

Countryside Currents

ADVENT AT COUNTRYSIDE
CHRISTMAS OFFERING 2024
GROUP NEWS

The Monthly Magazine of Countryside Community Church



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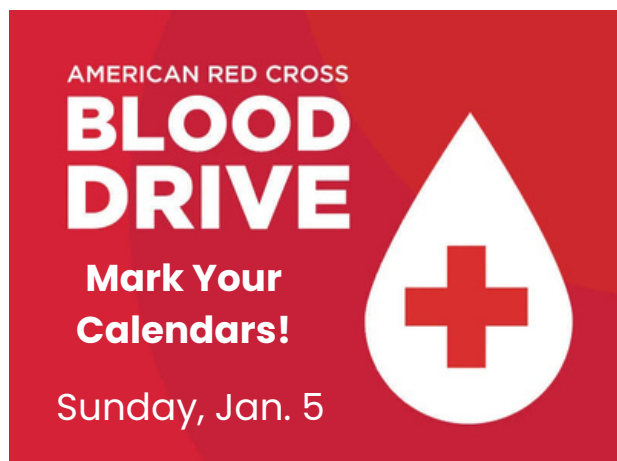
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Social Justice Outreach

The Box ~ December



The Social Justice and Outreach Board has chosen Food Bank for the Heartland, a vital partner in fighting hunger across Nebraska and western Iowa, as the December recipient of The Box donations. With 1 in 8 people in the Heartland—1 in 5 children—facing food insecurity, your generosity will help provide shelf-stable protein and pantry staples to families in need. Countryside's special Christmas Offering is also the Food Bank, which supplies our Community Cupboard, and we hope to double our support by donating both financial and food gifts. Thank you for making a difference this season!

Please deposit cans, boxes, etc. in the box located in the entryway. You can also visit their [Amazon Wishlist](#) for donations.

From the Financial Office & Stewardship Committee

2024 Contribution Deadline

Three quarters of the church year is behind us already! We appreciate and thank you for your financial support of Countryside's ministries. Now is the time to catch up on your planned gifts to the church.

If you'd like to make a special end-of-year donation – it would be greatly appreciated!

Stewardship Pledge Cards

If you have already returned the Stewardship Committee pledge card sent out earlier this Fall, thank you. If you have not submitted a 2025 pledge please do so today by going to countrysideucc.org/imaginemore.

2024 Contribution Deadline

Please submit your final contributions of 2024 to the church before the end of the year. The IRS looks closely at charitable giving, and we want you to understand that in order for your contribution to be deductible in 2023, it must be postmarked or physically received at the church office by December 31, 2024. Please note that your check date alone will not control to which year your contribution applies.

Countryside Christmas Offering 2024

Holiday Mission: Fight Hunger in the Heartland



Each day, our neighbors, friends, classmates, and veterans—from families with small children to seniors—struggle to find the nutritious food they need to work, grow, and thrive. Food insecurity is a serious issue in our region, with devastating effects. Right now, 1 in 8 people in the Heartland and 1 in 5 children are considered food insecure.

Founded in 1981 and headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska, Food Bank for the Heartland is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a vital mission: to provide food to children, families, seniors, and veterans facing hunger across Nebraska and western Iowa, with the ultimate goal of eliminating hunger in our communities. They serve our neighbors with respect, integrity, and urgency.



The Food Bank plays a crucial role, which is why they see the fight against hunger as an ongoing, collaborative effort. They distribute food through more than 500 Network Partners, including our very own Community Cupboard. Through this partnership, the Community Cupboard can offer a variety of food products, including fresh produce, proteins, and both perishable and non-perishable items.

This Christmas season, we urge you to take action. Your generosity helps Countryside make a difference for our neighbors; 96 cents of every dollar donated goes directly back into our communities. Please consider giving in whatever way works best for you—[online](#), by mail, by scanning the QR code below, or using the envelopes available in the pews.

Thank you for your support,

Your Social Justice and Outreach Board

Nancy Behringer
Ann Duey
Derek Kuhr
Jeri Lundblad

Natalie Mason
Sarah Miller
Ann Naylor
Will Reimer

Tom Scates
Sandy Sueper
Emily Wadhams
Joni Watke



How does a weary world rejoice?



The Last Time I Saw God

The last time I saw God face to face
I was looking at a bed of tulips.
God was every color of red.
I was merely a mortal,
in awe of it all.

The time before that,
we were tying back the curtains,
looking for stars.
God was the deepest purple
and the brightest light.

The time before that,
the city was soft with snow.
God was the quiet
that tucked us all in.

And in between these small gifts there were
newborn babies,
and sapling trees,
homemade bread,
the sound of a church singing on Sunday.

...

Why, yes, we are lucky.
We are more than lucky
for the moments when delight and awe
unzip the weight
we carry around.

