NOVEMBER 2026 | VOLUME 25 NUMBER 10

COUNTRYSIDE CURRENTS

THE MAGAZINE OF COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH



Why We Gather

In an age of constant connection, does it still matter to be together?

For a while, it seemed technology might make gathering almost unnecessary.

We learned to meet from home, worship from our couches and celebrate birthdays on screens. We discovered that a meeting could happen without a commute, a conference room or even real pants. For many of us, that was—and remains—a gift.

Remote participation makes connection possible when illness, caregiving, travel or physical and geographic barriers keep us apart. Livestreams and video calls have opened doors that might otherwise remain closed.

But somewhere along the way, we also learned something else:

Connection isn't quite the same thing as presence. We can communicate without sharing the small, unscripted moments that happen when people occupy the same space: the conversation before a meeting, the unexpected question in the hallway, the laughter that spreads across a room. A hug, a pat on the back or a knowing glance can communicate warmth and care in ways words alone sometimes can't.

For Mary Beth Link, Mark Ware, Pam Kregg and Kathy

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A Seat at the Table

Put Down the Phone, Pick Up the Pie

"The present moment is filled with joy and happiness. If you are attentive, you will see it." — Thich Nhat Hanh

There was a time, at least I can remember one, when I'd sit around a large oak table at my Mama's kitchen during the holidays and with the leaf in it at least 12 would sit there, all crammed around the wooden surface... smells of turkey gravy and cranberry sauce, wafting over the steam still hot from the freshly baked pies... and adults would talk over each other, reaching for food, adding the unwanted green beans to your plate. There wasn't an option to remove myself. I was stuck beside the uncle who liked to pinch my nose, the cousin who peed the bed, and the family I both loved and loathed in those moments. Whether giving my attention to what the grown-ups at the table were saying or to the smell of my teenage cousin who'd clearly wandered in without a shower, I wasn't absent from the room. I was fully immersed, all senses attuned to the moment we were sharing.

Few things matter more than paying attention and being present. But these days, our presence is more of an illusion—perceived behind glass, and one might say we are living a reflection of the life that we seek. Whether it's social media and the incessant pull towards its illumined screen or a simple google search as we hunt for a new recipe, our minds and our attention are constantly asked to do more, which in summation is really less. Less one-on-one conversation, less attention to one thing, one person, one idea or concept at a time. More divided, we are living a short-hand version of the self we seek to be. Present. Still. Calm. Grounded. Wise. Or at the very least, not scrolling through someone else's Thanksgiving while our own gets cold.

We are entering a season of gratitude, a time to give our senses to that which brings us joy; food, family, conversation, the leaves falling and the pumpkin pies calling. We'll gather for Thanksgiving or Friendsgiving with those we love, and we'll be tasked with being present to both we adore, and those who get on our nerves. We'll have the opportunity to decide whether to sit in another's presence, fully attentive, or to sit in the company of another while fully preoccupied — with a screen, with scrolling, or a general searching for more that can often steal not only our attention, but our deep yearning. I write this as someone who has checked her phone in my in-laws' bathroom between the appetizer and the main course, and who will be tempted to again. Presence begets attention, and attention leads to presence.

Without being present with one another, in community, as family or friends, we are never faced with the question of attention at all. When we choose to be attuned, to sit with another without distraction, and give ourselves to the moments before us, we are giving ourselves the gift of presence. We are learning how to sit in the discomfort, to sit through the awkward to achieve the laughter, to let the fleeting inner dialogue rummage through and release. We are learning to take not only one bite, but to make it from the appetizer to the dessert, knowing that without an enduring, abiding presence we would have left the table disgruntled, annoyed and, yes, hungry...longing for the more we left behind.

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Sunday, November 22, 11:15 am

Hanging of the Greens: A Countryside Tradition

At Countryside, preparing for Advent is marked by one of our most beloved traditions—the Hanging of the Greens. Each year, members of all ages gather to transform our church into a warm and festive space, preparing not only our surroundings but also our hearts for the Christmas season. From fluffing trees and arranging poinsettias to sorting decorations and hanging lights, the event brings together young, old, seasoned ladder-climbers, and first-timers alike.

A Tradition with Deep Roots
The Hanging of the Greens is a long-standing Christian tradition of preparing worship spaces for the Advent and Christmas seasons. Churches have traditionally been adorned with evergreens, wreaths, and garlands as symbols of eternal life and hope.

