

COUNTRYSIDE CURRENTS



THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Blessings of the Earth

New Intergenerational Art Project Honors Earth Day

The Blessings of the Earth Art Installation is a group of 92 living edge wall plaques completed by Countryside members and their families. It was sponsored by the Board of Worship and Arts and planned in conjunction with the Children's Wednesday night programming. It is the second Intergenerational Art Project to be done in our new church.

The goal of this project was twofold: to allow the adults and youth within our congregation to become better acquainted, and to create meaningful art appropriate to Earth Day and The Ordinary Times season.

The art was completed in two, 45-minute sessions on Wednesday evenings as part of our Wednesday Wonderer's and Core 56 activities. All participating youth and adults worked in random teams of two, adult and youth, on these evenings to create the art. A few teams included some of Countryside's most senior members. One of our youngest artists (preschool) teamed up with one of the eldest members, Marilyn Vincent (in her 90s) currently living in a local senior living facility.

Vincent spent her career as a teacher and said she was so excited to work with the Countryside kids. Volunteers Judy Waible and Deb Hickman made sure Vincent had rides to and from Rolling Hills Ranch Senior Living, where Vincent makes her home. Other seniors who helped make the project truly intergenerational included Pat Smith (who also sings in choir), Jean Stewart and Laurie Sample.

Continued on page 3



WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE?

AMI Has a New Imam ~ 2

Embracing Eastertide ~ 7

Quarterly Financial Report ~ 11

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The Box: May

The Social Justice and Outreach Board has chosen CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) for Douglas County as the recipient of our May Box donations.



CASA's mission is to provide trained volunteer advocates who serve to amplify the voice for children impacted by the child welfare system. For 25 years CASA for Douglas County has been a beacon of hope for children who have experienced abuse or neglect.

When children are removed from home they often leave with little but the clothes they wear. CASA partners with child-serving agencies to distribute Project Hope Packs, backpacks containing personal care products and comfort items, to traumatized children entering foster care or being moved between placements. These simple items promote hope, dignity and resilience.

The Amazon list contains suggested art supplies and comfort items:

- Crayons
- Coloring books
- Drawing pads
- Activity books
- Blankets
- Backpacks



The Box is located in the church entryway. Place your donations there or send Amazon purchases to Countryside.





Blessing the Sacred Seed

WITH TAYLOR KEEN



SUNDAY
MAY 5, 2024
1:00 P.M.

Join us at the Tri-Faith Unity Garden, where our friend Taylor Keen will be speaking on the next generation.

RSVP to Bonni Leiserowitz
bleiserowitz3@gmail.com

New Member News!

Sunday, May 5, 8:45-9:45 a.m. Membership Class For those who've decided to become a member of Countryside. Breakfast provided. Children Welcome. [Click here to register!](#)

Sunday, June 2 New Members Sunday New members are welcomed into the community during the Sunday service. A reception will follow in Common Grounds Coffee House. For information [email Diane Scott](mailto:dianes@countrysideucc.org) at dianes@countrysideucc.org.

Countryside Care Team Opportunity

The Care Team this year will focus on providing care for homebound members and those in Senior Facilities and maintaining an updated roster of those unable to attend in-person services. We aim to increase contact through visits, calls and flower deliveries. We send weekly cards based on Joys and Concerns shared during services and in the C-10. We also celebrate new babies with visits, baby blankets and books, and offer prayer shawls to those facing challenges. [Click here](#) to join our Care Team today! (See the article below about Visitor Training.) For more information, [email Deb Hickman](mailto:debhickman@centurylink.net), Team Lead, at debhickman@centurylink.net. All are welcome!

New Study Group - Invitation Faith Learners Study Group

Our group of new Countryside members and friends has a new name after meeting for a few weeks and we'd love to have you all join us! We are now the Faith Learners. We've enjoyed studying John Shelby Spong's *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*.

