OCTOBER 2026 | VOLUME 25 NUMBER 9

COUNTRYSIDE CURRENTS

THE MAGAZINE OF COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH



Every Body

Accessibility isn't a box to check. It's a way of being community.

Everybody.

We use the word easily. Everybody's welcome. Everybody has a place. Everybody matters.

But sometimes it's worth slowing down and hearing the two words inside it:

Every body.

Because there is no such thing as a standard body. Some bodies move differently. Some hear or see differently. Some process information differently. Some need more time, less noise or a different way to participate. Some differences are immediately apparent; others aren't visible at all.

And that means accessibility is about more than getting through the front door.

Of course, physical access matters. Ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, seating and hearing assistance can make the difference between being able to enter a space and being able to participate in it. But accessibility also lives in less visible places—in the ways we communicate, worship, learn, serve and make room for one another.

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Countryside Community Church

A2A

Countryside is committed to being Accessible to All (A2A) every day—and October gives us a special opportunity to celebrate that commitment.

Throughout the month, we'll explore accessibility and inclusion through art, music, worship, education and personal stories, celebrating the ways that including everyone, regardless of individual abilities or circumstances, strengthens our congregational life.

The United Church of Christ recognizes the second Sunday of October as Accessibility Sunday, and Countryside will celebrate October 11 as our A2A Sunday.

There's also some important news to celebrate: the United Church of Christ Disabilities Ministries Board of Directors has approved Countryside's application to become an Accessible to All congregation. We have earned Certified Designated Status and are now among the churches nationally recognized by the UCC with this designation.

Janelle Baber, who helped guide Countryside through the A2A process, describes the designation as part of a larger journey—one that recognizes that people may encounter different challenges throughout their lives, from physical and developmental differences to mental health, illness and genetic conditions.

For Countryside, becoming A2A is not simply about receiving a designation. It is about continuing to grow as a community where everyone is treasured. Everyone belongs and can participate fully.

Come celebrate A2A Sunday with us on October 11—and help us keep asking what welcome can look like for every body.

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Every Body

Sometimes the barrier isn't a staircase. It could be an assumption, or a process designed for only one way of participating.

Sometimes it's simply that we haven't thought to ask.

That is part of what makes becoming an Accessible to All church an ongoing practice rather than a destination. Countryside recently received its Accessible to All designation from the United Church of Christ, recognizing our commitment to creating a community where people with disabilities can participate fully in the life of the church.

It's an important milestone. But it isn't a finish line.

The designation is a milestone. The commitment is ongoing.

An accessible church doesn't ask every body to fit the same mold. It asks the community to be willing to change the mold—to notice barriers, listen to the people experiencing them, and consider what might be done differently.

That can mean asking new questions.

- Who is currently absent from our pews, and what barriers are keeping them from joining us?
- Can everyone participate in worship and learn in ways that work for them?
- How can we improve our programs and gatherings to make room for different needs and ways of communicating?

How can we ensure that people with disabilities are not only welcomed, but invited to contribute, lead and shape the life of the community?



Janelle Baber led the charge on Countryside's Accessible to All (A2A) designation from the United Church of Christ.

And perhaps the most important question: What aren't we noticing yet?

We won't always know the answer. That's part of the practice.

Accessibility isn't something we install once and check off a list. It's something we practice—in the way we welcome, listen, communicate, worship, learn and make room for one another.

Because everybody belongs here.

Every. Body.

Imagine More, Together

“We live by each other and for each other. Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” — Helen Keller

Candy corn is one of my favorite things about fall, and I don't mean to eat. I don't even like candy. But I love what it means. It means children in witch hats too big for their heads. It means the big kids still trick-or-treating, because their bodies may be growing but inside they're still candy-corn kids. It means caramel apples and hayrides and flannel and that first chill in the air that tells you the season has turned. I love candy corn because it's small, but it points to something much bigger that's happening around it.

The church knows a thing or two about seasons. Every fall we begin again. Children find their way into Discovery Kids, the choir gathers for its first rehearsal, small groups form, and someone new says yes to greeting you at the door. And in October we begin the season of stewardship, with a thermometer in the narthex and children invited to fill their piggy banks with coins.