Over time, this practice has evolved into the joyful, community-centered celebrations many churches cherish today. At Countryside, it's become more than a decorating event. It's a time to gather, connect, and reflect on the true meaning of Christmas: Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy.

Everyone Has a Place!
Hanging of the Greens is a community effort, and we welcome all hands, big and small. Whether you're a ladder climber or prefer to keep your feet firmly on the ground, there's something for everyone. Volunteers can fluff trees, arrange poinsettias, sort decorations, hang lights, or lend a hand wherever it's needed.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Lori Shrum, loriwshrum@yahoo.com.

Soup Challenge!

One of the sweetest perks of volunteering at Hanging of the Greens is the Annual Soup Challenge! Led by Diane Scott, this friendly competition lets volunteers taste and vote on a variety of soups while helping decorate the church.

The winning soup earns a starring role at Countryside's Annual Meeting in February. Last year, Denny Clark's Tuscano Soup was the crowd favorite, warming hearts and bellies alike. It's a delicious way to celebrate your hard work, enjoy fellowship, and have a little fun in the process!

Want to enter your own soup this year? Contact Diane at dianes@countrysideucc.org. And remember—the best way to secure your tasting spot is to lend a hand on Sunday!

2027 Stewardship Campaign - Imagine More

Your Pledge Matters!

Thank you to everyone who has submitted a pledge for our current Stewardship Drive! So far, we've received 70 pledges, representing 20% of Countryside member households, totaling $433,276 toward our $1.3 million goal.

We still have a way to go, and your pledge matters. Pledges help us determine our budget for the coming year and plan for the programs, ministries, and connections that make Countryside your place, your people, your home.

If you haven't submitted your pledge yet, please take a moment to do so. Every pledge helps us plan for the year ahead and continue the work we do together.

Click here to complete your pledge!
https://countrysideucc.org/imaginemore

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:
November 1 & 15

After Service Communion:
November 8 & 22

Countryside Musical Moment Series

Nov. 1: Countryside Jazz
Nov. 8: Countryside Choir & Handbell
Nov. 15: Children's Choir
Nov. 22: TBA
Nov. 29: Countryside Choir

If you (or someone you know!) would like to share your voice or instrument with the congregation, contact Adam, adamw@countrysideucc.org!

November Readers

Nov. 1: Molly Anderson
Nov. 8: Nancy Cohen
Nov. 15: Nancy Behringer
Nov. 22: Molly Anderson
Nov. 29: Becky Knightly

Let's see **your** name on this list! Julie Carlson, julieacarlson@hotmail.com.



Worship in November: More

November 1
More Than We Can Count I Matthew 5:1–12
Ordinary Time

November 8
More Than We Can Borrow I Matthew 25:1–13
Ordinary Time

November 15
More Than Permission I Matthew 25:14–30
Ordinary Time

November 22
The King We Walked Past I Matthew 25:31–46
Ordinary Time

November 29
Until the Dawn: Cry Out I Mark 13:24–37
The First Sunday of Advent

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





All-Church Events in November



Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29: Racial Justice Book Group, 8a

Nov. 1, 8 & 15: New Member Class, 11:15a

Nov. 3, 10, 17 & 24: Men's Breakfast, 8a

Nov. 3, 10 & 17: Adult Ed Manna & Mercy, 11:15a

Nov. 10 & 24: Odd Tuesday Coffee Group, 9:30a

Nov. 4, 11, 18 & 25: Books, Bible & Beyond, noon

Nov. 4, 11, 18 & 25: Choir Practice, 7p

Nov. 4, 11, 18 & 25: Bell Choir, 8p

Nov. 5,12 &19: Mindful Meditation, 7p

Nov. 5: Plant-based Potluck, 6p

Nov. 6, 13 & 20: FAME, 10a

Nov. 6: Community Cupboard Food Pantry Set-up, 8a

Nov. 7: Community Cupboard Food Pantry, 8a

Nov. 8: Kindernook Lantern Walk, 5p

Nov. 11: Veteran's Day

Nov. 22: Hanging of the Greens, 11:15a

Nov. 22: Interfaith Thanksgiving Service, 6p

Nov. 26: Thanksgiving – OFFICE CLOSED

Nov. 27: Day After Thanksgiving – OFFICE CLOSED

Nov. 29: First Sunday of Advent

Dec. 4: Coffee House Jazz, 7p

Dec. 6: Red Cross Blood Drive

Dec. 6: Blue Christmas Service, 6p

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.

