



COUNTRYSIDE CURRENTS



The PRIDE Special Section of Countryside Currents



Some of our Countryside family at Pride last summer!

Collaboration Kitchen *Conversations as a Recipe for the Future*

by Rev. Dr. Keith Herron

Is it possible to gather too many chefs in one kitchen?

My mother and father were two examples of Studies in Personality whenever they entered the kitchen. Both were better than fair chefs. Both were raised on rural farms during the Depression and neither had the rich resources of a full pantry from which to create a meal. Nevertheless, they both learned how to create tasty, wholesome meals to feed their family and friends. Like most couples, they didn't attempt to cook together in the same kitchen space.

Memorably, my dad taught me to cook on an open fire in Boy Scouts. A gaggle of us worked together to earn the Cooking merit badge and my dad was the master outdoor chef assigned to teach us. We learned to plan a meal and we learned how to prepare and cook the mixed ingredients for the meal. Obviously, we learned how to cook pot meals, all-in-one meals that could be ladled into a bowl. The planning for preparing a meal outdoors was the same as I learned in a kitchen, but the utensils were more crucial. I also learned how to start and maintain a fire meant to sustain the right temperatures for cooking the meal I had planned.

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Learn, Grow, and Serve by Becoming a Stephen Minister

Would you like to be part of a ministry that gives people care and support when they need it most—while making a difference in your own life? Consider becoming a Stephen Minister!

Stephen Ministers are members of our congregation who provide one-to-one caring ministry to people experiencing grief, divorce, loneliness, job loss, hospitalization, and many other life difficulties.

As a Stephen Minister, you'll be equipped to provide a very high level of care. After your training, our Stephen Leaders will match you with someone in need of care—men are matched with men, women with women. You'll meet with that person once a week to listen, care, pray, encourage, and reflect Christ's presence in his or her life. Stephen Ministry is life-changing for both the care receiver and the Stephen Minister. As an added bonus, your Stephen Minister skills can enhance relationships in other areas of your life as well.

Visit www.stephenministries.org/SM to learn about others' experiences in serving as a Stephen Minister.

If you'd like to learn more about becoming a Stephen Minister, contact a pastor or Stephen Leader.

Classes Forming Soon!



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



Heartland Pride Parade and Festival

Join Us for Live Out Loud!

LOVE
OUT
LOUD

2023

Mark your calendars for Saturday, July 15, as Heartland Pride descends upon downtown Omaha at the CHI Center. This vibrant celebration, featuring a parade and a festival filled with food, music and entertainment, is an opportunity for us to come together and demonstrate our unwavering support for the LGBTQ+ community.

By volunteering or walking in the

Pride Parade, you can actively contribute to creating a positive impact in the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals, not just within our community, but beyond its borders as well.

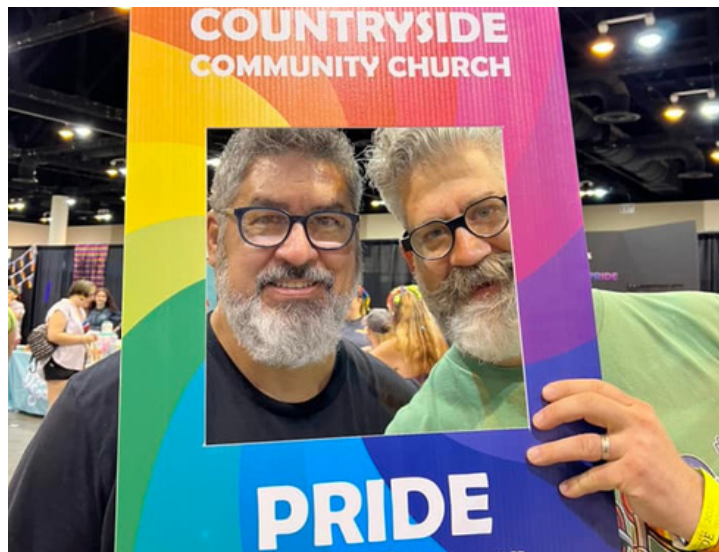
Countryside recognizes the significance of this event and proudly showcases our commitment to fostering a safe and inclusive environment for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Together, we can raise awareness about the importance of inclusivity, tolerance, and acceptance.

Countryside Engagement Coordinator Diane Scott, highlights the unique opportunity Heartland Pride presents.

"It's my strongest feeling that we have a responsibility to these young people to express the idea that they are loved beyond their wildest imagination," said Scott.

"Our yearly participation in Heartland Pride affords us that opportunity."