Stewardship, unlike Christmas or Easter, is an undecorated season. There's no candy corn, no tree, no Easter egg to tell the story for us. Stewardship is a story we live. It's the promise we make to one another that this church will be here, and that it will be here for everyone.

When you make a pledge, you're promising that there will always be communion bread on the table. That the live-stream will reach the member who can't leave their bed. That when injustice tries to keep someone out, Countryside will show up. That the hungry will be fed, and the ones the world has pushed to the margins will be met with dignity. Your pledge is a light in the dark for those the world has excluded from Christ's table.

Whether you give $5 a month or $500, your gift is needed. And like candy corn, it is a small thing that points to something far larger than itself.

Candy corn isn't the only sign that fall has arrived. Starbucks introduced the Pumpkin Spice Latte in 2003, and today sells around 20 million of them every fall in the United States alone. In Omaha, a grande runs about $7.25. Imagine one latte a week, pumpkin in the fall, lavender in the spring, gingerbread or vanilla in between, given to the church instead. One latte a week for a year is $377. That's a small thing. Now imagine twenty-five of us who don't yet pledge deciding to “latte-it-forward” to the church. That small thing becomes nearly $10,000 a year.

At Countryside, $10,000 a year is the entire youth budget. It's nearly double the social justice budget, and half the worship and arts budget. One latte a week goes a long way, but when the church imagines more together, we turn a cup of coffee into bread on the table and a seat for someone new.

That's what *Imagine More, Together* means. Not that any one of us gives more than we can, but that all of us imagine what our small gifts become when we offer them together.

Candy corn tells me that Fall is finally here. Your pledge tells someone looking for a place to belong that there is a seat with their name on it. Imagine more of that. Together!

Spirit is leading the way,
Jenny




Something for Everyone!!!

Annual Trunk-or-Treat Sunday

Calling all kids and kids at heart! Join us for lunch and Trunk-or-Treat on Sunday morning October 25. We invite you to come to worship in festive attire and stay for lunch in Common Grounds. Around 12:15 we will have a costume parade to open the trunks for treating. We are looking for people to host trunks - decorate your car, share store bought treats or festive items, and participate in the fun! Click here to sign up!

Co-sponsored by the boards of Congregational Life and Christian Education & Spiritual Growth



Resonance presenting Poulenc Gloria

Résonance and Countryside present *Gloria and Flos Campi* on Thursday, Oct. 22 at 7:30 pm. Hear more than 100 voices as the Résonance Festival Choir joins choirs from River City Mixed Chorus and Midland University with musicians from the Omaha Symphony and artist-faculty and aspiring youth from the Omaha Conservatory of Music, conducted by A. Barron Breland.

Experience the sensuous, shimmering atmosphere of Vaughan Williams' Flos Campi, a wordless symphonic poem inspired by the Song of Solomon, featuring principal viola Thomas Kluge. This journey into the "flower of the field" is paired with Francis Poulenc's Gloria, a masterpiece of 20th-century American patronage that blends cheeky, dance-like vitality with soaring operatic majesty. Together, these works celebrate a legacy of collaboration and the enduring Franco-American friendship that brought them to the global stage.

Tickets here!



The one-night-only event pairs a masterwork choir with a consort of instrumentalists from the Omaha Symphony and artist-faculty and young artists of the Omaha Conservatory of Music, all conducted under the baton of Barron Breland.

Countryside Community Church, Sanctuary, 7:30 pm.

Countryside Community Church Christian Education & Spiritual Growth Board

Perspectives in October

In the Chapel at 11:15am after Sunday Service

October 4

The Vote is Sacred

With **Paul Raushenbush**, President & CEO of Interfaith Alliance. Why protecting democracy and getting out the vote should matter to ALL people of faith.

The Vote Is Sacred 2026 is Interfaith Alliance's nationwide effort to protect our democracy and empower people of faith to get out the vote in the midterm elections, bringing together a cross-country bus tour launching October 6 and running through Election Day, hands-on GOTV and voter registration, election protection and de-escalation trainings, crisis scenario planning, and election grants empowering local organizations.

