

COUNTRYSIDE CURRENTS

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF
COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Countryside Tri-Faith Team

Understanding Our Tri-Faith Partners

In a world that often feels increasingly chaotic and divided, it's more important than ever to understand the beliefs, customs, and cultures of those around us. As we navigate a landscape shaped by political polarization and social tension, embracing opportunities to connect with people from different faith traditions can help foster empathy, solidarity, and unity. This is especially true for Countryside, where we are fortunate to have meaningful relationships with our Tri-Faith partners—Temple Israel Omaha and the American Muslim Institute (AMI).

Countryside's Tri-Faith team continues to lead visits to our faith partners' services each month, offering a unique opportunity to learn firsthand about their practices, history, and shared values. These visits aren't just an opportunity for education. They're also a way to show support for our faith partners as we collectively work for a more inclusive and compassionate world.

Mark Your Calendars!

Throughout 2025, the Countryside Tri-Faith team will continue to guide us to Temple Israel and AMI services. Beginning this month, we plan to visit the second Friday of every month. These visits are open to all Countrysiders, and they offer a

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The Box: April

Supporting OneWorld: Ensuring Health Care for All



This month, Countryside's Box donations will support OneWorld Community Health Centers, a vital resource providing quality health care to all, regardless of economic or insurance status.

Founded in 1970 as a volunteer-run free clinic, OneWorld has grown into the largest primary health care provider in South Omaha. They remain committed to breaking down financial, cultural, and linguistic barriers so that everyone can access medical, dental, and behavioral health services.

We're collecting onesies, personal hygiene kits, diapers, and toddler books to support OneWorld's youngest patients and their families. If you prefer the convenience of online ordering, you can purchase directly from their [Amazon wish list](#).

Your generosity helps sustain OneWorld's mission of inclusion, compassion, access, relationships, and excellence—ensuring that all people receive the care they need.

Thank you for making a difference!

Fingerprints: April

Paper Products



Fingerprints is collecting **paper products** like paper towels and tissues.

Fingerprints is the Board of Social Justice and Outreach's collaborative program with [Together Omaha](#) that provides essential household items to specific families in need.

Donations can be dropped off anytime on the counter or in the wicker basket behind the barista station in Common Grounds. On Sundays, look for the prominently displayed Fingerprints basket. Questions? Contact Diane at dianes@countrysideucc.org. Let's leave our fingerprints on lives in need!

Soup, Salad & Scripture

Bring-Your-Own-Lunch Series

Paul's Letter to the Romans

Tuesdays at Noon | Through April 29 (Skipping April 15) | 11:30 am – 1 pm

Join Don Sarton for a journey through Paul's Letter to the Romans in this bring-your-own-lunch Soup, Salad, and Scriptures, series. Explore why Paul wrote to the early Christian community in Rome, how he wrestled with his Jewish identity and commitment to the Torah, and how he sought to understand the revelation of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant.

Romans, though the last of Paul's epistles chronologically, is placed first in the biblical canon—likely due to its length and significance. Come for lunch, stay for discussion, and deepen your understanding of this foundational text.

Racial Justice Book Group

A New Read for Spring

The Sunday morning Racial Justice Book Group begins a new read on March 30: *Everyone Who is Gone is Here* by Jonathan Blitzer. This powerful book explores the lives shaped by the U.S.-Central America migration crisis and the policies behind it.

Join us Sundays, 8–9am on Zoom for discussion and reflection. All are welcome! Find the Zoom link on the church calendar. Questions? Contact Sharon Royers at sroyers26@gmail.com.

Legislature 101: Understanding Key Bills & Taking Action

Stay informed and engaged with Nebraska's legislative process! On April 27, 11:15am - 12:15pm, in the Chapel, Maureen Hornacek and members of the Rainbow Parents of NE will present Legislature 101. They'll provide an overview of our State Legislature, key bills under discussion, and how they impact our community.

RCMC Concert

Rebel with a Cause

River City Mixed Chorus, featuring Countrysiders Barron Breland, Adam Steinbach, and Adam Witte, will honor Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray this April.



On April 5 at 7 p.m. at the Holland Center, the Chorus presents *Rebel with a Cause*, featuring the world premiere of *Sincerely Yours, Pauli Murray*, a 10-movement cantata celebrating Murray's legacy as a legal trailblazer, civil rights advocate, and the first Black woman ordained as an Episcopal priest.

