

COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH

CHURCH PROFILE

ALL ARE WELCOME - WE ARE AN OPEN
AND AFFIRMING COMMUNITY



We are the Christian Partner
of the Tri-Faith Initiative

United Church of Christ

Local Church Profile

Countryside Community Church Omaha, Nebraska



Senior Minister

Nebraska Conference of the United Church of Christ
Living Waters Association

(November 24, 2022)

Local Church Profile Contents

Position Posting

Who is God Calling Us to Become?

Who We Are Now?

Who is Our Neighbor?

References

Consent and Validation

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your strength
and with all your mind; and
love your neighbor as yourself.”
~ Luke 10:27*

1a. Listing Information

Church name: Countryside Community Church

Address: 13130 Faith Plaza, Omaha, NE 68144

Supplemental web links: www.countrysideucc.org

Additional ecumenical affiliations: Christian Partner of the Tri-Faith Initiative <https://www.trifaith.org/>

Nebraska Conference the United Church of Christ, Association: Living Waters Association <https://www.livingwatersassociation.org/>

UCC Conference Staff Contact Person:

Rev. Jonna Jensen, jonna@ucctcm.org, (563) 357-7287

Countryside Community Church, UCC is committed to a progressive path, a path that honors the centrality of love, compassion, and justice as we follow Jesus. We seek to approach scripture with intellectual rigor and accept the role of Mystery in spiritual practice. God is still speaking!

We are seeking a Senior Minister who is a visionary leader who will facilitate the spiritual growth of our dynamic congregation.

***"Leadership is not about being in charge.
Leadership is about taking care of those in your charge."
~ Simon Sinek***

What we value about living in our area:



Omaha is a community with the cultural and economic benefits of a large city (arts, entertainment, live music, thriving businesses), yet with the warmth and friendliness of a small town. The greater metropolitan area of Omaha is home to over 900,000 residents and is one of the top places in the country to raise a family. Additionally, Countryside Community Church resides on the Tri-Faith Commons. Our church, a Muslim Mosque, and Jewish Temple provide endless opportunities for us to learn, grow, and build community with our faith partners.

Current size of membership: 1085

Position Title: Settled Minister

Position Duration: Settled – a called position intended for longer-term ministry in which the minister moved church membership to the congregation and moved standing to related association.

Compensation Level: Full Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines?

Yes



1b. Scope of Work



Job Description: Settled Minister

[Countryside Community Church](#) (CCC) seeks a full-time senior minister who will be in covenant with our congregation. We are looking for a visionary person that will bring direction and leadership to our dynamic church. We want to be inspired and challenged to serve as a vital leader of faith in the [Omaha community](#). We expect the senior minister to preach, teach, pastor, guide, reach out and direct. We want our senior minister to be a presence and a pastor, a partner and a leader, a mentor and an inspiration.

Be a Spiritual Leader

Countryside is a member of the United Church of Christ and follows a theologically progressive path. We take the Bible seriously, but not literally. We believe that all peoples are seeking God in their own way, which we express as many paths up the same mountain. This has led to our joining the Tri-Faith Initiative as the Christian partner.

We identify fully as Christians, and in many ways follow the traditions and holidays of the ancient church. Our church is a community of learners who ask questions and seek continuous spiritual growth. Historically, we are rooted in congregationalism, which has always emphasized an educated clergy. Our new pastor must be very knowledgeable of scripture, while encouraging curiosity and spiritual growth.

Be a Cooperative Church Leader

The new pastor will plan worship in cooperation with the Worship Planning Committee (which includes church staff and members). They will also work in cooperation with lay leadership groups such as Church Council, Trustees, and Deacons. Moreover, the senior minister will supervise church staff, working with them to ensure day-to-day activities run smoothly.

Be a Civic Leader

Climate, racial, and social justice are important to our congregation. For example, we have sponsored refugee families, provided disaster relief, marched in the annual Pride Parade, held a whole church book read on climate change, have several racial justice book groups, and offer a food pantry through our monthly Community Cupboard. It is important that our new pastor work alongside our staff and many members to support our continued service to Omaha and the greater community.

Grow Church Membership

Countryside Community Church is poised for a period of growth and renewal. We seek an energetic pastor with creative ideas and a history of success growing congregations. Our new senior minister will have experience engaging youth, young and older adults, and families in the life of the church.



Core Competencies

Three core competencies we seek for this pastoral position are:

1. Professionalism and Integrity

- a. Preferred minimum of 10 years experience as ordained minister
- b. Preferred ordained in the United Church of Christ
- c. Preferred doctorate degree
- d. Skilled, compassionate communicator – a genuine listener
- e. Strong organizational skills
 - i. Communicate in a timely, effective manner to staff, church leadership, and church members.
 - ii. Participate in the development of short- and long-term plans in cooperation with staff and church leaders.
 - iii. Facilitate implementation of those plans, coordinating with church staff, leaders, and members.
- f. Knowledgeable and appreciative of the UCC's history of social activism
- g. Care for our congregation with compassion
 - i. Officiate weddings, funerals, baptisms – personalize ceremonies
 - ii. Listen to the needs of individuals and families

2. Creative and Inspiring Worship Leader

- a. Nurture and inspire healthy faith journeys
- b. Stimulate curiosity and encourage congregants to ask questions
- c. Empower Countryside Community Church to be faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit
- d. Be a talented and creative worship leader
 - i. Be an inspiring orator who is technologically literate and incorporates a variety of tools to keep the weekly sermons and worship services stimulating
 - ii. Integrate diverse music and the arts
 - iii. Bring life to the sacred stories and traditions of worship
- e. Think creatively and challenge staff, church leaders, and congregants to do the same.

3. Leadership Style: Inspiring Servant Leader

- a. Be welcoming to all – fully embrace Open and Affirming
- b. Be respectful of staff, church leaders, and congregants' time
- c. Work with the Pastoral Care staff to minister to the individual needs of congregants
- d. Enthusiastically engage with our Tri-Faith partners: [Temple Israel](#), [American Muslim Institute](#), and The [Tri-Faith Initiative](#):
 - i. Participate fully in Tri-Faith Clergy Committee meetings
 - ii. Serve as a voting member of the Tri-Faith Initiative Board of Directors
 - iii. Encourage CCC members to participate in Tri-Faith activities
- e. Embrace servant leadership
 - i. Serve as clergy representative on the Tri-Faith Board of Directors
 - ii. Be willing to work alongside & gently guide congregants and staff
- f. Work closely with the church staff, leadership, volunteers, and members, to fulfill the mission of CCC
 - i. Strong supervisory/management skills–church administrative staff will report directly to the senior minister
 - ii. Respect and honor the work of church staff
 - ii. Guide and listen

Church Contact for any questions about Countryside Community Church:

Cathy MacInnes, Correspondence Chair
pastoralsearchcommittee@countrysideucc.org
(402) 578-7373
3524 S. 101st Street
Omaha, NE 68124

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones, Associate Conference Minister – Search and Call Specialist
Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota Conferences of the United Church of Christ
sarah@ucctcm.org
(808) 631-2444
5609 Douglas Avenue
Omaha, NE 68106

**All formal applications for this position must go through the UCC Ministerial Profile submission process. Please contact the UCC Conference staff member listed above to apply. Screening of candidates will begin immediately and the search will remain open until the position is filled.*

1c. Compensation and Support

Salary/Housing

\$90,000 to \$115,000 (depending on education and experience)

Benefits

UCC Pension Board family health/dental/vision coverage, UCC Pension Board retirement annuity, UCC Pension Board LT/Life, professional and continuing education reimbursements, SECA allowance, and minister mileage in line with the Nebraska Conference Compensation Guidelines.

Expected living situation for next minister

Living nearby, with flexible full-time hours allowing for limited work from home.

Description of peer and professional supports available for ministers in your association/conference

There are opportunities for connection with other UCC Clergy in the Nebraska Conference that have in the past included conference-sponsored monthly Zoom meetings, Minister Moments and Clergy Coffee Hours.

Historically, the clergy in the 3 partner congregations of the Tri-Faith Initiative gathered for collegial support every month. The clergy found meeting together regularly enriching as they shared perspectives on values found in the sacred scriptures and traditions of each Abrahamic path. As thought leaders, the clergy integrated interfaith learning and experiences into congregational life and championed participation in Tri-Faith programming through example and promotion.



1d. Who God is Calling to Minister with Us

Describe the ministry goals you envision your next minister co-collaborating with the congregation to achieve

1. Provide leadership that strengthens our inclusive and welcoming community and has experience that will help us grow our congregation.
2. Challenge members in their intellectual and spiritual growth as Christians and welcome all points of view, while respecting individual spiritual journeys.
3. Focus energies on engagement of members and assist with the development of programming to appeal to all members – individuals, families and youth.
4. Share a commitment to Tri-Faith Initiative and continue to build relationships with our Jewish and Muslim partners of faith. Possess a belief that there is more than one path to God.
5. Balance the well-being of our church with the external role of Tri-Faith and community involvement.
6. Lead meaningful, inspiring worship services that engage the congregation both spiritually and intellectually. Help us develop a deeper relationship with God and a renewed commitment to Christian life.
7. Provide compassionate care and build relationships with all members and staff.
8. Embrace and make decisions in a way that clearly reflects the mission and goals of Countryside Community Church.

Describe how your vision of the minister you are now seeking will assist the congregation in making an impact beyond its walls

It is Countryside's mission to serve the wider community and engage with our Tri-Faith neighbors. The minister would be involved with the congregation in seeking ways to promote social justice in our community, outreach to other churches, and continue to support activism in climate change, poverty, LGBTQIA+ and racial inequalities.

We are looking for a visionary minister who will expand our connections with our faith partners on the Tri-Faith Commons and help build relationships between congregations. With meaningful, courageous dialogue with a variety of faith and cultural traditions, our congregation can strengthen opportunities for deeper relationships and better understanding of each other. A strong minister will champion participation in Tri-Faith programming.

