plan to arrive at 5:45 as the movie runtime is 2hr5m.
Mar. 10: Taking Time for prayer and meditation/Who's in Charge Here?
Mar. 17: Who are you online?/Screaming Vikings
Mar. 24: Holy Week Stories/Upcycled Art
Mar. 31: Easter Sunday: No youth group



Countryside Fellowship Gallery ~ February

Fellowship after services at Countryside is important in building community, deepening relationships, and fostering a sense of belonging among members and visitors. It's a vital aspect of the church's mission and values, and a tangible expression of our commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive space for all.

Members and visitors gather together in the Sanctuary, Narthex and Common Grounds for coffee and conversation. It allows informal interactions and connections to be made and provides an opportunity for members to get to know each other on a more personal level.

Fellowship isn't just a social activity. It reflects a commitment to building a welcoming and inclusive community. It is a tangible expression of our belief in the power of connection and relationship-building, and a testament to the transformative potential of shared experiences and shared values.