The tribute begins April 4 with a screening of *My Name Is Pauli Murray* at Ruth Sokolof Theater, followed by a panel discussion. For details, contact Adam Witte, adamw@countrysideucc.org, or visit rcmc.org.

Save the Date: May 4!

A Sunday with Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis

We are honored to welcome Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis as our guest pastor on Sunday, May 4! Jacqui is a dynamic preacher, activist, and public theologian, and a powerful voice for an antiracist, just, gun violence-free, fully welcoming, and gender-affirming society where everyone has enough. After worship, join us for a special all-church gathering in the sanctuary at 11:30am. to continue the conversation. Mark your calendar—you won't want to miss this!

**Adult Ed
Perspectives**
Web of Care

Sunday, April 6 | 11:15am –
12:15pm

Join Cathy MacInnes and friends for a conversation about Web of Care—what it is, how it works, and how it differs from Stephen Ministry. This session focuses on how we care for one another at Countryside, not on volunteer recruitment. Come learn about this important ministry and how it supports our community!


Web of Care Launch!

We're excited to launch Web of Care at Countryside! This new congregational care program ensures members stay connected through regular check-ins and communication with a dedicated Web of Care Coordinator. Our goal is simple: no one is overlooked, and every member feels valued and supported at every stage of life. If someone is in crisis or needs extra care, this network allows us to respond quickly and compassionately.

A few weeks ago, we sent members an introductory letter explaining what to expect in the coming months. As we get Web of Care up and running, a Coordinator will reach out to check in with you, confirm your contact details, and make sure you're connected.

Feeling truly seen and supported is at the heart of a thriving faith community. Studies show that strong social connections improve emotional well-being, reduce stress, and even enhance physical health. In times of joy, connection multiplies our celebrations; in times of struggle, it reminds us we're not alone.

At Countryside, Web of Care is one way we live out our commitment to care for one another. A simple check-in or a kind word can make all the difference. Let's nurture these connections—because together, we are stronger.

Want to learn more? Pick up a brochure in the narthex! We hope you'll embrace this opportunity to deepen our connections as a church family. For questions, contact our Lead Coordinators, Margie Bolte and Cathy MacInnes, at webofcare@countrysideucc.org, or reach out to Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones at sarahrj@countrysideucc.org. 

The Transformative Power of Giving

Countryside's Easter Offering

This Easter, let's turn our faith into action!

Together, we can make a real impact in our community by supporting OneWorld Community Health Centers—an organization dedicated to providing high-quality health care to everyone, no matter their economic or insurance status. Join us in making a transformative impact on the lives of others through our Easter Offering!

OneWorld, founded in 1970 as a volunteer-run free clinic, is now the largest provider of primary health care services in South Omaha. Their mission remains grounded in the same core values that we hold dear at Countryside—values of inclusion, compassion, access, and relationship—that have guided OneWorld for more than 50 years.

OneWorld's Commitment to the Community

OneWorld's work is rooted in breaking down barriers to health care—financial, cultural, and linguistic. They believe that everyone, regardless of income, insurance coverage, race, religion, or immigration status, deserves access to quality health care. With an open-door policy, OneWorld serves the community without discrimination, ensuring that individuals from all walks of life can receive the care they need.

The services offered by OneWorld include medical, dental, and behavioral health care. For many, it's a



lifeline—a place where they can receive care regardless of their ability to pay. It's a place where relationships are built with trust and compassion, and where the pursuit of excellence in health care is a top priority.

A Call to Action

As we reflect on the Easter season, we're reminded of the transformative power of love and generosity. Your Easter offering to OneWorld is not just a donation—it's an investment in a healthier, more equitable community. It's a chance to share the blessings we have received with those in need, embodying the compassion and care that Jesus modeled for us.

Let's embrace this opportunity to give, knowing that our collective efforts will help bring healing and hope to those who need it most.

For more information on how to give, visit our website at countrysideucc.org/donate, scan the QR code in the pews, or use the envelopes available during Easter services. Together, we can make a difference—one gift, one life, and one community at a time. 💎



YOUTH MINISTRIES



"Ryan brings such a unique combination of skills and experiences to our youth ministry," says Director of Spiritual Formation Heather Moran.