Specify language requirements or culturally-specific capacities preferred in a next ministerial leader, and why those matter to the congregation's sense of calling

Countryside values a minister who has knowledge of the cultures and religions of our Tri-Faith partners and has interfaith experience. Our congregation seeks a minister who is also sensitive and accepting of the global diversity of cultures and religions of all. Given Omaha's multicultural community, we look for leadership to bridge those of different religious and cultural backgrounds.

This matters to our sense of calling which is reflected in our Mission Statement and our Statement of Beliefs – “We are an inclusive, open, and affirming family of faith, welcoming all to God’s table of love and acceptance. We are diverse, yet united by Christ’s example. We care for one another and support one another, and challenge one another to become all that God creates us to be. We work together to nurture our community and to promote peace, equality, and justice in our conflicted world.”

We believe there are many paths to God. We invite people to journey with us on their spiritual quest. We believe in the power of people of faith and goodwill, working together to improve our community, nation, and the world. We believe in an inclusive church where all are welcome to come and discern, belong and grow.

Based on what you have learned about who your church is, who your church's neighbor is, and who God is calling the church to become, describe four areas of excellence from The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry that your next minister will display to further equip the congregation's ministry in these areas

1. Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practice

We are searching for a minister who exhibits a spiritual foundation and is committed to lifelong spiritual development. We expect our minister to provide guidance in the development and nurturing of our congregations' faith and spiritual practice. We want our minister's daily walk to reflect their personal relationship with the Divine and live by that example.

2. Building Transformational Leadership Skills

Our minister will empower the church staff and congregation to be faithful to God's call, reflective of Christ's mission and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit.

3. Strengthening Inter- and Intra-Personal Assets

Our minister will exhibit strong moral character and personal integrity while respecting the dignity of all God's people. Our minister will empower staff, nurture and respect their potential to help them flourish in their roles. Furthermore, the minister will be a creative, skilled communicator who challenges the congregation both spiritually and intellectually.

4. Working Together for Justice and Mercy

Our minister will practice the inclusive hospitality of God and work to engage in mission and outreach with our communities at home and abroad. Our church has roots in community involvement, activism, outreach, and social justice. We want our mission to draw on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression.

It is important for our minister to have compassion and caring for all God's creation. The minister will be a steward of the resources of the church. They will provide the congregation with hope and healing.



2. Who God is Calling Us to Become?

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37 NRSV)

Who is God calling you to become as a congregation?

The congregation discerned during 2015 and 2016 that God was calling us to become the Christian partner of the Tri-Faith Initiative and relocate our home in 2019 to the Tri-Faith Commons, joining Temple Israel and the American Muslim Institute. Members who approved the move experienced a new energy toward inclusiveness that was always a part of our expressed identity as progressive Christians. Learning as we go, we strive to nurture a vibrant inclusive community even more as we engage with our Tri-Faith neighbors.

Countryside aspires to provide spiritual support for anyone searching for or questioning God’s presence in their lives. We strive to make sure everyone feels welcome, accepted, and cared for while tending to the needs of our congregation and the community through various ministries, including social justice-centered outreach. Additionally, a strength of our church has been our Children and Youth programming. Countryside Youth provides service projects in the community throughout the year and explores the wider nation for summer service trips.

Describe how God is calling you to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of your community and congregation.

In recent history, some paths of Christianity have become more insular, focused on rejecting other expressions of faith. We have found that engagement with our Tri-Faith partners, hearing their stories and sharing what we love about our own faith has strengthened our awareness of the many paths to the Divine. Our Christian commitment can be best described as changing the perception of Christianity. We believe God is calling us to be a beacon of Christianity where God’s love is transformational and helps us to experience the good news of “heaven on earth” in which all the love and acceptance we have been searching for is in this very moment.

Adapting to a pandemic, along with the loss of two long-term ministers, presented a number of challenges. Subsequent to these departures, Countryside implemented a new complex leadership model and at the same time hired two interim ministers that put further stress on our church. Since that time, our congregation and staff have shown resilience and continued to work on healing together.

3. Who Are We Now?

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39 NRSV)

- a. Congregational Reflections
- b. 11-year Report
- c. Congregational Demographics
- d. Participation and Staffing
- e. Church Finances
- f. Historical Information

3a. Congregational Reflections

Describe your congregation’s life of faith

While there are some in the congregation that have spent a majority of their lives as part of the United Church of Christ (UCC), many others within our congregation have come from different faith origins (e.g., Catholic, Episcopalian, Methodist) or not affiliated with any organized religion before finding their way to Countryside Community Church. In this respect, our congregation is a diverse faith community, united by progressive Christian beliefs and an understanding that all are welcome. New members are introduced to the 12 principles of the [Phoenix Affirmations](#), as a context to understanding core theological beliefs at Countryside.

Our congregation desires to be intellectually and spiritually challenged; we desire to have our spiritual curiosity stoked. Rather than literal interpretations of the Bible and rigid indoctrination, our congregation is looking for meaning within the teachings of the Bible and their applications to everyday life. Further, as the Christian partner in the Tri-Faith Initiative, congregational members seek to understand Christianity within the context of the other Abrahamic faiths.

We embrace and are energized by the UCC perspectives on peace, justice and inclusion. Within our worship liturgy, God is inclusive and not defined within one gender. A recent sermon series focused on the various congregational designation concepts of the UCC: racial justice, mental health, LGBTQIA+, climate justice, disability, and immigration. In 2010, we adopted the UCC designation Open and Affirming.

Our life of faith is perhaps best conveyed by describing a series of ritual recitations included in our worship together:

- At the beginning of each service, we state who we are as a congregation: "We are an inclusive, open, and affirming family of faith, welcoming all to God's table of love and acceptance. We are diverse, yet united by Christ's example. We care for one another, support one another, and challenge one another to become all that God creates us to be. We work together to nurture our community and to promote peace and justice in our conflicted world." This sets the understanding that all are welcome to worship here: believers, doubters, and those who are questioning.
- Our Examen focuses on memories from the events of the day as our way of recognizing God's Divine Presence. We then bring the gratitude of "welcoming all to God's table of love and acceptance" to a personal level, when we pause to "consider in the last 24 hours where we have given love and where we have received love."
- Our worship always ends with our Countryside Benediction and Blessing. We then encourage each other to go out into the world and serve alongside members of the community.

Our interpretation of the Good News is that the Kingdom of Heaven is the here and now, and to help us experience this Heaven on Earth, we encourage each other to focus on the three great loves: Love of God, Love of Neighbor, and Love of Self. Our belief is that the Holy Spirit is ever present – inviting, warm and comforting – and always accessible. For us, the Holy Spirit is found both within and around us, in the varied physical spaces within Countryside Community Church. We have faith that God is indeed still speaking.



Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation

Our congregation has many strengths exemplified by daily action. This is a church of doing and fully participating in our community. Individuals with diverse beliefs and experiences are openly welcomed, creating an environment full of energy and empowerment. Moreover, our congregants have a strong desire for spiritual growth. Congregational members are open to various modalities in stimulating this growth – not only through spoken word by the minister, but also through song, movement, book studies, other experiential learning, meditation, and the insight of spoken word from our youth. Sermons are creative and designed to reach people on many different levels – both a scholarly, intellectual manner and a heartfelt, soulful manner. One member described this as a merging of the head and heart. We are open to asking if we are becoming who God wants us to be.

Countryside diligently works to meet the needs of our congregation and the community through various ministries; many of the following were initiated by individual members, such as:

- Stephen Ministries
- Community Cupboard Food Pantry
- Board of Christian Outreach monthly box for giving to charitable organizations.

The leadership of Countryside has been dedicated to the well-being of the congregation throughout the pandemic. This was demonstrated by initial pre-recorded online services only – that were also televised on Sunday mornings – to the gradual re-introduction of more in-person offerings with masking and social distancing guidelines.

Lastly, members of the congregation are dedicated to the Tri-Faith Initiative whose mission is to “... cultivate inclusive environments to advance interfaith relationships and understanding” and whose vision is a “... world in which differences are honored, similarities are built upon, and everyone belongs.” Countryside members are proud to be the Christian partner of the Tri-Faith Initiative.



Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers

The peacefulness of the sanctuary provides an inviting environment for the congregation to worship in. The warmth of the wood, the colorfulness of the drapings, weekly floral arrangements, and the majesty of the pipe organ set the stage. As for worship itself, we enjoy intellectually stimulating, biblically referenced sermons with historical context and practical application to life. Countryside's advanced sound and video projection capabilities enable pastors to move beyond traditional, pulpit-style sermon delivery and create a more conversational atmosphere.

Historically, Countryside has offered two Sunday morning services. However, in response to COVID, our regular Sunday worship service currently takes place at 10 a.m. The scripture, music and children's message are aligned to the focus of the sermon. Integration of arts ministry within worship is important at Countryside, and it is not uncommon for the pipe organ, jazz band and singing all to be incorporated into the same worship service. Duos, trios and quartets have played instrumental songs within worship service; local singers have been invited to Countryside to perform during worship service. At certain times of the year, the sanctuary will additionally be decorated in support of enhancing the worship environment. The worship service is also live-streamed on YouTube and subsequently saved, making it more accessible.

There is an informal, relaxed feel to our worship service. This is also evidenced during baptisms at Countryside. At the start of a baptism, children within the congregation are invited to come to the front of the sanctuary. The baptismal message addresses both the family of the one being baptized and the rest of the congregation as all have an obligation to support the faith development of the one being baptized. Along with preaching comes teaching. At Countryside, good preaching is also scripturally-grounded and inspirational. Good preaching invites reflection.

Describe the educational program/faith formation vision of your church

Countryside has envisioned and implemented educational programming that spans from young children to adults; for children, these are more targeted by age; for adults, these are more targeted by interest(s).

Children and Youth Education Programs

Children and Youth

- Sunday School— “We are Wonderers!”: With the goal of building biblical literacy as well as spiritual engagement, we retell stories of The Old Testament (fall) and the New Testament (spring) inviting children to enter the stories, asking what truth is there for us today, even in 2nd grade!
- Children’s Church: A child-centered worship incorporates prayer practices, scripture, story, music, art and movement

Core 56

- Our 5th and 6th grade students gather weekly to engage in various prayer practices as well as fellowship.
- Summer Programming (Formerly Vacation Bible School)
- While currently evolving, our summer programming is designed to immerse students in community, scripture, stories, prayer, and activities.