October 11

Accessible to ALL (A2A)

Featuring **Brandon Herring**, founder of Adaptive Crossroads.

Adaptive Crossroads works with individuals with physical & developmental disabilities and their families, to help them build confidence, improve their health and wellness, develop life skills, and discover opportunities to live more independent, fulfilling lives.

October 18

Accessible to ALL (A2A)

With **Joan Allen**, founder of Destiny Café.

Destiny Café provides a supportive environment where neurodivergent individuals can develop skills, build confidence, form meaningful relationships, and discover opportunities for fulfilling careers and lives.

October 25

My Journey

Join Countrysider **Getenet Tilahun Mengest** as he shares his journey from Ethiopia, through 12 years in a refugee camp in Uganda, and eventually to the United States and Omaha. Along the way, he'll share the spiritual journey intertwined with his geography—the people, experiences, and faith that shaped his path.

More on the website!

Looking for more activities and groups? Check out the wide range of events, ongoing happenings and groups on our website! Click here or scan the QR code above!

Book Studies

Racial Justice Book Group

Sundays, 8-9am, Zoom (link on calendar). In October we're reading *The Education of a WASP* by Lois Mark Stalvey and *Introducing Womanist Theology* by Stephanie Mitchem.

Books, Bible, and Beyond Group

Wednesdays, noon-1pm, in Ruth. We're studying *The Tears of Things: Prophetic Wisdom for an Age of Outrage* by Richard Rohrthat.

The Scribes' House

Sundays, 9-9:50am, Deborah. We're studying *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* by Marcus Borg.

Video Series

Ethington Small Group

Thursdays, 10-11am, in Deborah. *The Spiritual Brain: Science and Religious Experience*.

Scates Journey Group

Fridays, 11:15am-12:30pm in Deborah. *Museum Masterpieces: The Louvre* and *Cultural Literacy for Religion: Everything the Well-Educated Person Should Know*.

"How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives."
— Annie Dillard, The Writing Life







All-Church Events in October



Oct. 1: Plant-based Potluck, 6p

Oct. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29: Mindful Meditation Sit, 7p

Oct. 1: **Art Show Reception**, 5p

Oct. 2: Community Cupboard Food Pantry Set-up, 8a

Oct. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30: FAME, 10a

Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25: Racial Justice Book Group, 8a

Oct. 4: Perspectives: The Vote is Sacred, 11:15a

Oct. 5: LGBTQIA Group, 6:30p

Oct. 6, 13, 20, 27: Men's Breakfast, 8a

Oct. 6, 13, 20, 27: Manna & Mercy, 11:30a

Oct. 7, 14, 21, 28: Books, Bible & Beyond, noon

Oct. 7, 14, 21, 28: Choir Rehearsal, 7p

Oct. 7, 14, 21, 28: Bell Choir Rehearsal, 8p

Oct. 10: Prayer Shawl Knitting Group, 9a

Oct. 11: Perspectives: Accessible to ALL, 11:15a

Oct. 13, 27: Odd Tuesday Coffee Group, 9:30a

Oct. 18: Perspectives: Accessible to ALL, 11:15a

Oct. 22: **Resonance Festival Chorus Concert**, 7:30p

Oct. 25: Perspectives with **Getenet Tilahun Mengest,** 11:15a

Oct. 25: **Annual Chili, Mac & Cheese**, 11:15a

Oct. 25: **Trunk-or-Treat**, 12p

Oct. 31: **Halloween Organ Concert**, 3p

Communion at Countryside

Communion at the Table:
Communion at the Table during Sunday service is just that—bread, cup and community at the table! Interested in helping prepare and serve? Contact Mimi Goings at mimigoings56@gmail.com.