INTERIM DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRIES

RYAN HUNTER

When Ryan Hunter steps into a gym, a classroom, or a film studio, one thing is clear—he's there to inspire. Whether coaching a basketball team to victory, helping students craft award-winning films, or mentoring young people through life's challenges, Ryan is passionate about shaping the next generation. Now, he's bringing that same energy and vision to Countryside as our Interim Director of Youth Ministries.

With 17 years of experience as an educator and basketball coach, Ryan has been a guiding force for many young individuals in the Greater Omaha community, nurturing their development both academically and athletically.

At the Omaha Public Schools Career Center, he taught courses in business, entrepreneurship, video production, short film, and sports broadcasting. His mentorship led students to secure 13 state championships in SkillsUSA video and short film competitions. As a high school basketball shooting coach, Ryan significantly contributed to Omaha Central High School's seven state championships and played a pivotal role in developing record-setting players.

[Click here to watch Ryan's introductory video.](#)

Ryan's innovative approach and ability to connect with youth from diverse backgrounds make him a valuable addition to our ministry. His expertise in

Walking the Sacred Path: The History and Significance of Labyrinths

Labyrinths have been used for centuries as a tool for reflection, prayer, and spiritual journeying. Unlike a maze, which is designed to confuse with multiple paths and dead ends, a labyrinth offers a single, winding path leading to the center and back out again. This simple yet profound design invites those who walk it to slow down, center themselves, and experience a deeper connection to God.

Historically, labyrinths date back over 4,000 years and have appeared in various cultures and spiritual traditions. The earliest known labyrinth designs can be found in ancient petroglyphs and on pottery from regions as diverse as Greece, India, and Scandinavia. In the Christian tradition, labyrinths became especially prominent during the medieval period. The most famous example is the labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral in France, built in the early 13th century. Pilgrims who could not journey to Jerusalem would walk the labyrinth as a symbolic pilgrimage, meditating as they moved toward the center, representing spiritual enlightenment or closeness to God.

Today, labyrinths are used by churches, retreat centers, and individuals seeking a contemplative practice. Walking a labyrinth during Lent can be particularly meaningful, as it mirrors the inward journey of reflection, repentance, and renewal. As we step onto the path, we are invited to let go of distractions, listen for God's guidance, and prepare our hearts for the transformative power of Easter.

This Lent, as you walk the Countryside labyrinth, take time to embrace its sacred rhythm. Trust the journey, knowing that each step brings you closer to God's presence and the hope of resurrection.



How to Walk a Labyrinth

Walking a labyrinth is a personal and spiritual practice, meant to quiet the mind and open the heart. Here are some simple steps to guide your walk:

Prepare Your Heart – Before stepping onto the path, take a deep breath, set an intention, or offer a silent prayer.

Walk with Awareness – Follow the winding path slowly and mindfully, letting go of distractions and focusing on each step.

Reach the Center – Pause in the center for reflection, prayer, or simply to rest in God's presence.

Return with Gratitude – Walk the path back out with a sense of renewal, carrying the peace and insight you've gained.

There is no right or wrong way to walk a labyrinth. Come as you are, trust the journey, and let the experience unfold. 🌿

The Lenten Labyrinth is open through
April 18. For times, see page 9.

Lenten & Easter At a Glance

April 2025

Join Countryside this Lenten season for a journey of quiet reflection, prayer, worship and spiritual practices that nurture growth and inspire us to embody our faith more fully.



Through April 17

- Labyrinth Prayer Walk
- Art Walk



Sundays, Through April 13

- Contemplative Lenten Taizé Worship, 8:30 a.m.
- Traditional, Jazz, and Communion Worship, 10 a.m.

Monday, April 7

- Discover Awe Book Study, 12 p.m.

Sunday, April 13, Palm Sunday

- Palm Sunday Procession, 9:45 a.m.
- Palm Sunday Service, 10 a.m.

Friday, April 18 - Good Friday

- Combined Maundy Thursday & Good Friday Tenebrae Service with Omaha Symphony Cellist Tim Strang, 7 p.m.

Sunday, April 20 - Easter Sunday

- Sunrise Service, 7 a.m.
- Worship Service, 9 a.m.
- Easter Brunch & Egg Hunt, 10-11 a.m.
- Worship Service, 11 a.m.