Confirmation

- Confirmation is a 2-year program that explores the 8 points of Progressive Christianity, the 12 Phoenix Affirmations, our Countryside Mission statement, congregational polity, UCC history and theology, and the structures and organization of Countryside.
- Students choose to confirm their baptism in community worship after having created an expression (writing, visual art, music, etc.) of their faith journey.

Youth

- Weekly gatherings of 9-12th grade students encourage spiritual development by engaging in prayer practices, scripture, book groups, and seeking out community connections through fellowship and fun.
- Youth summer service trips are immersive opportunities to live into the three great loves—love of God, love of neighbor and love of self.

Adult Education Programs

Adult education programming includes a wide range of offerings, all of which are aligned to the mission of Countryside Community Church. There are Phoenix Affirmation discussion groups and book studies that have focused on, for example, “White Fragility” by Robin Diangelo, “The Other Side of Freedom” by Derae McKesson, “Divine Dance” by Richard Rohr, and “Cathedral on Fire” by Brooks Berndt. Further, mindfulness and meditation groups, yoga groups, T’ai Chi Chih groups, and financial stability groups have been offered. Earth University is another example of an offering for those who are concerned with environmental justice. Countryside works closely with Rabbi Aryeh Azriel, (Scholar-in-Residence) to provide a regular educational series, sharing the Jewish faith perspective.

Journey Groups

Journey groups are small groups facilitated by one or more of its members that meet regularly to discuss and discover what God is calling us to do in our lives, community, and the world. In the process, deeper relationships are often formed, as we continue to care and support one another through life’s journey. Groups are formed around book interests, topic interests, or bible study. For example, recently a journey group read the book “How to be an Antiracist” by Ibram X. Kendi. Journey group members found this to be profoundly impactful with respect to both greater understanding of others’ perspectives and receiving history lessons seemingly never taught to them before. Journey groups may also focus their discussion on the last sermon, discovering deeper meaning through this time of reflection and discussion with others.



Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission

The church has [Bylaws](#), which are the covenant we use to work with one another to organize the church. They give the church history, stability, and guidance.

Our church is organized and led by the congregation. As per the bylaws, the Church Council represents the congregation between congregational meetings. The Church Council is a collection of representatives of church members from each of 8 boards, two at-large representatives (to represent members not on a board), and the officers of the church. Officers are Moderator, Vice Moderator, Vice Moderator-Elect, Treasurer, and Clerk. The Church Council is our manifestation of a congregation-led church.

The Church Council and each of the 8 boards typically meet monthly. Decisions made by the Church Council can be communicated to the congregation through a number of different ways: the weekly C-10 emailed newsletter; the monthly newsletter, and/or an announcement during the service. The board representative serving on the Church Council also has the responsibility of communicating said decision(s) back to their respective board.

With direction and oversight from the church council, the officers provide governance, guidance and support to the senior minister and staff, who take care of the day-to-day operations of the church.

The Personnel Committee is a standing committee that reports its activity to the Church Council and to the Board of Trustees when concerning financial matters. The Church Council reviews and ratifies decisions of Personnel.

The Church Council may create additional committees as deemed necessary. Most recently we created an Interim Search Committee and a Covid Response Committee. All committees report their activity to the Church Council, who reviews and ratifies (as needed) proposed actions.

The eight boards that select representatives to the Church Council are:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Board of Trustees | 5. Board of Christian Education |
| 2. Board of Deacons | 6. Board of Youth |
| 3. Board of Arts Ministry | 7. Board of Pastoral Care |
| 4. Board of Christian Outreach | 8. Board of Life Ministries |

The Boards, Moderators, and the Church Council are a dedicated team working on behalf of Countryside. With the number of church council members that turn over each year, this annual change can impair the full implementation of vision. For example, Countryside is committed to the mission of the Tri-Faith Initiative and is proud to be its Christian partner; however, we continue to struggle to determine how to fully implement what it means to be the Christian partner into the fabric of the day-to-day workings of the Church. Further, Countryside currently has no formal process set up for strategic planning, and we look forward to establishing this going forward.



3b. 11-Year Report

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
ELEVEN YEAR CHURCH PROFILE BASED ON DATA REPORTED IN UCC
YEARBOOKS



Church # 421010
Countryside Community Church UCC

Assoc: 462
NE

Schedule: 0
68144

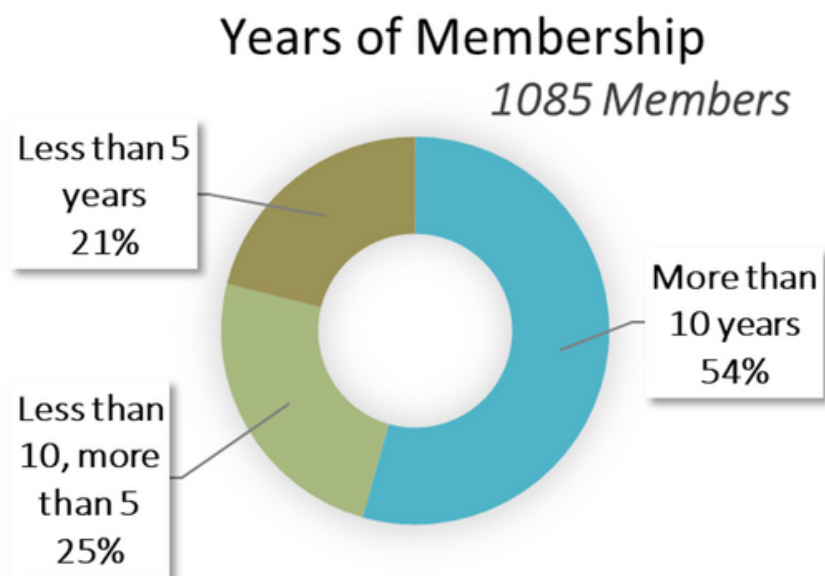
YEAR	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY/ ATTENDANCE	CHRE D/ FAITH FORM	CONFIRMA TION	CONFESSI ON	TRANSFE R OR REAFFIRM	DEATHS OR TRANS OUT	OTHER LOSSES	NET MEMBS/ ADDS- REMOVED	
2011	1512	482	763	0	0	0	0	0	0	
2012	1431	396	230	0	1	44	20	106	-81	
2013	1525	405	777	28	0	48	18	21	37	
2014	1593	409	450	32	5	78	47	0	68	
2015	1551	333	471	28	3	31	90	14	-42	
2016	1454	299	515	23	1	47	168	0	-97	
2017	1281	262	693	12	0	46	27	204	-173	
2018	1323	270	500	28	2	35	19	0	46	
2019	1371	323	302	17	2	59	18	12	48	
2020	1061	299	309	10	0	14	18	316	-310	
2021	1061	170	339	12	0	15	19	3	5	
YEAR	CURRENT EXPENSES	CAPITAL PAYMENTS	BASIC SUPPORT	TOT OTHER UCC GIVING	TOTAL OCWM	OTHER GIFTS	WIDER MISSION	BASIC SUPP% CURR LOCAL	TOTAL EXPEND	PLEDGES AND OFFERINGS
2011	\$1,404,069	\$0	\$50,000	\$300	\$50,300	\$0	\$50,300	3.56	\$1,454,369	\$0
2012	\$1,221,346	\$0	\$50,000	\$3,024	\$53,024	\$48,993	\$102,017	4.09	\$1,323,363	\$1,196,418
2013	\$1,421,927	\$0	\$50,000	\$5,109	\$55,109	\$32,208	\$87,317	3.52	\$1,509,244	\$1,186,297
2014	\$1,516,310	\$0	\$51,200	\$53,162	\$104,362	\$33,829	\$138,191	3.38	\$1,654,501	\$1,278,515
2015	\$2,196,137	\$0	\$51,200	\$2,887	\$54,087	\$0	\$54,087	2.33	\$2,250,224	\$2,099,094
2016	\$1,421,637	\$678,993	\$50,000	\$2,862	\$52,862	\$32,091	\$84,953	3.52	\$2,185,583	\$6,102,218
2017	\$1,383,038	\$3,293,843	\$41,250	\$2,862	\$44,112	\$27,907	\$72,019	2.98	\$1,455,057	\$11,776,730
2018	\$1,468,731	\$13,961,391	\$45,000	\$2,862	\$47,862	\$36,334	\$84,196	3.06	\$1,552,927	\$3,609,264
2019	\$1,385,045	\$5,552,083	\$49,000	\$2,652	\$51,652	\$30,193	\$81,845	3.54	\$1,466,890	\$3,845,649
2020	\$1,370,733	\$301,262	\$50,000	\$2,562	\$52,562	\$34,372	\$86,934	3.65	\$1,457,667	\$1,193,890
2021	\$1,499,791	\$174,504	\$50,024	\$2,646	\$52,670	\$38,188	\$90,858	3.34	\$1,590,649	\$1,099,539
% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHRE D/ FAITH FORM	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVAL S	CURR LOCAL EXPENSE S	TOTAL OCWM	TOTAL EXPENDIT URE		
2016-2021	-27.03	-43.14	-34.17	-61.97	-86.9	5.5	-0.36	-27.22		
2011-2021	-29.83	-64.73	-55.57	0	0	6.82	4.71	9.37		