Communion at the Table:
October 4, 18

After Service Communion:
October 11, 25

October Readers

Oct. 4: Marcia Blum
Oct. 11: Molly Anderson
Oct. 18: Renee' Besancon
Oct. 25: Becky Knightly

October Music

Oct. 4: Countryside Choir
Oct. 11: Jamie Luedtke, Mezzo-soprano
Oct. 18: Countryside Choir & Children's Choir
Oct. 25: TBA

"Attention is the beginning of devotion."
— Mary Oliver, Upstream



Worship in October

More Than We Can Imagine

What does God dream for us that we haven't dared to imagine yet? How does generosity unlock possibility - for us and the world?

October 4

Community in the Making I Matthew 21:33-46
On this world communion Sunday, we consider what it means to be community. Jesus tells the parable of wicked tenants and leaves us asking the question - what is our work in this world?

October 11

More Room I Matthew 22:1–14
A wedding hall that fills with everyone except the people who were formally invited. The "more" isn't the decor — it's the guest list, and the powerful disqualify themselves.

October 18

More Than Silver I Matthew 22:15–22
Jesus doesn't have the coin; he has to ask for one. Caesar gets his metal back — but you bear the image of God, so God gets all of you.

October 25

More Heart than Head I Matthew 22:34–46
The whole law in two sentences, and then a question no one can answer. Our theology is always catching up to love, never running ahead of it — ecclesia semper reformanda.

October 11 Guest Soloist

Jamie Luedtke



Jamie Luedtke is a mezzo-soprano and educator from Elkhorn, NE. Her credits include the Narrator in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, Daniela in *In the Heights*, Maleficent in Disney's *Descendants*, and Tuptim in *The King and I*. She has been featured in Duruflé's Requiem, Beethoven's Mass in C, and various projects with Résonance and the Omaha Symphony, including their annual Physicians Mutual Omaha Symphony Christmas Celebration. In addition to her work on stage, she serves on the worship team at Bethany Lutheran Church and teaches vocal music at Minne Lusa and Ponca Elementary Schools.



Tri-Faith Walking Group



Do you want to get to know people from Countryside, Temple Israel and American Muslim Institute in a casual, informal way while enjoying the beauty of the Tri Faith Commons? We had so much fun at the Tri-Faith Festival, let's continue that connection with our neighbors! Sally Kaplan from Temple Israel and Mary Meints from Countryside invite you to join the Tri-Faith Walking Group on Fridays at 9 am. Lace up your tennis shoes! Walk as long or short, as slow or as fast as you wish. All are welcome to join on this adventure. We share stories of faith and family as we walk on Abraham's Bridge. If you have questions, please contact Mary Meints at meints1@me.com or 402-290-4167.



DEADLINE

November Currents

Content for the November issue of Currents is due **Friday, Oct. 2!**

Submit to office@countrysideucc.org

When the Vote Is Sacred

Interfaith Alliance Bus Tour Launches Oct. 6

The freedom to vote can feel like a simple thing: a right exercised at a polling place, through a ballot box or by mail. But around the world—and throughout our own history—that freedom has required people willing to protect it.

On Tuesday, October 6, Omaha will be the starting point for The Vote Is Sacred Tour, a nationwide effort from Interfaith Alliance to bring faith communities together around voting, election protection and participation in the 2026 midterm elections.

The Tri-Faith Initiative and Interfaith Alliance will launch the 30-day bus tour at the Tri-Faith Center with a 10 am rally and press conference, followed by an Election Protection training and box lunch from 11 am to 1 pm. The training will explore threats to the election process and ways faith communities can help ensure free and fair elections.

Author and pastor Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III, senior pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, will speak and share Otis' Dream, a short film about his father's journey to vote in 1946.

From Omaha, the bus will travel through communities across the country, partnering with local organizations for voter registration, canvassing, election protection trainings, public gatherings and vigils.

The work is practical. But it is also rooted in a larger conviction: that democracy depends on people who are willing to show up for one another.

Tuesday, October 6 • 10 am rally; 11 am–1 pm training
Tri-Faith Center
RSVP here!

Luncheon Celebrates 20 Years of Community

The Tri-Faith Initiative will celebrate its 20th anniversary with a Legacy Luncheon at noon Tuesday, Oct. 13, at the CHI Health Center Omaha. The event will honor three founding pioneers whose vision helped create Tri-Faith: Rabbi Aryeh Azriel, Bob Freeman and Dr. Syed Mohiuddin, in memoriam.