Even if you don't have the book or aren't interested in keeping up with the reading, come for the conversation. Sundays, 9-9:45 a.m. in Deborah. Hope to see you all on Sunday. Denise Lenhart, Vicki Roy and Susan Rothe.

American Muslim Institute

AMI Welcomes New Imam!

The American Muslim Institute (AMI) has appointed Ibrahim Muhammed Ashour as their new Imam.

Imam Ibrahim served as Imam at Masjid al-Noor in Maadi Cairo, and served for many years as a lecturer of Islamic studies in English at



Al-Ruwaq Al-Azhari, Al-Azhar Mosque. He was regularly invited as a commentator and hosted religious programming on the Nile Family TV channel in Cairo, both in English and in Arabic.

Imam Ibrahim graduated from Al-Azhar University, with a focus in English Literature and Linguistics. He recently obtained a Masters Degree in Linguistics, specializing in English from Ain Shams University.

Born and raised in Cairo, Egypt, AMI is excited to welcome Imam Ibrahim to our diverse Omaha Muslim Community and greater community.

Pentecost Pancake Breakfast

You're invited!

[Register here!](#)

Join us for
Pentecost
Pancake
Breakfast on
Sunday, May 19,
8-9:30 a.m. in
Marys' Hall.

Pancakes, eggs, sausage,
pastries and juice!



FEATURE

Blessings of the Earth



BOARD OF ARTS AND WORSHIP

Ferde and Mimi Goings, Dale Jones and others were instrumental volunteers in setting up and providing support during the Wednesday art nights. (See the About the Art poster next to the installation for names of most of the adults and youth who participated.)

Each of the teams picked their desired backboard bases, then chose and applied the wood rounds using their own artistic flare. The size and color of backboard, as well as the chosen wood grain, color, size, depth and type of wood were factors in the individuality of each piece of art.

There were more than 22 types of wood available for use including apple, aspen, ash, river birch, white birch, butternut, cedar, cherry, cottonwood, crab apple, elm, locust, maple, mulberry, oak, Osage orange, pine, poplar, redbud, sycamore, standard and black walnut, and other unidentified trees.



A true intergenerational project, Blessings of the Earth brought together the youngest and most senior members of Countryside to create the stunning installation in the Narthex.



The wood was obtained from downed branches and trees in the Omaha and surrounding areas. Church volunteers, including Ferde Goings, Dale Jones, Bill Bolte, Derek Kuhr and Ed Schwartz cut more than 10,000 wood rounds of various sizes (cookies), using chop, table, miter and scroll saws. The backboards consisted of donated, repurposed wall art showing that there does not have to be a great expense to have fun with art.

A project in and of itself, the art installation was hung Friday, April 19, in time for Earth Day Sunday. The installation's volunteer crew included Rick and Cathy MacInnes, Ferde and Mimi Goings, Ed and Kim Schwartz, Shannon Daubert and Doug Bloomquist. 🌍



Blessings of the Earth took thousands of wood 'cookies' and a full contingent of artists and volunteers to complete. The installation took place on Friday, April 19.



Get Connected!



Countryside offers many opportunities to connect with one another and the community. Read the weekly C-10 for new and updated information on these and other groups, events, and programs. For more information on how to get involved, [email Diane](mailto:dianes@countrysideucc.org) at dianes@countrysideucc.org, scan the QR code to the right or text her at 402-707-1556.

Social groups meet for the sheer joy of connecting with friends old and new. Some gather at the same location each week, like Fellowship Arts and Music Etc. This group meets each Friday in Rahab for – you guessed it – activities that revolve around arts and music. Others, like the 9 to Dine groups, meet once a month at various venues. A devoted small group of young Dungeons and Dragons aficionados meets each Friday evening for gameplay. On Sundays, a small group of junior high school students meets just for the joy of fun and games!

Journey Groups meet weekly to discuss and discover what our Still-speaking God calls us to do in our lives, community, and the world. In the process, we form deep relationships offering support to one another through life's journey. Journey Groups meet in person, although some groups offer a hybrid Zoom option. Journey Groups are always being formed. If you're interested in joining a Journey Group, contact the church office.