3c. Congregational Demographics

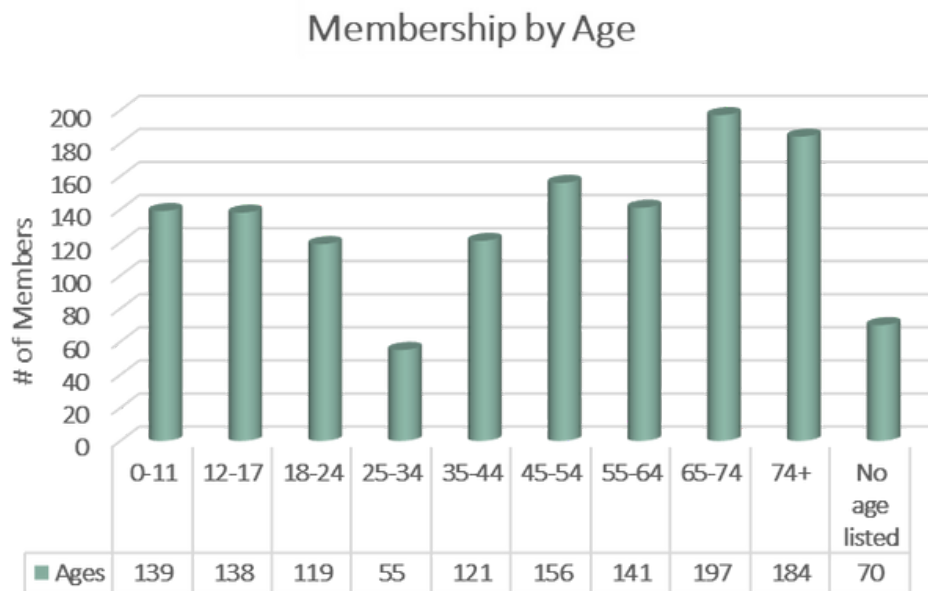
Describe those who participate in your church (actual)

Number of active members:	1085
Number of active non-members:	72
Total of church participants	----
(sum of the numbers above):	1157

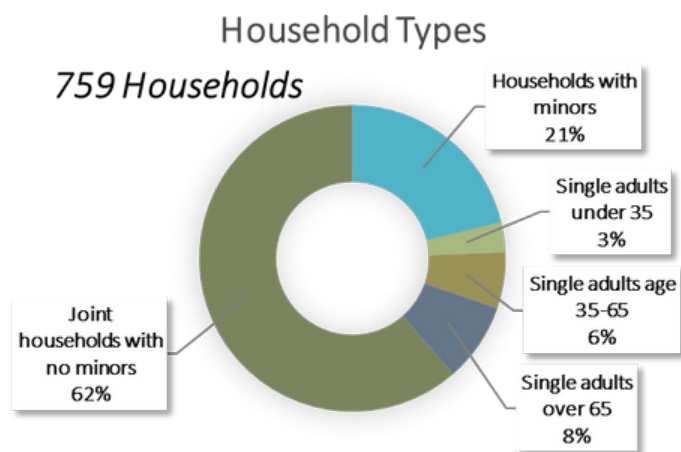
Percentage of total participants who have been in the church (actual)



Number of total participants by age (actual)

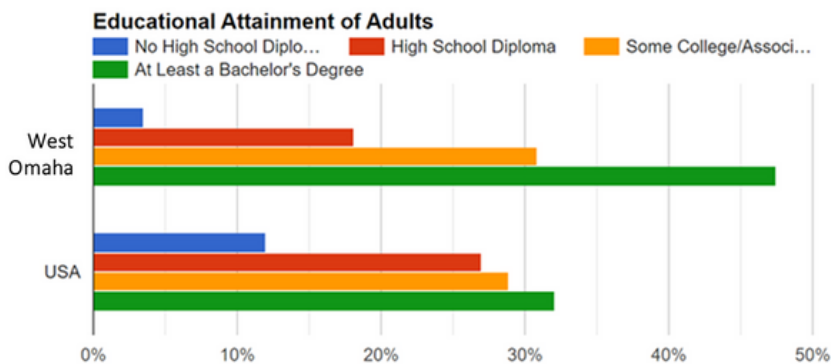


Percentages of adults in various household types (actual)



Education level of adult participants by percentage (estimate based on ARDA data for 68144 5 mile radius)

High School	18.1%
College	
Some College	22.2%
Associate Degree	8.7%
Bachelors Degree	31.0%
Graduate School	16.5%
Specialty Training	NA
Other (please specify)	
Less than 12 th Grade	3.5%

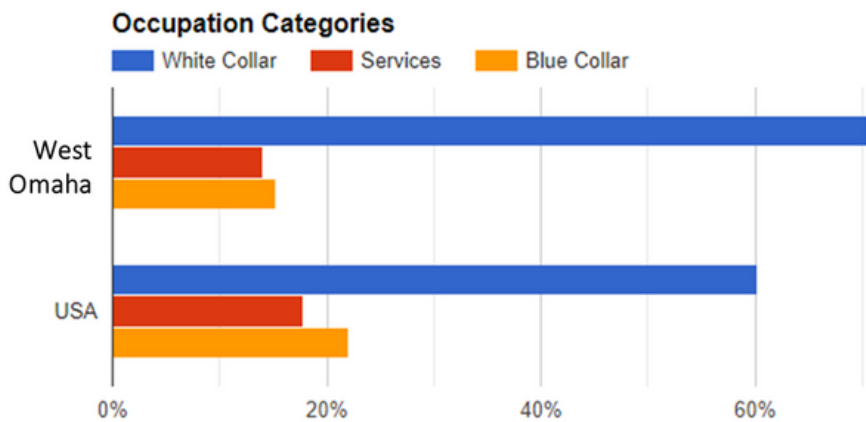


Percentage of adults in various employment types (estimate based on ages/employment categories based on ARDA data for 68144 5 mile radius)

Adults who are employed: 65%

Adults who are retired: 30%

Adults who are not fully employed: 5%



Describe the range of occupations of working adults in the congregation

This is not information that Countryside actively collects, but in general, our congregation is composed of working adults (unless retired) in a range of career fields and occupations. For example, within our congregation are those who work in education, government, law, insurance, real estate, banking, and other financial planning, healthcare, engineering, information technology, and nonprofit enterprises.

Describe the mix of ethnic heritages in your congregation, and the overall racial make-up. Most UCC congregations tend to describe themselves as “diverse.” Yet, the vast majority of UCC congregations are mono-cultural. What does diversity mean in your context?

Our church has only a few people of color as members. Diversity is a value held and a challenge we wish to address more effectively. Our church began as a “neighborhood” church and for many years reflected the newly developing suburban neighborhood in which it was located. The move to the Tri-Faith Commons presents a marginally more diverse suburban neighborhood. Our Youth now represent multiple schools and school districts with more racially diverse student populations.

Has your congregation recently had a conversation about welcoming diversity, or do you plan to hold one in the near future?

We do have conversations about welcoming diversity, but struggle in identifying effective strategies for increasing the racial diversity of our congregation. Countryside defines diversity broadly and we have long emphasized that All Are Welcome Here. Over a decade ago we added Open and Affirming. The LGBTQIA+ members of our church are an integral part of our community.



3d. Participation and Staffing

Complete the following chart. Please leave blank any fields that are not applicable to your congregation.

Ways of Gathering	Estimated number of people involved in attendance	Who plans each of the listed gatherings?
Adult Groups or Classes	693	Board of Christian Education
Baptisms (number last year)	3	Minister
Children's Groups or Classes	153	Director of Youth and Family
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	Easter 490 (2022) Christmas 355 (2021)	Worship Planning
Church-wide Meals	200	All Ministries
Choirs and Music Groups	93	Director of Arts Ministry
Church-based Bible Study	55	Minister
Communion (served how often?)	Weekly	Minister
Community Meals	NA	NA
Confirmation (confirmed last year)	12	Director of Family and Youth
Drama or Dance Program	NA	NA
Funerals (number last year)	12	Minister
Intergenerational Groups	NA	NA
Outdoor Worship	NA	NA
Prayer or Meditation Groups	118	Minister/Pastoral Care Team
Public Advocacy Work	72 families	Food Pantry
Retreats	none due to COVID	Minister
Community Theology/Bible Programs	NA	NA
Weddings (number last year)	2	Minister
Worship 10 AM	Average 150 (2022)	Worship Planning
Young Adult Groups or Classes	NA	NA
Youth Groups or Classes	33	Director of Family and Youth

List all members or regular participants in your congregation who are ordained, licensed, or commissioned ministers. Indicate those with current United Church of Christ Three- Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a congregation) or Four-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a ministry beyond a congregation).

Name	3- or 4-way Covenant	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired?
Rev. Karen Fenne			UCC	YES
Rev. Jon Noble			Presbyterian	YES
Rev. Norm Pavey			UCC	YES
Rev. Don Sarton			DOC	YES
Rev. Judy Waible			UCC	YES
Rev. Reva Karstens			UCC	YES
Pastor Randy Sanders		Serving Arlington Community UCC, Arlington NE	UCC	NO
Rev. Joshua Sawyer		Serving First Christian Church (DOC), Omaha, NE	UCC	NO
Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones	YES	Serving Associate Conference Minister for Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota UCC Conferences	UCC	NO

If one or more previous pastors or retired ministers currently hold membership in the church, describe their role(s) in the life of the congregation:

Within the congregation are several previous pastors and retired ministers. Most recently, three of these individuals agreed to provide and deliver sermons and communion at Sunday morning services while Countryside was without a pastor. We have had a retired minister lead an Adult Education program. As members of the congregation, they have attended and participated in discernment sessions and town halls the church has held.

List all current staff, including ministers. Exclude the position you are seeking to fill. Indicate which staff person serves as head of staff.

Staff Name	Staff Position **Head of Staff	(FT/PT /VOL)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure in this position
HERRON, Keith	Interim Minister	FT	Personnel Committee	0.5
LOVEN-CRUM, Dan	Dir of Admin/Comm **	FT	Personnel Committee	10
CIRACO, Chris	Building/Property Coordinator	FT	Dir of Admin/Comm	0.5
SCOTT, Diane	Engagement Coordinator	PT	Dir of Admin/Comm	3
GARDER, Shari	Financial Secretary	FT	Dir of Admin/Comm	22
GOMEZ, Steve	Admin Asst	PT	Dir of Admin/Comm	8
HILL, Kris	Admin Asst	PT	Dir of Admin/Comm	6
HUBBARD, Robyn	Exec Admin Asst	FT	Dir of Admin/Comm	6
JACKSON, Anne	Dir of Kindernook Preschool	FT	Dir of Admin/Comm	2
MORELLO, Rebecca	Dir of Youth/Family Ministries	FT	Dir of Admin/Comm	8
GRUTTEMEYER, Tyler	Youth Choir Director	PT	Dir of Youth/Family Ministries	6
BOYD, Emma	Youth/Family Coordinator	PT	Dir of Youth/Family Ministries	1
RITTER, Alex	Dir of Arts Ministry/Organist	PT	Dir of Admin/Comm	8
WITTE, Adam	Choir Director	PT	Dir of Arts Ministry/Organist	0.5
GOMEZ, Dinah	AV Technician	PT	Dir of Admin/Comm	0.5
HESS, Steve	AV Coordinator	PT	Dir of Admin/Comm	8
SEMISCH, Ben	AV Technician/Video	PT	Dir of Admin/Comm	9
AZRIEL, Rabbi Aryeh	Scholar-in-Residence/ Volunteer	V	Minister	3
BUCKLAND, Bonnie	Clerk/Volunteer	V	Dir of Admin/Comm	5

Reflection: After reviewing the congregational demographics and activities above, what does this information reflect about your congregation's overall ministry?