The luncheon will also feature former Ohio Gov. John Kasich, whose new book, Heaven Help Us: How Faith Communities Inspire Hope, Strengthen Neighborhoods, and Build the Future, highlights Omaha's Tri-Faith Initiative as a national example of what can happen when faith communities work together.

It's a legacy worth celebrating—and a reminder that meaningful community can begin with something as simple as people choosing to build relationships across differences.





Legacy Luncheon
Tuesday, Oct. 13, noon
CHI Health Center Omaha
Register here! legacylunch.org

8 at 8 Groups

A Simple Reminder That We're Still Connected



Maybe you've heard someone mention the "8 and 8 groups" and wondered what they're talking about. The story began in 2020, when the pandemic shut down our church (and most of the world as we knew it) and Countryside Community Engagement Coordinator Diane Scott worried about how we would stay connected.

Her idea was simple: At 8:00 in the morning and 8:00 at night, she would send a text with a pair of praying hands—a reminder to pause and pray in whatever way felt right, for ourselves, one another and the world. About 75 people signed up, forming 15 small text groups.

When Countryside reopened, she wondered if the groups had served their purpose. Instead, almost everyone chose to stay.

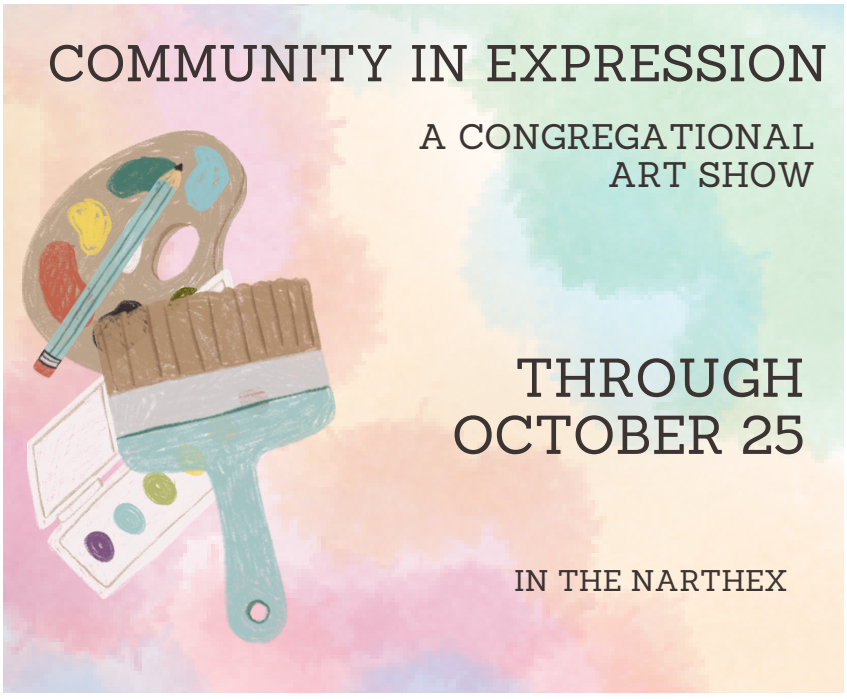
Six years later, those groups are still going strong. "Over time, the groups have become something I could have never imagined," said Scott. "To varying degrees, they have become their own small groups. Some groups have become fast friends, like family, and others are more quiet. One thing they all do is continue to support one another, listen to concerns and lift each other up."

Members have shared prayer requests, health updates, encouragement, music, memes, practical help—and, yes, even a picture of Lionel Messi.

There are no rules and no expectations. Diane can connect you with an existing group, start a new one, or simply text you individually if that's what works best. The 8 and 8 groups continue to be a small, daily reminder that even when we aren't together in the same room, we are still connected.

Interested? Text Diane at 402-707-1556, or email dianes@countrysideucc.org.