Discussion, Study & Interest groups meet to expand their horizons on topics of interest. Some move beyond to become involved in the greater community. Some existing groups that meet in person include the Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group and Banned Book Lovers Group.

Bible Study groups focus on developing and deepening our understanding of what it means to be a Christian in today's world. Some meet on a regular schedule, others for a specific period of time. Rev. Don Sarton's extremely popular Bible Study group's most recent series was *Understanding Our Roots*. The study focused on Luke's work organizing the many oral and written accounts of Jesus.

Educational small groups, like Adult Forum, meet to hear about and discuss various topics of interest. Adult Forum meets each Sunday after worship. Some small group opportunities are less structured. Some groups have brought in outside experts to speak on specific topics like the impact of immigration on Nebraska's economy, the importance of birds of prey in the environment, and the history of women in Omaha.

Volunteer Opportunities

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



Embracing Eastertide

A Celebration of Renewal and Hope

As we journey through the Easter season, remember that it's about more than a marshmallow bunny or chocolate egg...



Happy Easter!

Wait. Didn't we just have a joyous and impactful Easter Sunday?!

True. We did. But, contrary to what the candy companies would lead us to believe, Easter isn't just a single Sunday that we share with an adorable bunny rabbit.

As the spring flowers bloom and the days grow longer, we find ourselves immersed in the season of Easter (aka Eastertide)—a time of profound significance for the Christian community. Not just a single day of celebration but a season of renewal, transformation and hope.

The 50-day Easter season begins on Easter Sunday, and extends until Pentecost; this year it falls on Sunday, May 19.

Easter marks the culmination of the Lenten journey, a period of reflection, repentance and preparation. Lent is a time when we walk alongside Jesus in his final days, contemplating the ultimate sacrifice he made for humanity. Those solemn observances of Lent lead us to the joyous celebration of Easter Sunday, where we proclaim the triumph of life over death, light over darkness and hope over despair.

Continued on page 8

Embracing Eastertide

A Celebration of Renewal and Hope

Continued from page 7

Eastertide invites us to delve deeper into the meaning of Christ's resurrection and its implications for our lives.

The period from Easter to Pentecost, aka the Great Fifty Days, draws inspiration from the Jewish tradition of the fifty-day period between Passover and Shavuot, which commemorates the giving of the Torah to Moses.

During this season, the liturgical color of choice is typically white or gold. But as Pentecost Sunday marks the culmination of this period, white gives way to red, symbolizing the fiery presence of the Holy Spirit.

The first Sunday following Pentecost sees the colors reverting back to white or gold.

As we journey through the Easter season, remember that it's about more than a marshmallow bunny or chocolate egg. The Easter season serves as a reminder that no matter how dark our circumstances may seem, there's always the promise of new beginnings and second chances. It's a time to let go of past hurts, regrets and disappointments. We embrace the hope that comes from knowing that we are loved and cherished by a God who offers us grace and redemption. 🌿

Crafting Comfort: Prayer Shawl Ministry

Countryside's Care Team is initiating a Prayer Shawl Ministry group that will meet to knit and crochet prayer shawls for members experiencing challenging life events. The first meeting will be held Saturday, June 8 at 9 a.m. at Countryside. [Click here to register!](#) For more information on this new group, email [Margie Phillips](mailto:margiephillips56@gmail.com) at margiephillips56@gmail.com.