Lent & Easter 2025

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Lenten Labyrinth Prayer & Art Walk

Through April 18, Chapel

Open Hours (*Check church calendar and website for additional hours)

- Mondays & Fridays, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
- Good Friday, ALL DAY!
- Groups, call the office to reserve a group time!

Self-Directed Lenten Poetry Journey

Immerse yourself in the beauty and depth of Lent through the power of poetry. A PDF version is available by emailing Office@countrysideucc.org. Printed copies are also available upon request.

LENTEN WORSHIP

Contemplative Lenten Taizé Worship: Sundays, through April 13, 8:30 a.m., Chapel

Through silence, prayer, and the repetitive beauty of Taizé chants, we'll draw closer to God's presence, preparing our hearts for the journey to Easter.

Traditional, Jazz and Communion Worship: Sundays, through April 13, 10 a.m. in the Sanctuary. Journey with us as we explore "everything in between," discovering how to meet God in the midst of life's extremes.

HOLY WEEK & EASTER SERVICES

Sunday, April 13 - Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday Processional & Worship Service: Join us at 9:45 a.m. on Palm Sunday for a joyful and meaningful celebration as we begin Holy Week together.

Friday, April 18 - Good Friday

7 p.m. Combined Maundy Thursday and Good Friday Tenebrae Service

Our Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services are being combined into one powerful worship experience.


Sunday, April 20 - Easter Sunday

Easter Sunday Worship Services

Begin your morning with an 7 a.m. Sunrise Service, out on the lawn, followed by worship at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

Easter Brunch & Egg Hunt - 10-11 a.m.

Celebrate Easter with delicious food and family fun! Whether you worship at 7 a.m., 9 a.m., or 11 a.m., you're invited to join us for a festive Easter Brunch at 10 a.m. At 10:30 a.m., children can enjoy an exciting Easter Egg Hunt, perfect for capturing joyful memories—so don't forget your cameras!



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ABOUT RYAN HUNTER

video production and storytelling opens new avenues for engaging our youth in meaningful ways.

“Ryan brings such a unique combination of skills and experiences to our youth ministry,” says Director of Spiritual Formation Heather Moran. “His passion for working with young people, his creativity, and his heart for mentorship will be such a gift to our middle and high school students.”

During his interim tenure, Ryan will help maintain and enhance our youth programs, ensuring they remain spaces

of spiritual growth, community building, and enriching faith-based activities. Collaborating closely with Heather, church staff, and dedicated volunteers, he’s committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for our youth.

Please join us in welcoming Ryan Hunter to the Countryside family. We eagerly anticipate the enthusiasm, creativity, and leadership he’ll bring to our youth ministry. Be sure to introduce yourself and get to know Ryan in the coming weeks as we continue our mission of fostering faith and community among the young people of Countryside. 🍂

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Tri-Faith Team: Understanding Our Tri-Faith Partners

wonderful chance to build interfaith relationships in a welcoming and respectful environment. The following dates are confirmed with both AMI and Temple Israel:

- April 11
- May 9
- June 13

These visits provide us a window into the worship services of our Jewish and Muslim neighbors. You don’t have to be an expert on their faiths to attend—just bring an open mind and heart. Whether you’re curious about their beliefs, seeking deeper understanding, or simply wanting to offer support,

these visits are a powerful way to engage.

Ready to join us?

Please [register here](#) and help us fill our spots for each visit. If you have any questions or would like more details, feel free to reach out to Will Reimer at reimer.will@outlook.com.

In today’s world, where it’s so easy to be divided, let’s take the opportunity to build stronger bonds with those around us, regardless of faith. Together, we can create a community of understanding, compassion, and connection that transcends barriers.



Faith in Every Furrow: Where Service and Soil Meet

What happens when you mix soil, service, and a dedicated community? You get the Tri-Faith Gardens—the Unity Garden and Hope Orchard—where fresh produce and friendships grow side by side. Since its start in 2019 as a Temple Israel Social Justice Committee project, the garden has provided healthy food to food-insecure families across Omaha.

2024: Challenges, Wins, and Community Spirit

This year, volunteers gave more than **2,600 hours** of labor to improve the gardens—restructuring beds, enhancing composting, and refining irrigation. Their work supported food pantries like the UNO MAV Student Pantry, Intercultural Senior Center, Countryside Cupboard, and Clair Cares.