Taking part in Heartland Pride events can positively impact the lives of individuals who may have felt marginalized. Seeing us in the parade and at the festival can provide reassurance that Countryside is a safe place for them, and that they're embraced unconditionally.



It also offers a chance to connect with like-minded individuals and forge new friendships. Heartland Pride is a time to celebrate diversity, equality and love in all its forms. Will you stand alongside us and be part of this incredible event?

"...we have a responsibility to these young people to express the idea that they are loved beyond their wildest imagination." ~ Diane Scott

Don't miss out on this exceptional opportunity to make a difference, celebrate our shared values and create a stronger, more inclusive community. Join us at Heartland Pride and let's show our unwavering support for the LGBTQ+ community together!

To take part in the Parade, register [here](#). To participate in the Festival, register [here](#)!

You Are Loved - Loved
Beyond Your Wildest Dreams!!!

To watch Countryside's new Pride video, visit countrysideucc.org/pride, or scan one of the QR codes below!!!!



COMMITTEE UPDATE

Pastoral Search Committee

We had high hopes that we would be announcing a candidate to you by now. Sadly, that is not the case. Recently, we finalized a candidate to put forth to the congregation to recommend for our settled senior minister. Unfortunately, this candidate subsequently withdrew their application due to personal reasons.

Our committee was surprised and deeply saddened by this. We felt a little like we'd been running a marathon; but when the finish line came into view, it was abruptly moved further away.

We'd like to summarize our process so far to help you understand better where we are.

We spent the first 10-12 months of the process holding town hall-style meetings and conducting surveys to ensure your voice would be heard and included in the new church profile.

In December, we completed and posted Countryside's profile and immediately began to receive several pastor profiles.

We developed rubrics to evaluate candidates and decide if they warranted an initial interview. We developed consistent questions for these interviews. We then created questions and processes for second interviews, evaluating sermons and reference checks.

Although this whole process felt long, please remember that as of this writing, it's only been six months since our church profile was posted. Hopefully, this will help us all keep a realistic perspective.

Throughout the search process, the Pastoral Search Committee dedicated itself to identifying a candidate for our settled senior minister position the congregation would feel excited about – both in terms of enriching our spiritual journeys and in providing leadership both within this Church and outside this Church as the Christian partner in the Tri-Faith Initiative.

The Pastoral Search Committee continues to be as open with the congregation as we can be about the progress of our search process. We want you to know

we've hit a bump in the road, but the processes are solidly in place and the search will continue. The Pastoral Search Committee remains committed to the stewardship of this sacred process and steadfast in our work to identify the right settled senior minister for Countryside.

New Workshop! LGBTQ+ 101



Join us for an enlightening LGBTQ+ Workshop with Joni Watke on Sunday, July 9 at 11:15 a.m. This dynamic workshop will educate and empower individuals to become better allies to the LGBTQ+ community. You'll gain a deeper

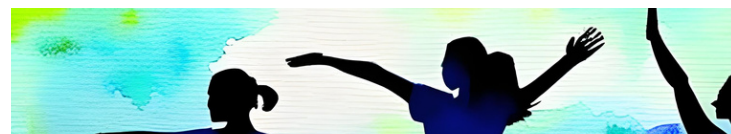
understanding of sexuality, learn culturally competent terminology and discover practical steps to support and advocate for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Joni Watke, an experienced attorney and professional speaker, founded Academy LGBTQ with a mission to educate organizations and families for the celebration of LGBTQ+ individuals. With extensive experience presenting on LGBTQ+ issues to various audiences nationwide, Joni has collaborated with Fortune 500 companies, the American Bar Association, and the US Army Corps of Engineers.

Her work includes providing continuing education credits for legal, law enforcement, medical, and mental health professionals. Joni has even been featured on CNN and The Advocate.

Don't miss this opportunity to expand your knowledge and contribute to a more inclusive community. This workshop is free of charge and includes a light lunch. Child care will also be provided.

[Register now](https://countrysideucc.org/register) on the Countryside website, countrysideucc.org/register. Let's work together to create a culture of understanding and acceptance.



Summer Sermon Series

First Stories

The summer's sermon series draws upon the lectionary cycle of stories from Genesis. These narrative tales grow episodically each week. There are many ways to approach these stories, but in our First Stories series, you can think of them like pearls on a string that tell a larger story. NOTE: We'll hold a special Pride service on July 16, and return to First Stories on Sunday, July 23.