Web of Care Visitor Training Workshop

All are welcome to attend the Care Team Visitor Training Workshop on May 19 at 11:30 a.m. in the Ruth meeting room. This training will prepare you to visit our members who are sick, homebound, or in senior living facilities. We will discuss best practices, active listening and prayer, and spending time practicing with one another. A box lunch will be provided, so we ask that you please register so we can order accordingly. [Register here!](#)

2024 RSSJ Conference



Tri-Faith Initiative and University of Nebraska Omaha's Religious Studies department are presenting the third annual Race, Religion, and Social Justice Conference, June 5-6, 2024 on the Tri-Faith Commons. The goal is to facilitate cross-cultural, interfaith and interdisciplinary connections that lead to a more resilient community. The conference will address intersections between race, religion, and social justice across different sectors of society; nonprofit and civic leaders, diversity, equity, access, and inclusion (DEAI) practitioners, community members, educators, health and mental health practitioners, artists, religious communities, and scholars. [Click here for more information or to register!](#)

Kindernook News



Catlin Elementary 2nd and 3rd graders came over to play their violins for Kindernook as a part of our Exploration of the Arts program. Mr. Tyler Hottovy is their principal and the dude talking in the front. It was wonderful! ~ Dir. Anne Jackson

Youth & Family Ministries

[Rebecca Morello](mailto:rebeccam@countrysideucc.org), Director of Youth & Family Ministries,
rebeccam@countrysideucc.org

[Emma Boyd](mailto:emmab@countrysideucc.org), Youth & Family Ministries Program Coordinator,
emmab@countrysideucc.org, 402-884-8035



Children's Ministries

Pre-K-6th grade

May 5: Children's Church

May 12: Community Worship

May 19: Children's Church

May 26: Community Worship

Wednesday Wonderers, Core 56

Wednesdays, 6-7:30 p.m.

May 1: Union Owls Soccer Game:
offsite/Werner Park- 6:30 p.m.

May 8: Sidewalk Chalking on our
campus!

May 15: Community Clean-Up and
Exploration

May 22: Omaha Street Percussion

May 29: Core 56 All Day Together
Time 9a.m.- 8 p.m. Family Movie Night
6-8 p.m.

Confirmation

Sundays, 4-5 p.m.

**Congratulations to our recent
Confirmands! Our confirmation class
will be offered again in the fall on
Sundays at 4 p.m.**

D&D group

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

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

Group 1: Emotional Damage

Group 2: Holy Rollers

Group 3: Chaos Campaigns

Group 4: One Group to Rule Them All



Jr. High Youth Group

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

May 5: No Evening Youth Group - lunch
in the youth room at 12pm for Jr & Sr
high students

May 12: Mother's and Mother-like
Caregivers Day! No youth group

May 19: Name that Tune/Cornhole
Tournament...with prizes

May 26: School's Out! Let's celebrate!
Field trip- AMC theatre (movie and
official time tbd)

Sr. High Youth Group

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

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

May 5: No Evening Youth Group - lunch
in the youth room at 12pm for Jr & Sr
high students

May 12: Mother's and Mother-like
Caregivers Day! No youth group

May 19: Self-Care during and after
finals/kick ball

May 26: School's Out! Let's celebrate!
Field trip- AMC theatre (movie and
official time tbd)



James T. Hicks Memorial Library Rededicated



Members of the James T. Hicks family were on hand to help rededicate the James T. Hicks Memorial Library on Sunday, April 14. Hicks, a former member of Countryside Community Church, died in a car accident in 1958, the summer after his high school graduation.

His mother, Alyce, established the Countryside library a year later as a memorial to James. She generously continued providing funds for new books for the library through the years and her memorial funds were allocated to the library after her death.

James oldest brother John, and his family, have also contributed funds through the years to update the library and to purchase materials. Countryside thanks Alyce and her family for establishing this library in James's memory.

Family members attending the rededication reception and ceremony included John and Debbie (Pillings) Hicks, their son and daughter-in-law Tom and Nancy Hicks; their daughter and son-in-law Cindy and Kurt Brown; grandchildren and great-grandchildren Jeff and Britt Hicks, Cannon and Foster Hicks, Kelly and Nick Djernes; Brenna, Adelynn, and Willa Djernes, Kevin and Alexis Brown, and Oliver Brown. 🍷

Board of Worship and Arts

At the Table Communion Volunteers Needed!