Prayer by Rev. Sarah Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC |
sanctifiedart.org

As Advent comes again to a weary world, we ask, *How does a weary world rejoice?* Christ was born into a weary world. King Herod ruled the land with a legacy of ruthlessness. The Romans treated the people of Israel with contempt, imposing harsh taxes and land seizures that forced many into subsistence farming. Poverty and destitution were pervasive. And yet, Christ was born, bringing good news of great joy for all people.

So, how does a weary world rejoice? From the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel, we have found a few answers: we acknowledge our weariness, we find joy in connection, we allow ourselves to be amazed, we sing stories of hope, we make room, we root ourselves in ritual, and most importantly, we trust our belovedness. In the parallel birth stories of Jesus and John, joy arrives—despite trepidation, fear or grief. In these stories, we find rhythms for rejoicing. As we

move through the Advent season, we hope to create space for acknowledging the weariness of our world while celebrating God's closeness with great joy.

2024 Devotionals

How Does a Weary World Rejoice?

This Advent, we'll hold space for our weariness and our joy. We'll seek a "thrill of hope" in our hurting world. We'll welcome joy—even if, like the prophet Isaiah, we cry out for comfort (Isaiah 40:1). In this weary world, may we find many ways to rejoice. The 2024 Devotional, *How Does a Weary World Rejoice?* follows the Christmas story in Luke 1–2, concluding with Baptism of the Lord Sunday. It includes weekly readings to follow at your own pace. Copies are available in the Narthex and church office for a suggested donation of \$5.

Advent 2024: How Does a Weary World Rejoice?



Advent Worship at Countryside

Join us this Advent at Countryside as we journey through ***How Does a Weary World Rejoice?*** Discover hope and joy as we await the light of Christmas together!

Sunday, Dec. 1, 10am

We Acknowledge our Weariness.

Luke 1:1-23. Music: *Bring Us Hope*, C4 Choir

Sunday, Dec. 8, 10am

We Find Joy in Connection.

Luke 1:24-45. Music: *Creation Will Be At Peace*, C4 Choir

Sunday, Dec. 8, 7pm

Lessons & Carols

C4 Choir sings Advent & Christmas music. The service features Scripture, prose and poetry evoking the imagery and emotion of the season.

Sunday, Dec. 15, 10am

We Allow Ourselves to be Amazed.

Luke 1:57-66. Music: *How Great Our Joy*, C4 Choir

Thursday, Dec. 19, 7pm

Longest Night Service

Featuring special music by vocalists Emily Wadhams and Shannon Shultz-Thomas.

Sunday, Dec. 22, 10am

We Sing Stories of Hope.

Luke 1:46-55. Music: *Of The Father's Love Begotten*, C4 and Handbell Choirs

All-Church Events

Celebrate the season with Countryside's All-Church Advent events. Deck the halls with Hanging of the Greens, enjoy the cool tunes of Jazz Coffeehouse and thrill to the stirring Christmas Organ Extravaganza!

Sunday, Nov. 24, 11:15am

Hanging of the Greens

A joyful tradition at Countryside! Help decorate the Church for Advent & Christmas; Soup Contest & Tasting.

Saturday, Dec. 7, 7pm

Jazz Coffeehouse

A perennial favorite featuring the Countryside Jazz Band!

Sunday, Dec. 15, 4pm

Christmas Pipe Organ Extravaganza

The joyful sounds of the season played expertly by Countryside's Organist-in-Resident, Alex Ritter!

Christmas Eve Services

Experience the wonder of Christmas Eve at Countryside. Families are invited to a joyful family-oriented service at 5, followed by a candlelight service featuring the C4 Choir. Join us to celebrate the light and hope of Christmas!

Tuesday, Dec. 24, 5pm

Children & Families Service

Children's Choir. The service features the Christmas Story, with Carols and Costumes.

Tuesday, Dec. 24, 7pm

Candlelight Service

Music: *O Holy Night*, C4 Choir.



Social Justice & Outreach Board

Blood Drive: Save the Date!



Nationwide, someone needs a unit of blood every 2 to 3 seconds - most of us will need blood in our lifetime.

Please donate at the American Red Cross blood drive event on January 5, hosted by the Social Justice and Outreach Board.

The need for blood is constant and only volunteer donors can fulfill that need for patients in our community. All blood types are needed. We look forward to seeing you there on January 5. [Click here](#) to make your appointment and thank you for supporting the American Red Cross blood program!

Date: Sun Jan 5, 2025

Time: 8:30 am - 2 pm

Location: Gym

For more info, email [Emily Wadhams](mailto:Emily.Wadhams).

EPS Recycling



Just in time for the holidays, Countryside will have a collection site for heavy, Expandable Polystyrene (EPS) packing material. EPS is the hard white packaging foam used to transport goods like TVs, appliances, glass items, temperature-sensitive medications and perishables. There's bound to be a lot of it during the gift-giving season. Give it another life by sending it to Plastilite.

The collection site will be on the lower level near the south double doors. Drop-off times are 8–4 Mon–Fri. Access the green bag container by ringing a buzzer from the outdoor entrance or by going through the main upper-level doors. **Please don't drop off tape, labels, flexible foam, food containers, packing peanuts or foam sheets.** The collection site will be open from December 15, 2024, through Jan. 12, 2025. Be environmentally friendly and recycle your EPS!