Our demographics are currently predominantly white, middle to upper-middle class. Our move to the Tri-Faith Commons was a result of our vision for the future and has served to intensify our commitment to justice and equality for all. We seek to deepen our understanding and appreciation of other faiths while strengthening our own. This is evidenced by some of the current journey groups who are engaged in the study of contemporary issues as well as the breadth of our youth programming. This is a congregation that cares about its community and is continually open to opportunities to address their needs.

3e. Church Finances

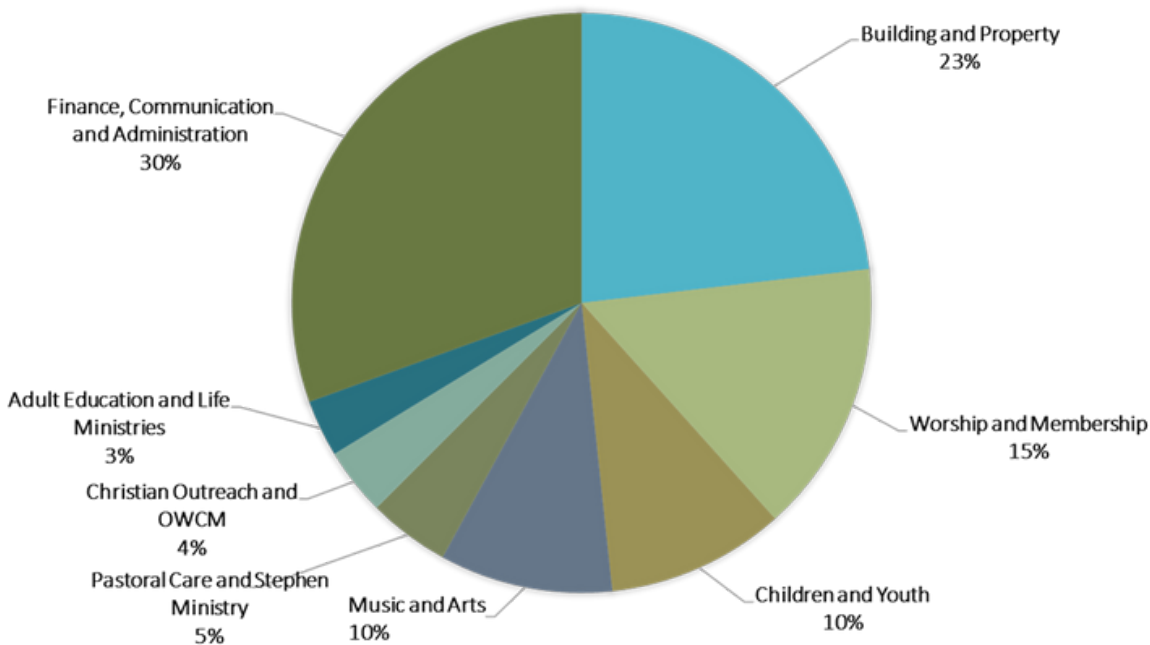
Current annual income
(dollars used during most recent fiscal year)

Source	
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$ 1,052,885
Endowment Proceeds (as permitted within spending policy)	\$ 81,450
Endowment Draw (beyond what is permitted by spending policy, "drawing down the principal")	NA
Fundraising Events	\$ -
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$ -
Grants	\$ -
Rentals of Church Building	\$ 28,444
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$ -
Support from Related Organizations	\$ -
Transfer from Special Accounts	\$ 58,701
Other: Cares Act/PPP Loan Forgiveness	\$ 192,533
Other: Interest/Dividends	\$ 34,757
Total	\$ 1,448,769

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year):

\$ 1,632,086

2022 EXPENSE BUDGET - \$ 1,632,086



Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage?

15.7%

Has the church ever failed to pay its financial obligations to a minister of the church?

No

Is your church 5-for-5, i.e., does it include each of the following contributions during the church year?

- X Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM – Basic Support)
- One Great Hour of Sharing
 - Strengthen the Church
 - Neighbors in Need
 - Christmas Fund

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered? If calculated as a percentage of (the) operating budget, what is that percentage? Flat \$50,000

What is the church's current indebtedness? \$0

Total amount of loan debt: \$0

Reason for debt: N/A

Are capital and other payments current? N/A

If a building program is projected or underway, describe it, including the projected start/end date of the building project and the total project budget. NA

If the church has had capital campaigns in the last ten years, describe Our relocation capital campaign concluded and we moved to our new church in April 2019. Countryside Community Church raised \$26 million in pledges over five years to construct a new building debt-free.

If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe None other than that described above.

Describe the prominent mission component(s) involved in the most recent (or current) capital campaign. The mission of our most recent capital campaign was to build a new church building to represent the Christian faith within the Tri-Faith Initiative. The Tri-Faith Initiative reflects the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths, and with a church, synagogue, and mosque on this site, it is representational of the commitment of all three faiths to live together with respect and trust.

Does your church have an endowment? Countryside Community Church Charitable Foundation holds the endowed funds on behalf of Countryside Community Church. These endowed funds have been donated to support Church-related programs and facilities.



What is the market value of the assets? \$1,313,870 as of 12/31/21.

Are funds drawn as needed, regularly, or under certain circumstances? The Foundation Board reviews and approves requests through an annual grant request process.

What is the percentage rate of draw? 4-7%

Describe draw on endowment, if any, to meet operating budget expenses for the most recent year and the past five years:

Support of the operating budget expenses is done by special request.

2021: 0% designated for operating budget

2020: 0% designated for operating budget

2019: 0% designated for operating budget

2018: 1.7% designated for operating budget

2017: 0% designated for operating budget

At the current rate of draw, how long might the endowment last? We endeavor to maintain and continue to grow the endowment.

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

Other Assets

Reserves (savings): \$1,012,759 as of 12/31/21.

Investments (other than endowment): Capital and Maintenance Fund –
\$1,926,219

Does your church have a parsonage? No

Describe all buildings owned by the church: 62,025 Sq. Ft. Worship Facility with classrooms, meeting rooms, sanctuary, chapel, fellowship hall, activity center, coffee house and columbarium.

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs? All parts of our new building are accessible to wheelchairs, including the balcony in the Sanctuary.

Reflection: After reviewing the church's finances and assets described above, what does this information reflect about your congregation's mission and ministry?

The budget process begins with requests from individual boards, which are subsequently reviewed by the budget committee. The budget then goes to the Board of Trustees for approval and then ratified by the Church Council. Last, the budget is approved at the Annual Meeting of the congregation. This process reflects the fiscal responsibility of Countryside for its daily operations as well as its ongoing commitment to Our Church's Wider Mission. Further, the Board of Trustees reviews the actual-to-budget expenses on a monthly basis and any significant variances are discussed during the Board of Trustees meeting.

With respect to new ministry initiatives financed, Countryside's move to the Tri-Faith Commons created additional expenses for the Church. Prior to this, Countryside financed [Darkwood Brew](#), a weekly online ministry that explored convergent Christian faith and value. Additionally, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we financed a television broadcast of our weekly service to make it accessible to the public.

3f. Historical Information

Name one to three significant happenings in the history of your church that have shaped the identity of your congregation. Add the most important event in the life of your church in the past 10 years.

Discernment before joining Tri-Faith as the Christian partner

- When our congregation was invited to become the Christian partner of the Tri-Faith Initiative, we embarked on a structured 40-Day Discernment period, preceded by speaker conversations with leaders of the American Muslim Institute and Temple Israel.
- We gathered in large and small groups, with questions and concerns as well as hope and excitement. It wasn't always a calm experience, but we were always urged to use prayer and meditation to discern God's plans for us.

- On April 12, 2015 Countryside Community Church voted to accept the invitation made by the Episcopal Diocese of Nebraska to be the Christian partner of the Tri-Faith Initiative and on April 7, 2019, Countryside held its first service on the Tri-Faith Commons. Over 900 congregational members/volunteers helped in this move.

Community Outreach

Countryside Community Church has a long history of community outreach, and this “love of neighbor” continues to be present within the fabric of Countryside ministry today. Below are just a few examples of our extensive community outreach:

- Countryside’s lecture series, Center for Faith Studies, served our broader community by bringing people of diverse beliefs together in a learning environment. Speakers have included Reza Aslan, author of No God but God and Zealot; Sue Monk Kidd, author of Book of Longings; Isabel Wilkerson, author of The Warmth of Other Suns and Margaret Wheatley. The series continues to be available to church members as well as to the larger community through YouTube. We look forward to new life for this effort in the future, perhaps in collaboration with our Tri-Faith partners.
- In 1975, in response to a devastating tornado in the Omaha area, Countryside partnered with six other faith entities to form what is now the 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency “Together.” Together’s mission is to prevent and end homelessness and hunger. Countryside continues to financially support Together.
- In the 1970’s Countryside Community Church also provided leadership for the formation of the Asian Rural Institute (ARI) located in Japan. ARI works to strengthen the abilities of rural leaders from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific in building an environmentally healthy, just and peaceful world through the growth and sustainment of food in rural areas. Countryside continues to financially support ARI.
- Countryside’s own Community Cupboard was started in 2010 to help address food insecurity in the Omaha area. The Community Cupboard continues operation today.
- Darkwood Brew was an online ministry designed to augment the progressive Christian voice.