The Board of Worship and Arts is diving head first into Countryside's Communion at the Table, and we want YOU to be part of it! Communion is a big deal at Countryside, and we're excited to involve our awesome congregation in this tradition.

[Click here to register!](#)

Right now, we're serving

Communion on the first and third Sundays of each month, and we need volunteers to help out. If you're willing to lend a hand, whether regularly or on-call, we'd love to have you on board!

We've already got some volunteers signed up but we're updating our list and reaching out for more help. Whether you're up for becoming a regular or willing to be on standby, [we want to hear from you.](#)

Currently, we have four usher teams, each covering a month at a time. Depending on how many of Countrysiders step up to serve Communion, we're planning to set up a system similar to the one we used at Easter to keep things going smoothly.

If you've already signed up and received an email about Easter services, just be aware we're refreshing our list and asking if you are willing to help either on a regularly scheduled basis or on call.

So, if you're down to serve Communion regularly or be part of our on-call crew, [click here.](#) If you need more information, hit me up at mimigoings56@gmail.com. Let's make Communion even more awesome together! Thank you! Mimi Goings 🍷



Rev. Dr. Shultz-Thomas: Navigating Interfaith Relations in the Midst of Global Conflict


Countryside Senior Minister Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas was one of the three featured panelists on a recent United Church of Christ webinar on the importance of fostering understanding and solidarity among different religious communities during turbulent times, [Navigating Interfaith Relations in the Midst of Global Conflict](#).

The Tri-Faith Initiative (TFI) was highlighted as a beacon of hope amidst these challenging times, where the Temple Israel Omaha, American Muslim Institute and Countryside congregations are forging connections and building bridges—both metaphorically and literally.

Shultz-Thomas shared insights from her experience during the UCC webinar and emphasized the significance of Tri-Faith as a model for proactive relationship-building, stressing the importance of nurturing connections before conflicts arise. She acknowledged the complexities inherent in such endeavors, noting that progress often brings its own set of challenges.

She highlighted the "statement pressure" faced by groups like Tri-Faith during times of heightened media scrutiny on global conflicts. While statements can wield significant influence, she cautioned

against the potential harm they may cause, advocating instead for the power of living out shared values as a profound statement in itself. The true statement we're making to the world, said Shultz-Thomas, is reflected in how we live and interact with one another on a daily basis.

The webinar offered insights into navigating complex dynamics in an increasingly polarized world. As conflicts persist and tensions simmer, initiatives like TFI stand as beacons of hope, demonstrating the transformative power of genuine dialogue, understanding and solidarity across religious divides. 

Quarterly Financial Report

Dear Countryside Donors ~ We've celebrated Easter and completed the first quarter of the church year! We appreciate and thank you for your financial support of Countryside's ministries. Total member revenue received is on target for the budget passed in February at the Annual Meeting. Our operating expenses are slightly below budget! Please remember that we, the congregation, passed a budget using additional resources from general investments, designated/estate gift funds and capital reserve funds. We've begun using those additional resources to cover church expenses. Thank you! Ed Schwartz, Treasurer; Dan Loven-Crum, Director of Administration

Countryside Community Church
2024 Q1 Quarterly Budget Update

Revenue	Actual YTD	Budget YTD	Annual Budget
Member Giving	\$ 417,703	\$ 416,698	\$ 1,088,302
Other income	\$ 17,232	\$ 16,875	\$ 67,500
Total	\$ 434,935	\$ 433,573	\$ 1,155,802

Expenses	Actual YTD	Budget YTD	Annual Budget
Operating Expenses	\$ 348,524	\$ 367,729	\$ 1,470,918

NET Income/(Expenses) \$ 86,411 \$ 65,844 \$ (315,116)

Authorized transfer from General Investments and Capital Fund \$ 59,478 \$ 78,779 \$ 315,116

Countryside Fellowship Gallery ~ Holy Week

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

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

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