Countryside Community Church Children's and Youth Ministries



At Countryside Community Church, children and youth are not the church of the future—they are the church right now. We are honored to walk alongside families as we nurture faith that is curious, joyful, justice-seeking, and rooted in love.

This newsletter shares what's happening in Children's and Youth Ministries this season—on Sundays, Wednesdays, and beyond! Whether you're brand-new or have been part of Countryside for years, you are welcome here.

October Events

7

October 7 - First Wednesday Family Dinner
Calling all children, youth, and families! Join us in Mary's hall starting at 5:15pm for dinner. Wednesday Wonders, Youth Group, and Parent and Caregiver Small Group to follow.

9

October 9 - Youth Special Event: Spare Time Outing
Enjoy an evening of fun and games with the Youth Group at Spare Time!
Register Here or contact David for more information.

25

October 25 - Trunk or Treat!

All kids and kids at heart are invited to come to worship dressed up for Trunk or Treat. Lunch of chili and mac and cheese will begin at 11:15 - followed by a costume parade out to the trunks at 12:15. Register here if you would like to host a trunk.

Sundays at Countryside

Discovery Kids (Sunday School)

Kindergarten - 5th Grade

During 10 am Worship

Children begin worship with their families and head to their classrooms after the Children's Moment.

Discovery Kids is a place where kids get to be kids—together. Through storytelling, creative activities, conversation, and play, children are invited to wonder, ask big questions, explore faith, and discover how God's love shows up in their lives and in the world around them.

Register for Discovery Kids **here!**
Want to learn more about Discovery Kids? Contact Rev. Maggie Kennedy Morey, Associate Minister of Care, Connection, and Formation: maggiekm@countrysideucc.org

Interested in Volunteering?

If you are interested in volunteering with Discovery Kids or other childrens ministry opportunities, reach out to Pastor Maggie or fill out this volunteer interest form. Whatever level of comittment you are looking for, we could always use more volunteers!

Nursery

Birth - Pre-K

During 10 am Worship

Age-appropriate care is available during Sunday morning worship in a loving, safe environment.



Childrens Church

Kindergarten -5th Grade

Sept 20 - *During 10 am Worship*

On the third Sunday of the month, our Discovery Kids time will be a children's worship service in the Chapel. Kids will participate and lead in different elements and have a time of hands on learning and wondering.

Discovery and curiosity go hand in hand as we sing, pray, and tell stories with one another.

Children's Choir

Kindergarten - 5th Grade

Sunday Mornings During Discovery Kids

Children's Choir meets as part of Discovery Kids and offers children a joyful way to explore faith through music and community.

On the third Sunday of each month, children return to the sanctuary to receive communion with their families.

Learn more:
Adam Witte, Director of Arts and Worship: adamw@countrysideucc.org
Shannon Shultz-Thomas, Children's Choir Director: shanthom81@gmail.com

Sundays at Countryside continued ...

Sunday Funday
6th-12th Grade
8:30 - 9:45 am | Youth Room/ Activity Center

October 4 November 1
October 25 November 22

This time of our week is going to be experimental and malleable to fit whatever it is our students are in need of in order to be in community with one another. For now, Sunday Fundays will be every Sunday when there is no Confirmation.

For more info please contact our Director of Youth, David McGinness: davidm@countrysideucc.org



For more events and information, check out the church calendar!

Wednesdays at Countryside

Wednesday Wonders
Kindergarten - 5th Grade
1st and 3rd Wednesdays | 6 - 7:15 pm | Marys' Hall

Adventure and wonder await! Wednesday Wonders is a midweek gathering filled with creativity, play, service, and curiosity. Each evening offers kids a chance to explore faith in hands-on, joyful ways.

Wednesday nights are a wonderful opportunity to invite a friend!

Wednesday Wonders Fall Snapshot

Oct. 7	A Joyful Noise: Music Night
Oct. 21	Halloween Party
Nov. 4	Card Making
Nov. 18	Planting Flower Bulbs
Dec. 2	Advent Wreaths
Dec. 16	Holiday Art Night

Register here for Wednesday Wonders!