Inclusivity

The history of Countryside Community Church is filled with examples of its value of inclusivity which has shaped its identity. Below are a few of the examples exemplifying this:

- In 1953, Kindernook Preschool opened its doors, and preschoolers came from Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant faiths.
- In the 1960s, Countryside's then pastor, Pastor Bob Alward, led efforts to address racial equality and partnered with historically black churches in Omaha.
- Countryside has long emphasized that "All are Welcome" and at the beginning of every service we read in unison "We are an inclusive, open, and affirming family of faith, welcoming all to God's table of love and acceptance."
- In 2010, Countryside adopted the UCC designation Open and Affirming. In 2015, both Countryside's senior and associate ministers signed "The Heartland Proclamation" which was a document in support of marriage equality for same-sex couples.

Describe a specific change your church has managed in the recent past

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us all, and Countryside was no exception. The overriding need was to determine how best to provide ongoing faith support despite the pandemic keeping so many of us socially separated. Countryside shifted to an online service, with both live stream and pre-recorded versions of the sermon that was placed on YouTube for members and visitors to watch at their convenience. Further, Countryside entered into a contract with a local television station, and Countryside's service was televised on Sunday mornings. Because of Countryside's earlier Darkwood Brew productions, we were fortunate to have equipment and expertise to create these online experiences for our members and visitors in a relatively quick manner. For Sunday School, we packed boxes each semester containing hands-on materials that supported each broadcast lesson for children. Our Community Cupboard pantry revised their distribution process in order to limit social contact. The COVID Response Committee continued to meet throughout the pandemic, monitoring local statistics and trends and making recommendations to the Church Council regarding masking, social distancing and when it was safe to re-open the doors to the church.

Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. “Where two or three are gathered, there will be disagreement....” Describe your congregation’s values and practices when it comes to conflict

We value providing a voice to all members of our congregation. The recent conflict regarding the new collaborative leadership model (now no longer followed) and interim ministers has been difficult. Members were divided around this conflict. Strong opinions and concerns were expressed in various meetings; these opinions and concerns were subsequently considered by the Church Council in their decision-making. Throughout the process, it has been clear that our members' overriding concern has been for the good of the church as a whole. Engagement, open communication and transparency were other values prominent during this conflict; at times transparency was difficult to maintain as the Countryside Personnel Committee maintained confidentiality with respect to personnel matters. Throughout, the Church Council remained steadfast in working through the conflict and looked for strategies for healing thereafter.



Ministerial History *(Include all previous ministerial staff for the past 30 years.)*

SENIOR MINISTERS

Staff Member's Name	Years of Service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Dr. William F. Allinder	1990-1998	Y
Dr. Donal J. Longbottom	1999-2006	Y
Reverend Tom Zoelzer - Interim	2007-2008	Y
Rev. Dr. Eric Elnes	2008-2020	Y
Rev. Dr. Keith Herron - Interim	2022-Present	Y

ASSOCIATE/ASSISTANT MINISTERS

Staff Member's Name	Years of Service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Rev. Lea Marshall (Assoc)	2006-2010	Y
(Pastoral Care)	1985-1994	Y
Rev. Dr. Chris Alexander (Assoc)	2010-2020	Y
Rev. Bruce Van Blair (Interim & Sm. Grp. Minister)	2009 & 2015	Y
Rev. Mary Hansen	1995-2004	Y
Jan Harris (Pastoral Care)	2004-2006	Y
Rev. Keith Cook (Minister in Residence).	1998-1999	Y
Rev. Ronald Roskens (Minister in Residence)	2004-2005	Y
Rev. Dr. Anna Crews Camphouse (Interim Collaborative Minister)	2021-2022	Y/UMC
Rev. Elka Tracey Perry (Interim Collaborative Minister)	2021-2022	Y/DOC

Comment on what your church has learned about itself and its relationship with persons who provided ministerial leadership:

Congregation members are eager to develop and launch new programs and/or activities with the leadership of the minister. Countryside members are happy to be early adopters and at the forefront of change. Congregation members want a minister who is an engaged leader and one who is also accessible.

Has any past leader left under pressure or by involuntary termination? Yes.

After attempts to resolve the conflict and in consultation with outside professionals, it became clear that the interim minister and ministry setting were no longer a match. With a commitment to our minister's well-being and our commitment to the health of the church, we did all we could to part well and with grace, honoring the sacred confidentiality required when matters of employment are involved.

As we move forward from this experience, we are open to discussing and learning other strategies and/or structures for resolving conflict and healing from conflict. Members of the congregation care for one another, and it was difficult to be divided.

Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation? No

Has a past pastor been the subject of a Fitness Review while at your church? No

4. Who Is Our Neighbor?

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39 NRSV)

a. COMMUNITY VISION

b. ASSOCIATION OF RELIGION DATA ARCHIVES (ARDA): Community Profile Builder

4a. Community Vision

How do the relationships and activities of your congregation extend outward in service and advocacy?

Community Vision

Countryside Community Church is committed to being a good neighbor and supportive of those outside of our local area. The three main areas of mission that our congregation supports involve the greater Omaha area, UCC denominational support and international projects. Our Board of Christian Outreach (BOCO) designates community service and support through approved financial resources at Countryside. Each month a local charitable organization is selected, and members can contribute money or needed items such as food, toiletries and paper products. Recent recipients have been, but not limited to, [Youth Emergency Services](#) and [Rise Recovery Services](#).

Our Christmas and Easter offerings have supported [The Asian Rural Institute](#), refugee families, [Pine Ridge Reservation](#), [Together](#), [100 Black Men](#) and Los Chavalitos Health Clinic in Nicaragua.

Our average annual monetary support of \$56,500 supports our Church's Wider Mission (\$50,000), the Living Waters Association (\$2,000) and Small Service Groups (\$4,500). In 2010, two members of our congregation sought the assistance of our Board of Christian Outreach and began the Community Cupboard Food Pantry. We have partnered with Food Bank for the Heartland to provide a year-round, free mobile pantry on the first Saturday of each month. Adjustments were made from the in-person choice pantry to drive-through services when we were unable to provide a safe environment during the pandemic. We have continued to partner with the Food Bank for the Heartland and support 75 families. In addition, we provide an opportunity for in-home delivery as a Tri-Faith partner. During the summer months, our pantry is supplemented by our Tri-Faith Garden with fresh fruits and vegetables.



Describe your congregation's participation in meetings, relationships, and activities connecting the wider United Church of Christ (association/conference/national setting).

Our UCC participation includes Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and Living Waters Conference contributions and participation at annual gatherings of our Conference, including hosting the Joint Annual Conference at our new church in 2019. Director of Administration Dan Loven-Crum serves on the Nebraska Conference Board of Directors.

Many local churches love to tell the story of what they are doing in the community to transform lives. Some have identified certain aspects of their witness into the wider community using language shared with other UCC congregations. (Find more information as desired at ucc.org.) Check any statements below that apply to your UCC faith community.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessible to All (A2A) | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Peace |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creation Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Global Mission Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic Justice | <u>We Are</u> Open and Affirming (ONA) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faithful and Welcoming | Other UCC designations: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> God is Still Speaking (GISS) | <input type="checkbox"/> Faith & the Environment (FATE) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Border and Immigrant Justice | <input type="checkbox"/> Designations - other |
| Denominations | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inter-cultural/Multi-racial (I'M) | <input type="checkbox"/> None |

Reflect on what the above statement(s) mean(s) to your community. Is your congregation interested in working toward any of the above statements of witness in the near future?

We are a congregation that is Open and Affirming as indicated above and supportive of the LGBTQIA+ Community. We are exploring the following designations:

- Disability - Accessible to All (A2A) - We have built our new church building to be accessible to everyone
- Racial Justice - Anti-Racist Church
- Creation Justice - Climate Justice Church
- Immigration - Immigration Welcoming Community
- Mental Health - Welcoming Inclusive Supportive Engaged (WISE)



Describe your congregation's participation in ecumenical and interfaith activities (with other denominations and religious groups, local and regional).

As the Christian presence on the Tri-Faith Commons, we model and advance interfaith relationships. The Tri-Faith Garden and Orchard engage volunteers from each of our faith communities in organic food production to be distributed throughout the community. We grow food and friendships with our shared commitment to social justice. In the past, our annual summer Tri-Faith Picnic (and pre-COVID winter Taste of Tri-Faith) was an opportunity to share food, fellowship and heritage.

The retired Rabbi of Temple Israel (whose vision was instrumental in creating the Tri-Faith Initiative), maintains an office in our church. He regularly leads members of the Christian community in sessions to enlighten and educate people on the history, practices and teachings of Judaism.

The Tri-Faith clergy participated in several sessions with congregants from all three communities to discuss and inform others of each faith's teachings on particular scripture passages as well as about worship practices.



Countryside hosted an Omaha meeting of clergy from several different Christian churches within the Metropolitan Area.

Countryside hosted the joint annual meeting of UCC conference ministers from Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota in 2019.

Each Thanksgiving, Temple Israel, Countryside, the American Muslim Institute and congregations from across Omaha, celebrate a joint Interfaith Pre-Thanksgiving Service of worship, fellowship, music, and gratitude.

Recently, on September 11th, Countryside congregants joined with more than 3,000 from Temple Israel, the American Muslim Institute, and a variety of faith communities from the metropolitan area who gathered on the Tri-Faith commons for the inaugural United We Walk (UWW) to celebrate Omaha's varied cultural, racial, and religious diversity in a spirit of peace and unity where all were welcomed.





If your congregation has a mission statement, how does that mission statement compare to the actual time spent engaging in different activities? Think of the range of activities from time spent gathering, to governance, to time spent going out.

We follow our mission statement in a very intentional manner. Since it is broad in scope, our mission statement empowers us to address the changing needs of our community on an ongoing basis, as reflected throughout this profile.

Reflect on the scope of work assigned to your pastor(s). How is their community ministry and their ministry in and on behalf of the wider church accounted for in the congregation's expectations on their time?

