

# Countryside Currents

The Monthly Newsletter of Countryside Community Church

## Beyond Sundays: Building Community Through Engagement

*As the calendar turns to January, many of us are reflecting on the year past and setting intentions for the year ahead. Hopefully, engagement and giving back will find their ways to the top of our list.*

### Reflecting on Volunteers and Engagement in 2024

The past year brought many opportunities for engagement at Countryside. Signature events like the Ice Cream Festival/Small Group Fair, Trunk or Treat, and Hanging of the Greens were as popular as ever, while new additions such as the Easter Breakfast, Pride Lunch during Pride Weekend, and our Juneteenth celebration made their mark and will return in 2025.

These gatherings share a common thread: engaging volunteers. Approximately 100 Countryside members dedicated their time and talents to make these events successful, helping foster the sense of community that welcomes newcomers and strengthens bonds among long-time members.

### Celebrating Service: Making in Impact

Volunteers' contributions extend far beyond events. Over the course of 2024, more than 125 meals were delivered to Countryside members recovering from illness or surgery, offering comfort and care when it was needed most.



The energy and dedication of these volunteers have also supported the integration of new members. In May and November 2024 alone, 55 new members joined Countryside, many of whom have already embraced opportunities to serve, from participating in

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## Social Justice and Outreach

### The Box ~ January



The Social Justice and Outreach Board has designated Heartland Family Service as the recipient of The Box for January.

Founded in 1875 Family Service has connected with countless individuals and families through two trauma-informed services categories: Housing, safety and well-being, and Counseling and prevention services.

While their needs are extensive, we encourage members to supply goods for Move-In-Kits to give families household necessities for a new start. Deposit goods in the Box in the church foyer or send directly to church via Amazon.

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



## Imagine More in 2025!

### 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](http://countrysideucc.org/imaginemore).

# Honoring Martin Luther King Jr. Day

This January, Countryside celebrates Martin Luther King Jr. Day by continuing our commitment to antiracism and fostering the Beloved Community Dr. King envisioned. The national holiday, on Monday, Jan. 20, is an invitation to reflect on Dr. King's legacy and take meaningful action in our communities.

We are committed to building a more inclusive and equitable society, and our ongoing antiracism work helps us live out these values.

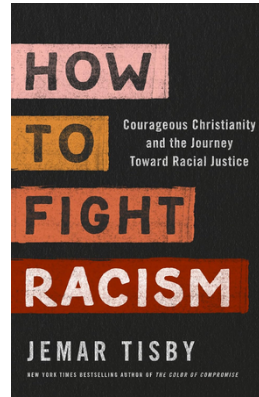
Looking for a way to observe Martin Luther King Jr. Day? Consider one of these community events on Monday, Jan. 20:

The Durham Museum, 10 am - 4 pm, 801 S 10th St, Omaha. Celebrate Dr. King's legacy of peace, tolerance, and community service with free admission. Explore the museum's exhibitions, join in special activities, contribute to a community art project, and watch a screening of Dr. King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech. For more information, visit The Durham Museum at <https://durhammuseum.org/>.

Habitat for Humanity, 8-11 am, 1701 N 24th Street, Omaha. MLK Jr. Day of Service Build. Honor the spirit of the day by volunteering to build wall panels for new homes. This event, held indoors at Habitat's warehouse, requires no prior experience—training and tools will be provided. For more information visit [ShareOmaha.org](http://ShareOmaha.org).

Let's come together as a church and community to commemorate Dr. King's life and legacy by striving for justice, equality, and love in all we do.

# Join the Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group This January



Countryside's Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group will kick off the new year with engaging and thought-provoking discussions on Jemar Tisby's *How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey Toward Racial Justice*. Starting Sunday, January 5, this series promises to deepen our understanding of racial justice

justice and inspire action rooted in our faith.

Tisby's book offers a practical framework for combating racism in everyday life, emphasizing the power of the ARC of Racial Justice—Awareness, Relationships, and Commitment. Through personal stories, historical context, and actionable strategies, *How to Fight Racism* equips readers with tools to recognize and confront racial injustices in their communities.

Whether you've been a long-time participant or are new to the group, this is a perfect opportunity to explore what it means to live out courageous Christianity in pursuit of equity and justice. Sessions are open to all and provide a safe, welcoming space to ask questions, share experiences, and grow together in our commitment to justice.

Mark your calendar and join us in the conversation as we explore ways to build a more inclusive and compassionate community.

For Zoom link and passcode, visit the Countryside website calendar at [countrysideucc.org/calendar/](http://countrysideucc.org/calendar/).

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## EPS Recycling



The drop-off site for hard (EPS) Styrofoam is open through January 12. EPS is the hard white packaging foam used to transport goods like TVs, appliances, glass items and perishables.

There's bound to have been 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.** Be environmentally friendly and recycle your EPS!

## Children & Youth Programming

### Discovery Kids

**Sundays**, 10:15-11:15 a.m.

Kids start in Worship with their families then leave together after the Children's Moment. Please pick up in Choir Room after group music! (Priscilla)

**Sunday, Jan. 26**, Discovery Kids sing during Worship!

### Kids & Families

**Wednesday, Jan 15**, 6-7 p.m.: Movie Night

## Confirmation and Youth Groups

**Sundays**, resuming January 5 with Pastor Sarah Rentzel Jones.

## Board of Christian Education & Spiritual Growth

### Adult Education Events

**Tuesday, Jan. 7**, 11:30-1 p.m.: #1: *Meeting John Again For The First Time* - Soup, Salad, & Scripture. A bring-your-own lunch, six-session series with Don Sarton.

**Sunday, Jan. 12**, 11:15-12:15 a.m.: *How the Playground Set the Groundwork for Interest in Tri-Faith*, 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.

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Continued from page 1

# Beyond Sundays

## *Building Community Through Engagement*

events to sharing their expertise on boards and in ministry areas.

This year promises even more opportunities for connection and collaboration, including a new outreach collaboration with one of Countryside's community partners, Together. It's a testament to the strength of our community that we continue to grow, give and serve together.

### **Brewing Community at Common Grounds: A Year of Service, One Cup at a Time**

At Countryside, there's no better place to start than at Common Grounds, our coffee shop and ministry hub, which embodies the spirit of connection and care that defines our community.

Common Grounds played a key engagement role in 2024, too. Volunteers in the coffee shop have worked tirelessly to ensure its continued success. Once reliant

on the church budget, Common Grounds now generates enough revenue to provide coffee and supplies for small groups, teams and boards while also supplying compostable service ware for various events.

As you sip your coffee or specialty drink at Common Grounds, take a moment to reflect on the warmth and generosity that define Countryside. Whether you're a new visitor or a long-time member, you'll find a place here to engage, to connect, to contribute and be part of something meaningful.

Our heartfelt appreciation goes to the Common Grounds barista volunteers who bring energy, organization and a spirit of service to every event and ministry - Bill Bolte, Shannon Avard, Amy Stoddard, Pam Govier and Jeremy Wadhams. You make all of this possible.

For more information on how you can get involved and make a difference this year, contact Diane Scott, [dianes@countrysideucc.org](mailto:dianes@countrysideucc.org). 🌱