July 2: *TBA*, Genesis 22:1-14

July 9: *Smitten*, Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67

July 16: *Guests at God's Table*, Isaiah 55:1-9, Acts 10

July 23: *Sweet Dreams*, Genesis 28:10-19a

July 30: *A Heel Grabbing Way of Life*, Genesis 29:15-28



The Box: July & August

Spreading the Joy of Reading to Elementary Students

The Board of Christian Outreach has designated an elementary school in each of the Millard, Westside and OPS school systems as Box recipients during both July and August.

For two months, The Box will accept new or gently used elementary-age books. We'll collect as many as possible to share with the three schools when the new school year begins. The goal is to place books into the hands of children who might not have a book to call their very own and to inspire a greater love of reading.

The schools we've approached (Cody, Westbrook, and Belvedere) have been enthusiastic. The school librarians have offered some valuable suggestions for the types of books that would be most beneficial to their students, including:

- Picture and board books for the youngest students
- Fiction and non-fiction books for grades 2-6
- Easy beginner chapter books
- Book series by popular authors Mo Willems or Dav Pilkey
- Recent Golden Sower selections



Whether gently used or new books, your contribution can make a significant impact. If using Amazon, please select a category of books from the list above. If you need guidance, look for books with the "teacher's pick" designation. You can either ship them to Countryside or drop them off in The Box located at the entry.

The Box's book donation campaign provides an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young readers in our community. The simple act of donating a book can have a profound impact on a child, sparking their imagination, expanding their knowledge, and opening doors to new worlds.

Small Groups

Core 56, Wednesdays, 6–8 p.m. Movies, games, outside activities, art and more!

Dungeons & Dragons, Fridays, 5:30–8:30 p.m. Sr. High-age students, in the Youth Room. Jr. High-age students, Tamar.

Jr. High Youth Group, Sundays, 4–6 p.m. Youth Room. Open to ALL Jr. High-age students, grades 7 & 8.

Sr. High Youth Group, Sundays, 6–8 p.m., Youth Room. Open to ALL Sr. High-age students.

Men's Breakfast, Tuesdays, 8 a.m. at First Watch, 72nd and Pacific Streets. Everyone is welcome!

Fellowship Arts and Music Etc. (FAME), Fridays, 10 a.m. in Rahab. No reservations are required!

Mindful Meditation, Thursdays, 7 p.m. Zoom only, link is available on the church calendar.

Adult Forum, Sundays, 11 a.m. in Deborah and on Zoom. Link is available on the [church calendar](#).

Groups on Summer Hiatus

The following small groups are on hiatus for the summer: Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group; Books, Bible & Beyond; The Banned Book Lovers Group; and The Banned Book Study Group.



BOLM Presents

Tai Chi for Wellness Classes

The Board of Life Ministries in August is promoting spiritual health and wellness with a 4-week Tai Chi class led by instructors Rita Otis and Sharon Royers.



Two sessions of the Tai Chi class will be held each day; you can choose between a 10 a.m.

session in the front courtyard, a 6 p.m. session on the lawn behind Marys Hall – or both! In case of inclement weather, class will be held in the Chapel.

Tai Chi is a centuries-old Chinese martial art that combines graceful, flowing movements with deep breathing and meditation. It is known for its numerous health benefits, including improved balance, flexibility, and stress reduction. By offering this class, the Board of Life Ministries aims to enhance the spiritual well-being of its congregation and provide them with tools to cultivate a harmonious mind-body connection.

Otis and Royers will guide participants through the four-week program. Whether you're a beginner or have some experience with Tai Chi, you'll find these sessions beneficial and fulfilling.

Otis said the class is designed for healing and works with the principles of the Five Elements as defined and used in Chinese medicine.

There is no charge, but a suggested free will donation of \$10 per session will be gladly accepted. The BOLM will use funds raised to promote spiritual and physical wellness.

Don't miss out on this wonderful opportunity to prioritize your spiritual health and wellness. Take a step towards finding balance, tranquility, and a deeper connection with your inner self. [Register now](#) at countrysideucc.org/register!

MacInnes Named Interim Chair for Tri-Faith Initiative Board

Rick MacInnes, Vice Chair of the Tri-Faith Initiative Board of Directors has been appointed Interim Chair upon the recent resignation of the Board Chair.

Rick will convene the Nominating Task Force in the coming weeks to identify a Chair-elect to start in January, 2024, and make this recommendation to the Board at their July 25 meeting. The task force will also discuss filling the vacant at-large position.

The Tri-Faith Initiative is a collaborative effort involving representatives from three different faith communities working together towards common goals. The Chair of the Tri-Faith Initiative Board is



responsible for leading and overseeing the activities of the board.