We anticipate our pastor will prioritize nurturing our Countryside and Tri-Faith communities in preparation for our future. In the past, our senior minister has been a leader of progressive Christianity as an example to the greater community.

4b. Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA): Community Profile Builder

Comment on your congregation's ARDA: Community Profile Builder report with data for your neighborhood(s) or area. What trends and opportunities are shown?

1. Population within 5 miles is expected to grow moderately. Heartwood Preserve is an area being developed for Living, Working, Shopping, and Recreation and will continue to play a part in the growth of our community. Heartwood Omaha: A New City Hub.

2. Households in our 5-mile radius are expected to have moderate to significant household change demographics. Household changes are a measure of mobility – new families moving into the area at higher levels than state averages. When people move into a new location, one of the things they look for is a new place to worship. With Countryside's reputation, we could have a distinct advantage in attracting new families that did not have a prior Omaha church affiliation or are searching for a new one.

3. Countryside members are above average in education and income. Our new location fits with an area that is also significantly above the state average in both of those categories.

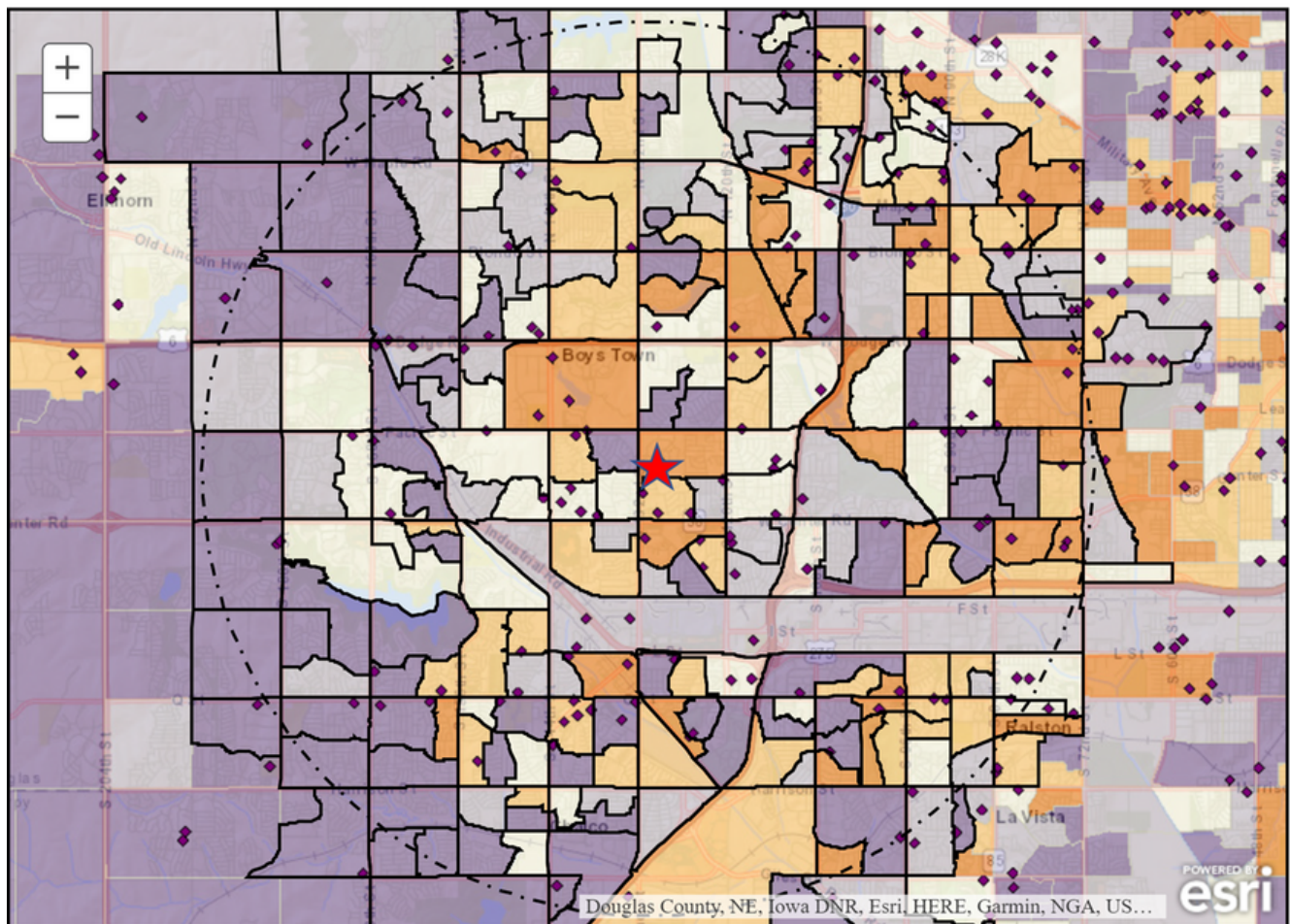
4. Our current location does lack diversity, so it will be a challenge to attract members of ethnicities other than white.

5. Our members tend to be older, but that has changed slightly with our new location. That did impact our yearly pledges and financial situation, but that seems to be recovering.

We compared the ARDA: Community Profile Builder reports for the old 8787 Pacific Street location with our new location at 13130 Faith Plaza using a 5-mile radius at both locations. While both reports showed that Countryside remains in higher-than-average income, (compared to state and local averages), our new location shows an even higher income level. Both areas remain about the same regarding racial diversity.

How do your congregation's internal demographics compare or contrast to a) the neighborhoods adjacent to your church, and b) other neighborhoods with which your church connects?

Our internal demographics generally reflect those of the adjacent neighborhoods as shown in (refer to data/chart)



How are the demographics of the community currently shaping ministry, or not?

Our new community draws from three or four different school districts which have more racially diverse populations. However, because the demographics are like our previous neighborhood, we want to maintain our history of providing service to the wider Omaha community and beyond. The Senior High Youth Group completed a service trip this summer assisting a community garden organization in St. Louis. They spent the prior year participating and learning about gardening through Tri-Faith Community Garden activities in preparation for their service trip to the community garden in St. Louis Missouri.

What do you hear when you talk to community leaders and ask them what your church is known for?

Currently, we are known locally and beyond our community as the Christian partner of the Tri-Faith Initiative. We've been known for our acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community, our Community Cupboard which supplies needed food assistance for anyone in the community, and our Kindernook preschool program. Kindernook is known for its safe and welcoming environment for children of all ethnicities and faiths in the Omaha community.

What do new people in the church say when asked what got them involved?

There are three main reasons our new members tell us they became involved with our congregation:

- We are an Open and Affirming congregation. Many of our new members say that they have LGBTQIA+ family members or loved ones who have not felt welcome at other churches. They find a welcoming environment at Countryside that they have not experienced before.
- We are the Christian partner in the Tri-Faith Initiative. Many new members have been drawn to this unique endeavor and are excited about the opportunities.
- We are a progressive Christian church that does not adhere to old dogma. New members tell us they appreciate our acceptance and encouragement of wider perspectives.

5. References

***See appendix for reference letters**

REFERENCE 1

Rev. Katie Miller/ Minister of Student and Family Life First Central Congregational
First Central Congregational UCC
432 South 35th St.
Omaha, NE 68131
402-345-1533

REFERENCE 2

Bob L. Freeman, J.D.
Partner, Fraser Stryker Law Firm
500 Energy Plaza
Omaha, NE 68102

REFERENCE 3

Aryeh Azriel / Rabbi Emeritus Temple Israel
402-214-3344 /aryehaz@cox.net

6. Closing Thoughts

- a. CLOSING PRAYER
- b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT
- c. CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION VALIDATION

6a. Closing Prayer

A Poem by John O'Donohue

May the gift of leadership awaken in you as a vocation,
Keep you mindful of the providence that calls you to serve.
As high over the mountains the eagle spreads its wings,
May your perspective be larger than your view from the foothills.
When the way is flat and dull in times of gray endurance,
May your imagination continue to evoke horizons.
When thirst burns in times of drought,
May you be blessed to find the wells.
May you have the wisdom to read time clearly
And know when the seed of change will flourish.
In your heart may there be a sanctuary
For the stillness where clarity is born.
May your work be infused with passion and creativity
And have the wisdom to balance compassion and challenge.
May your soul find the graciousness
To rise above the fester of small mediocrities.
May your power never become a shell
Wherein your heart would silently atrophy.
May you welcome your own vulnerability
As the ground where healing and truth join.
May integrity of soul be your first ideal,
The source that will guide and bless your work.

Countryside Blessing

May the Spirit of the Living God have made known to us, as Christians,
most fully in Jesus Christ our Lord:
Go before you to show you the way;
Go above you to watch over you;
Go behind you to push you into places you would not necessarily go yourself;
Go beneath you to uphold and uplift you;
Go beside you to be your strong and constant companion; and
Dwell within you to remind you that you are surely not alone on life's journey, and
that you are loved – loved beyond your wildest imagination.
And may the fire of God's blessing burn brightly upon you, within you, and
through you, now and always.

Amen



6b. Statement of Consent

The covenantal relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as pastors and teachers and in other ministerial positions is strengthened when vital information is openly shared by covenantal partners. To that end, we attest that, to the best of our abilities, we have provided information in this profile that accurately represents our church. We have not knowingly withheld any information that would be helpful to candidates.

As the committee charged with the responsibility for identifying and recommending a senior minister for our church, we have been authorized to share the information herein with potential candidates. We understand that a candidate may wish to secure further knowledge, information, and opinions about our church. We encourage a candidate to do so, recognizing that an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing and healthy relationships between calling bodies and persons seeking a ministry position.

Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile?