New Book for Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group

The Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group is discussing Ta-Nehisi Coates' newest book, *The Message*. We meet each Sunday, 8-9 am via Zoom. The link can be found on the church calendar. All are welcome to join our conversation. Contact Sharon Royers sroyers@centurylink.net with any questions. The schedule for the remainder of the year:

Dec. 8: Part III of The Message

Dec. 15: Part IV of The Message

Dec. 22: OFF for Christmas

Dec. 29: OFF for New Years

Jan. 5: Resume - book TBD

Tri-Faith Partners

Walking Group on Hiatus for the Winter



Members of Temple Israel, Countryside Community Church and the American Muslim Institute gathered on Friday mornings during the fall to walk together on Abraham's Bridge. We built relationships by sharing stories and learning about each other's families, careers, interests and faith traditions. We visited the Tri Faith Garden one week and were greeted in Hebrew and English by children from the Friedel Academy. We shared the bridge with children from Kindernook, the pre-school at Countryside. We talked about our holidays and celebrations. The vegetation in the Commons changed each week, with members checking out the names of plants on our phones.

This was a fun, healthy way to build relationships with members of each faith community! We encourage others to join us when the weather warms up! We will let each congregation know when we resume the walking group. Mary Fraser Meints, Countryside Community Church Walker

Spiritual Formation Children & Youth Programming

Discovery Kids

Dec. 8: Discovery Kids Sunday, 10:15 - 11:15 am. Our story this week is Advent. We'll make an angel. Be sure to stop downstairs to see our Children's Christmas Tree!

Kids & Families

Dec. 15: Children will be welcomed in for communion during service. They can sit with their families for the remainder of the service.

Dec. 18: 6 pm. Christmas party with crafts and treats!

Dec. 24: 5 pm. Children and Families Christmas Eve Service - The Christmas Story with Carols and Costumes!

[Heather Moran](mailto:heatherm@countysideucc.org), Director of Spiritual Formation,
heatherm@countysideucc.org

Honoring Years of Good Work with Omaha's TOGETHER



Bonnie & Bob Buckland were honored November 7 at the Friends of TOGETHER fundraiser for all their work over the years with the nonprofit. The TOGETHER fundraiser also celebrated the founding of their 49th year with Countryside and other area faith partners.

Board of Christian Education & Spiritual Growth

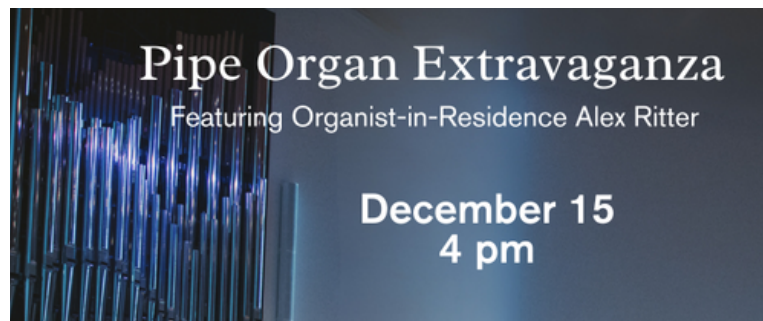
Adult Education Events

Sunday, Dec. 8, 11:15-12:15 am: *I get by with a little help from my friends...and my family...and my faith* with Pam Govier. Through personal experience, Pam discusses how to recover from personal setbacks through the love and support from the Countryside community, family and friends.

Tuesday, Jan. 7, 11:30-1 pm: #1: *Meeting John Again For The First Time* - Soup, Salad, & Scripture with Don Sarton.

Sunday, Jan. 12, 11:15-12:15 am: Playing with the Jewish kids set the groundwork for Tri-Faith interest with Linda Spencer.

Sunday, Jan. 19, 11:15-12:15 am: *How Poetry Can Help With Stress*. Learn how poetry can be used to calm our nerves, raise our moods and inform us about our lives.



Countryside Gallery ~ Hanging of the Greens

The annual Hanging of the Greens at Countryside Community Church brought joy, connection, and creativity as the sanctuary and surrounding spaces transformed for the Advent season. Under the guidance of Adam Witte, Director of Worship and Arts, volunteers of all ages came together on November 24, immediately following worship, to decorate the church with greenery, candles, and ornaments. This cherished tradition serves as a reminder of the spiritual preparation that accompanies the anticipation of Christ's birth.

The festive atmosphere was enriched by a community luncheon featuring homemade soups, including a lively soup contest that added a dash of friendly competition. Families with young children played a special role in the event, with ornaments crafted during a Wednesday evening gathering on November 20 led by Heather Moran. Their handmade decorations were lovingly placed on a special tree, highlighting the community's intergenerational spirit.

As the final touches were placed, the church was ready to welcome the season of Advent, embodying the hope and joy of the coming weeks. Thank you to all who lent their hands and hearts to this beautiful tradition!

