

September 1, 2020

Dear Countryside,

This year has brought many challenges, not the least of which has been how we, as a congregation, deal with COVID-19. Now we find ourselves needing to embrace another challenge—the resignation of our Senior Minister Eric Elnes. Even in the most ordinary of times, the departure of a senior minister is occasion for some anxiety and even grief.

First, let us express our deep thanks to Eric for his gifts and for accepting the call to step into the senior minister role for Countryside in the spring of 2008. We will deeply miss his rich preaching, teaching, and vision that has led us to the Tri-Faith Commons and our wonderful new building. We acknowledge Eric's painful, but prayerful, decision that now is the right time to step away and follow his next calling to Portland, Oregon.

A great deal has been accomplished during Eric's tenure with us including our church-wide exploration into how we view and do worship. Our online worship through Darkwood Brew and the extensive volunteer and participant network that developed. Deep discussions centered on the Phoenix Affirmations and our love of the Earth, God, and each other. Important spiritual and social justice work, capped by our journey to the Tri-Faith Commons and new spiritual home. For all these and so much more, we are thankful. Eric has helped us know God's love.

Moving forward, the Church Council will meet in executive session Tuesday, September 1, to accept Eric's requested resignation. His last day at Countryside will be November 30, 2020. We look forward to a celebration of Eric's ministry at Countryside, even as we are aware of the challenges that are presented during this pandemic.

The Council will also be voting on a motion to establish a Transition Leadership Committee consisting of these members: Tracey Halvorson, Aubrey Fitzke, Diane Poots, and Stacey Warner. Dan Loven-Crum will be a non-voting member of this team. This team is not a settled pastor search committee but rather a team to determine:

- Countryside's immediate and long-term needs as we prepare to call our next senior minister.
- The best fit forward for Countryside in this transitional interim time.
- How best to work within Countryside bylaws to establish a search committee.

Countryside holds a special place in all of our hearts. We ask and listen for the Spirit's grace. We ask for guidance as we discern what the future will hold for us. Above all, give Eric and Melanie all your love and blessings as they journey to their new home in Oregon.

Sincerely yours,

Russ Schertz, Moderator

Tracey Halvorson, Vice Moderator

Aubrey Fitzke, Vice Moderator-Elect