The Pastoral Search Committee:

Kris Hess, Chair

Cathy MacInnes, Corresponding Chair

Sharon Royers

Bob Davis

Elaine Wiles

Adam Steinbach

Mark Draper, Vice Chair

Shelley Boyd, Recording Chair

Mimi Goings

David Hubbard

Mallis Bonner

Director of Administration & Communication

Dan Loven-Crum

Signed:



Cathy MacInnes, Correspondence Chair

pastoralsearchcommittee@countrysideucc.org

(402) 578-7373

Equal Employment Opportunity

It is the policy of Countryside Community Church to grant equal employment opportunity to all qualified persons without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, veteran status, disability, or handicap – if such handicap or disability may be accommodated without undue hardship. The recruitment and selection process will be based on job-related, objective qualifications, in accordance with the job requirements of the position being filled. All employees must be able to perform the essential functions of their jobs as set forth in the employee's individual position description. Reasonable accommodations will be made, in accordance with applicable state and federal laws, to assist employees with disabilities in performing the essential job functions.

Countryside Community Church is organized for religious purposes and is substantially supported by a religious body, the United Church of Christ. As a religious organization, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 exempts churches from the prohibition on religious discrimination; consequently, our hiring practices may require faith as a job-related, objective job qualification for some specific positions.



6c. Validation by Conference/Association

The congregation is currently in good standing with the association / conference named. Staff Comment:

To the best of my knowledge, ministerial history information is complete. Staff Comment:

To the best of my knowledge, available church financial information is presented thoroughly. Staff Comment:

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature: _____

Name / Title:

Email:

Phone:

Date:

This document is created through support to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and is only possible through the covenantal relationships of all settings of the United Church of Christ.

"Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God!'" – Mark 11:22

Appendix: Letters of Recommendation

To Whom it May Concern:

Greetings! My name is Rev. Katie Miller, and I currently serve as the Associate Minister for Student and Family Life at First Central Congregational Church in Omaha, Nebraska. In my work and life here in Omaha, I've had many experiences interacting with Countryside Community Church, and I'm happy to recommend it as an excellent place and opportunity for ministry.

My introduction to Countryside actually occurred during seminary. I am a Nebraska native, and I remember walking into a community organizing class taught by Chicago organizer Rami Nashishibi, and he said, "Katie! What's going on in Omaha?!" - referring, of course, to the Tri-Faith Initiative being planned there and all the interfaith work that would be possible thanks to that connection. To a non-Nebraskan, I suppose it does seem a surprising place for such work to be done, and it speaks volumes on the history and leadership of Countryside that they were willing and able to say yes to joining such an endeavor. The fantastic United We Walk event held there commemorating September 11th this past year was a testament to their ecumenical success and commitment - clergy of all faiths gathered to stand on their stage and voice their commitment to peace and care, and that is no small feat in these parts.

But that seems to be who Countryside is - a progressive community striving to make a difference in the world by living into that age-old UCC value of welcome and working towards justice and peace with their community. A place that opens its doors to the wider world to provide a beautiful sanctuary and a home for those in need of one. Back in May, I was delighted to serve as a guest preacher for a Sunday, and I was greeted by some glorious music in a beautiful space, welcoming and warm people and staff, and a congregation eager and hopeful for what was to come next. The building is certainly beautiful, but the people are what makes it a holy place: the strength of the ministry of Countryside is in the people who call it home.

I know the past few years have been difficult ones for Countryside, from leadership to a pandemic to numbers. There has been much transition there, and all the necessary rebuilding from the turmoil of the community and the wider world will certainly be a challenge. The thing is, though, that Countryside has the kind of staff, resources, and congregation to absolutely live up to that challenge! They are a community that deeply strives to live into their commitments to justice, witness, and peace with all that they do, and it would be a truly wonderful place of ministry for any who wish work alongside them and their ecumenical partners.

In short, Countryside is a wonderful church filled with and surrounded by wonderful people. I feel confident that they would be an excellent place for any minister to walk with in doing the work of the church.

Sincerely,
Rev. Katie Miller
(402)843-8191
katesmarie84@gmail.com



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ROBERT L. FREEMAN
DIRECT DIAL: 402.978.5217
RFREEMAN@FRASERSTRYKER.COM

November 14, 2022

VIA EMAIL: cathy.macinnes@gmail.com

Cathy MacInnes
Countryside Community Church
13130 Faith Plaza
Omaha, NE 68144
RE: Countryside Pastoral Search Committee

Dear Cathy:

In connection with your request that I be a reference for Countryside's Pastoral Search Committee, I submit the following:

Bob Freeman
Partner, Fraser Stryker Law Firm
500 Energy Plaza
Omaha, NE 68102
rffreeman@fraserstryker.com
(402) 978-5217 (work)

Relationship to Countryside - I'm the co-Founder and past Chair of the Tri-Faith Initiative of Omaha, Ne., and I helped the Church analyze its move to the Tri-Faith Campus

Areas of Strength in Countryside's ministry -

Countryside Church has one of the most solid histories of any church in Omaha... and Omaha is a unique community where people are truly 'solid' and their religious affiliations matter to them. Countryside had done quite well for many decades in its location at 87th & Pacific. It had a glorious track record of a strong, vibrant congregation and top notch pastoral leadership. Yet the congregation discerned and ultimately determined to move to its new location because they and their pastoral leadership were moved by the opportunity to be a partner in the Tri-Faith Initiative of Omaha. The result of this move is (i) a stronger congregation at (ii) a great location, with (iii) a brand new, state-of-the-art physical structure and (iv) being located uniquely next door to a Jewish synagogue and Muslim mosque, and an Inter-Faith Center. This is a package

which no church in America has, and it offers an inspired Minister unique opportunities to make a huge difference in the lives of congregants, and beyond. Whoever is selected will join an impressive list of past leaders of this Church, work with a passionate and committed congregation, work within brand new religious and educational space, and work with leaders from other faiths in a completely unique setting in this country. This is one amazing opportunity.

Areas for Improvement -

Ok, no one is perfect... not even Countryside Community Church! First, Covid has put a damper on its activities for about 3 years - not new here, a problem everywhere, but it's quite a challenge. How do you go from 100mph to 20, then zoom back up to 110?! A dynamic but thoughtful leader can do it (the world needs a lot of 'em!) And Countryside's leader will probably have the ability to impact other congregational leaders around Omaha, and the country, because of the church's leadership in the Tri-Faith project.

Second, the choice to join TFI came with the loss of some dozens of families who had been long-time members of the church. Then, Covid hit, yet the church still has the capacity to add many new members. This will be a top challenge for the new minister.

Third, just settling in and establishing consistency will be important for Countryside. They and their new Minister each need to make the right choice - hear the 'call' - and then settle in for a good, long stretch.

Significant Experiences with Countryside -

My experiences with the Church go back many decades (because I went to school next door at Westside High!), but I'll focus here on my principal interactions during the Church's Discernment process over joining Tri-Faith.

I chaired the Tri-Faith Board for over 10 years during our early phases, which included the Episcopal Diocese of Omaha being the Christian partner for the first 7 or so years. When the Diocese got to a difficult point and concluded they probably couldn't build a new Episcopal church to participate in Tri-Faith, they in effect offered the opportunity to Rev. Eric Elnes at Countryside, who was intrigued by the prospect. I then worked closely with Rev. Elnes and the Church's lay leadership over the next few years in analyzing the possibilities, and the upside/downside of Countryside's participating. And, I had many friends who were members of the Church who would be affected by the decision - everything from financial to location to participation to friends/family who might not agree with one's position. Despite the enormous complexity of the decision, the Church did a truly wonderful job of taking its time, establishing a really good process for the review and decision making, getting tons of input, and trying hard to not lose any/many members in the

ultimate move. This is a church with a huge collective heart. It is a great opportunity for a top-flight minister to make a big impact in his chosen career.

Finally, I'm sure it's unusual for a Christian Church to have a Jewish guy serve as one of its references here. And while I'm "pretty Jewish", I am also one of the Church's biggest fans. Countryside has for decades attracted top notch clergy and an exceptional congregation, who each have been motivated by so many of the 'right' things. Countryside's next Minister will find a place that is uber supportive of her/him, ready to embrace their new Minister in every way possible, and follow leads to new places that seemed implausible a few years ago. Countryside has already done some big dreaming, not been deterred, executed exquisitely, and is now ready for the next step forward!

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Freeman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bob" and last name "Freeman" clearly legible.

Robert L.
Freeman FOR
THE FIRM

RLF:nmu



THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF TEMPLE ISRAEL

13111 Sterling Ridge Drive - Omaha, Nebraska 68144
templeisrael@templeisraelomaha.com
402.556.6536 · templeisraelomaha.com

I came to Omaha in 1988 to become the Senior Rabbi at Temple Israel, and shortly after arriving, I started to build my relationship with the clergy and members of the Countryside Community Church that was located on Pacific Street. Countryside Community Church is a Christian church that understands the value of collaboration and involvement with the Reform Jewish Community in Omaha. Over the years, we have collaborated around social justice projects, adult education classes on religion, charity work with the food bank, and combined youth programs.

Upon my retirement in 2016, I was invited by Countryside Community Church to establish my study at the church (only Jewish clergy in the US to have a study in a Christian church)! I was asked to teach a weekly class on Judaism where the curriculum is "Sermons for Life", which includes a collection of my sermons from the 28 years of being the Senior Rabbi at Temple Israel.

The relationships became stronger and much more meaningful when Temple Israel moved to its new location in 2013, and Countryside Community Church joined the Tri-Faith campus in 2019. The hard work that went into the joining of three congregations with differing beliefs gave each community a chance to connect in ways that never seemed possible before.

My testimony for Countryside Community Church is the result of my work with their church leaders, clergy, and my observations of the strength and quality of them over more than 30 years. Countryside Community Church is a unique Christian church in Omaha that is very active in a wide range of programming and caring for their membership; which is an important attribute of the congregation. Adult education is a vital ingredient for the spiritual and religious life of their congregation.

I admire the commitment and involvement of their clergy and membership with the Tri-Faith Initiative. For me, the highlight of the collaboration is the establishment of the Tri-Faith garden that was created by all three member congregations where they grow a substantial amount of food to be distributed to different food banks in Omaha.

The clergy that apply for this position (and hopefully become the senior clergy) will have ample opportunity to work with outstanding leaders of the church and collaborate with the clergy and members from the Tri-Faith community. They will have countless opportunities to teach, learn, and grow with other religious movements and become great for a church that will fall in love with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Aryeh Azriel'.

Rabbi Aryeh Azriel
Emeritus Rabbi