Major highlights? The **5,840 pounds** of vegetables donated to the pantries, and a whopping **137 volunteers**, from students to faith communities, proving that food isn't the only thing flourishing—so is a spirit of service and connection.

What's Ahead for 2025?

Big things are growing! The garden will be featured in the [Munroe Meyer Guild Garden Walk](#), June 8, and included in Ellie Pierce's new documentary, *A Bridge*. Plus, an exciting new partnership with Rise



aims to provide opportunities for individuals reentering the community after incarceration.

Sustainability is also in focus, with expanded composting, cover crop planting, and organic methods leading the charge. Thanks to dedicated volunteers and generous donors, 2025 is set to be a fruitful year—literally and figuratively.

The Tri-Faith Gardens prove that when a community comes together, incredible things happen. Whether you're up for digging in, donating supplies, or spreading the word, **you're invited to be part of the garden's next chapter**. Let's grow something beautiful together! [Sign up for April/May here!](#)

Soup, Salad & Scripture in May

An Appreciative Intro to the Qur'an for Curious Outsiders

Join us for a special two-part series, **May 11 and May 18**, with Denny Clark, as we explore the Qur'an with fresh eyes. For Muslims, the Qur'an is at the heart of their faith and understanding of God. Yet, for many outside the tradition—even those with curiosity—it can feel unfamiliar or even daunting. Why? Often, our expectations, shaped by our own religious backgrounds or common cultural narratives, don't quite align with the Qur'an's unique structure and purpose.

This series offers an open and thoughtful introduction to the Qur'an, inviting us to learn about it—and even from it. If you count yourself among the 'curious,' this is a welcoming space to ask questions, engage in meaningful conversation, and deepen your understanding.

Soup, Salad & Scripture is a **bring-your-own-lunch** series, so pack some eats and join us for meaningful discussion!



ON THE COMMONS

Abdul Mackie Joins Tri-Faith

TFI's New Ops Manager Brings Experience, Passion and Focus on Interfaith Values



You've probably seen Abdul Mackie's friendly face around Tri-Faith Commons. Now, he's officially joining the Tri-Faith Initiative team as the new Operations Manager, working alongside Dr. Lucas

Schulte, Dr. Hamza Haqqi, Catherine Maydew, and Roni Gosch.

Abdul, who has called Omaha home since 2017, has been a dedicated volunteer and former Tri-Faith Board Member. He's passionate about interfaith values and building strong partnerships within the Tri-Faith community. When he's feeling "churchy," Abdul jokes that he likes to join us for Countryside's Sunday Service — and we're definitely happy to have him!

Before stepping into his new role, Abdul spent 16 years in federal service, specializing in training program development and approvals. He also worked with state departments of education and educational facilities in Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and Illinois.

In addition to his federal experience, Abdul has a background in human resources, program development, and management in both the private and non-profit sectors. He holds a Master of Arts in Education from the University of Detroit-Mercy and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Michigan.

We're excited to have Abdul join the team and bring his wealth of experience — and great sense of humor — to Tri-Faith!

UNO's Studies Lecture to Feature Tri-Faith's Schulte

April 3, 6:30 p.m.

Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center, UNO

Don't miss the annual Ancient Mediterranean Studies lecture at UNO, featuring Tri-Faith's Dr. Lucas Schulte. On April 3 at 6:30 p.m., Dr. Schulte will present *Isaiah's Persian Messiah: Scribal Religious Adaptations in the Achaemenid Empire*.

In this insightful lecture, Dr. Schulte will explore how Persian kings, through Babylonian and Egyptian inscriptions, assumed the religious roles of local kings. He will also examine how Deutero-Isaiah reinterprets this Persian Royal Propaganda Model to fit the religious context of Judean exiles. This fascinating topic sheds light on the intersection of religion, power, and scribal traditions during the Achaemenid Empire.

The lecture is free and open to the public—no registration required. Don't miss this unique opportunity to delve into ancient history and religious studies!

OMAHA MODERN QUILT GUILD PRESENTS

2025 QUILT EXHIBIT

TRI-FAITH INITIATIVE
13136 FAITH PLAZA

Free to Attend

Quilt Raffle
Tickets \$2 each

April 4 - 6, 2025