The Tri-Faith Board of Directors includes 25 directors, all with strong ties to the Omaha community. Countryside's representatives to the Board are Rick MacInnes, Trisha Hoffman-Ahrens, Mark Stursma, Nancy Behringer and Rev. Dr. Keith Herron.

Other members of the Tri-Faith Executive Committee include Amee Zetzman, *Second Vice Chair and Asst. Treasurer*; Nuzhat Mahmood, *Secretary*; Karim Khayati, *Treasurer*; Trisha Hoffman-Ahrens, *Development Committee Chair*; Dr. Paul Williams, *Clergy Representative*; Dr. Ali Khan, *Immediate Past Chair*; and Wendy Goldberg, *Executive Director*.

Artist-in-Residence: Christie Beard Returns to Countryside



The Board of Arts Ministry is pleased to announce that Dr. Christine "Christie" Erlander Beard is rejoining us as our Artist-in-Residence at Countryside. Christie was our Artist-in-Residence from 2019 through 2020 when the pandemic got in the way. She was also involved in our virtual Covid Concerts,

and the UNO recital *Nasty Women: A Celebration of Female Composers of the Suffragette Era* celebrated the ratification of the 19th Amendment.

The board wanted to formally reinstate the program, through which she will be involved in worship multiple times throughout the year and will occasionally be a part of concerts and other events.

The Canadian journal *Flute Focus* described Christie as "...having shattered any notions that the piccolo might be lacking in deep, expressive powers." The flutist enjoys an active international career as a soloist, chamber artist and teacher. A passionate performer noted for her

great expressive tone and range" (Christopher Caliendo, composer) and her "...capacity to reveal the deep soul of a composition" (Martin Rokeach, composer), she has performed extensively across North America, South America and Europe, including 15 conventions of the National Flute Association and three British Flute Society International Conventions. She's performed and taught at International piccolo festivals in Italy, France and The Netherlands, and flute festivals in Canada, Costa Rica, Honduras, Peru, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Portugal.

Christie's return ensures the continuation of an exceptional artistic program that enriches the worship experience and brings joy to our community. Through her remarkable talent and unwavering commitment to musical excellence, she'll inspire and captivate audiences once again, leaving an indelible mark on the artistic landscape of Countryside and beyond. The board eagerly looks forward to the upcoming collaborations, performances, and events that will undoubtedly showcase Dr. Beard's profound musicality and contribute to the thriving artistic community at Countryside.

Collaboration Kitchen

Conversations as a Recipe for the Future

by Rev. Dr. Keith Herron

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My mom was the regular chef at home and taught me how to cook in the kitchen. We may not have had every needed utensil or pan, but we had what worked. These meals were more complicated and had more variety.

While both cooked well, it was amazing how different they went about their efforts. In their lifetime of cooking for our family, I have zero memories of them both in the kitchen at the same time. One would cook and the other would clean up, but they didn't risk their marriage by sharing time and space together in the kitchen.

Dad was always capable of more but he seldom created fancy meals. He didn't rely on recipes but created meals confident intuitively that he knew how to make what he wanted. Mom, on the other hand, loved researching new recipes, and she would always prepare a new dish for our holiday gatherings. She trusted the recipe and my father trusted the intuitive chef within.

By the way, preachers are like this in how they go about planning and writing a sermon. Some are very formulaic in their approach. The content may vary but the formula doesn't. Other preachers are more experimental and are less constrained by a seminary-taught method of writing "a good sermon." Some are meticulous and craft a well-prepared sermon ready to be published. Others jot down a few ideas on a 3X5 card and plan out a few lines to jumpstart the sermon and take off creating a live event in which even the preacher doesn't know how she or he will come to a conclusion.

In a few weeks, we will launch the first of two conversations meant to get us together to talk about our present challenges and to consider our dream for the future and the kind of church we want to become.



When we gather, we stand the possibility the world will blow up! Too many chefs, each with their own idea of how the church should move forward. Too many methods, too many different ideas of what we need and what we need to let go of as we stand at this crossroads. Some are committed to the recipe and others want to mix new ingredients in new ways to create something, but what?

Make a point to join us on August 20. We will share a large group presentation and then will break into smaller groups for the chance to share our thoughts on the future. We will have the opportunity to express our thoughts and opinions (aka, attitudes) about a comprehensive range of topics so our new pastor will have a better idea of how the congregation thinks and feels about our future together. No one is a mind reader and no one person can know how the members of our church think, feel, or believe about where we want to go. Our process is designed to give all members an opportunity to share their thoughts in a guided conversation about the church in the present moment and to hear about their wishes for the future.

Put on your calendar these Sunday dates for the two listening events: August 20 and September 24.