Want to learn more? Contact Pastor Maggie or Anne Jackson, Kindernook Director & Wednesday Wonders Director: annej@countrysideucc.org

October 7
Join us for dinner in Marys' Hall before Wednesday night activities on October 7. RSVP here so we can have a headcount.

Suggested donation of $5.



Wednesdays at Countryside continued ...

Youth Group
6th - 12th Grade
Wednesdays | 6 - 7:30 pm
Youth Room

Youth Group is a space for middle and high school youth to explore faith honestly, ask big questions, and build a community rooted in love for each other.

Every Wednesday night is a mixture of exploring biblical characters and stories, intentionally and consistantly getting to know one another, as well as always leaving plenty of room for fun to emerge.

For more info please contact our Director of Youth, David McGinness: davidm@countrysideucc.org

Parents and Caregivers
1st and 3rd Wednesdays | 6 - 7:15 pm
Ruth

While children gather for Wednesday Wonders, parents and caregivers are invited into a warm, low-pressure small group to explore faith, parenting, and a lot of laughs!

The Wednesday evening parents' small group is always a *get-to,* never a *have-to.* Come as you are. That will always be enough.

Interested in small groups at Countryside? Contact Leah Georges: LeahGeorges@creighton.edu



Youth Group October Snapshot

October 7 - Every Voice Matters
October 9 - Special Event Outing
October 14 - Show Up For Each Other
October 21 - Lead Through Service
October 28 - Our Living Covenant



Nursery Care on Wednesdays
Birth - Pre-K
6 - 9 p.m.

Nursery care is available during Wednesday evening activities, including adult choir and bells rehearsals.

Church Office

13130 Faith Plaza, Omaha NE 68144
www.countrysideucc.org
P: 402-391-0350
E: Office@countrysideucc.org
FB: www.facebook.com/CountrysideOmaha

Staff Directory

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas, Senior Minister
jennyst@countrysideucc.org

Rev. Maggie Kennedy Morey, Associate Minister for Care, Connection and Formation
maggiekm@countrysideucc.org

Rev. Charlene Wozny, Congregational Care Chaplain
charlenew@countrysideucc.org

Adam Witte, Director of Worship and Arts
adamw@countrysideucc.org

Alex Ritter, Organist-in-Residence
alexr@countrysideucc.org

Anne Jackson, Director of Kindernook Preschool & Wednesday Wonder Director
annej@countrysideucc.org

Christine Kasel, Director of Communications
christinek@countrysideucc.org

Dan Loven-Crum, Director of Finance, Administration and Operations
danl@countrysideucc.org

David McGinnis, Director of Youth & Young Adults
davidm@countrysideucc.org

Diane Scott, Engagement Coordinator
dianes@countrysideucc.org

Doug Bloomquist, Building Property Coordinator
dougb@countrysideucc.org

Jasmin Gallardo, Finance and Operations Clerk
jasming@countrysideucc.org

Polly Sindelar, Administrative Assistant
pollys@countrysideucc.org

Steve Gomez, Administrative Assistant
steveg@countrysideucc.org

Social Justice & Outreach Board

THE BOX for October

WOW — thank you! Your response to the September Pantry Partners request was fabulous.

Let's work together to reach our goal of collecting 75 cans of no sugar-added canned fruit this month! Your generosity helps keep the Countryside Cupboard shelves stocked and supports families experiencing food insecurity. Thank you for the many ways you continue to care for our community.



Drop items in The Box between the outer and inner front doors — or shop our Amazon Wishlist here! Let's keep the momentum going. Thanks, everyone! — Social Justice & Outreach Board

October Fingerprints

Peanut Butter & Jelly!

Teaming up Together

Food Housing Advocacy

Fingerprints works with Together Omaha to support area families in need. Recent cuts (15 percent) and growing need (expected to increase by 41 percent by year's end) have become an enormous challenge. Every bit counts. Our monthly drive continues in Common Grounds. Check out the Amazon Wishlist here!

October: Peanut Butter & Jelly
Thanks for helping neighbors in need—making lives a bit brighter, one thoughtful gift at a time! Questions? Contact Diane at dianes@countrysideucc.org.