Fall Highlights!









This fall has seen fun activites from Sunday mornings, to Wednesday evenings and everything in between! Bowling and service projects for the youth, music and storytelling for our elementary school students. Check out what the rest of this year has in store!



Sundays at Countryside

November 2026

Discovery Kids (Sunday School)

Kindergarten - 5th Grade

During 10 a.m. 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 a.m. Worship

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



Childrens Church

Kindergarten -5th Grade

During 10 a.m. 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.

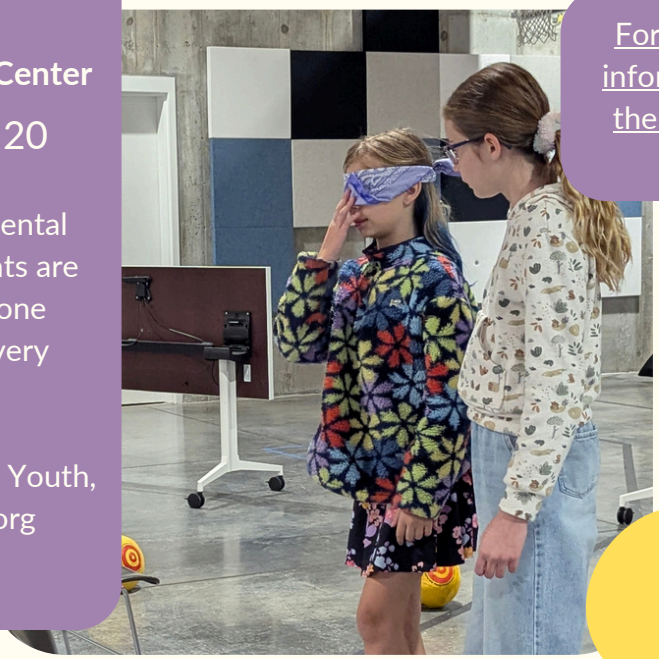
Learn more:
Adam Witte, Director of Arts and Worship: adamw@countrysideucc.org
Shannon Shultz-Thomas, Children's Choir Director: shanthom81@gmail.com

Sundays at Countryside continued ...

Sunday Funday
6th-12th Grade
8:30 - 9:45 AM | Youth Room/ Activity Center
November 1 & 21 December 20

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 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 p.m. | 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 Snapshot

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

November 4

Join us for dinner in Marys' Hall before Wednesday night activities on November 4. 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 p.m.
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 p.m.
Ruth Room

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 and Metta West:
LeahGeorges@creighton.edu
mettac@gmail.com



Youth Group November Snapshot

November 4 - The Big Announcement

November 11 - The VIP Party Crashers

November 18 - Rule Breaker or Life Saver?

November 25 - NO YOUTH GROUP



Nursery Care on Wednesdays

Birth - Pre-K
6 - 9 pm

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






BEWARE


SUPER








Don & Pam
THE PERFECT BLEND
HAPPY HALLOWEEN
COFFEE BAR


HALLOWEENTOWN
EST 1998
UNIVERSITY



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Why We Gather

Menke, who gather each Friday with other members of Countryside's FAME (Fellowship, Arts, Music, Etc.) group, those everyday interactions are part of what makes gathering meaningful. Being together creates opportunities for physical connection, spontaneous conversation and empathy.

There is something powerful about simply being there.

More than a meeting

Human beings gather around tables and campfires, in houses of worship and community centers, at concerts and ballparks. We gather to celebrate and grieve, to learn and share, because something—or someone—matters to us.

Research points to the importance of meaningful social connection for our well-being, including physical and mental health and or sense of belonging.

Gathering also gives us opportunities to encounter people we might not otherwise get to know. Online, we curate much of our experience. Together in a room, we leave more room for the unexpected. We might sit next to someone from another generation, hear an unfamiliar perspective or discover that the person we've nodded to for months has a fascinating story. Over time, these small encounters help build community.

The FAME group has noticed this distinction: meeting remotely can feel like a collection of individuals, while sharing a room and an experience can help those individuals become a community.

Perhaps that's one of the gifts of gathering: It makes other people real to us. We don't have to agree on everything. *We just need to be willing to show up.*

So why gather?

Virtual meetings aren't bad. For many people, they're essential. Accessibility and presence aren't opposites; technology can extend the circle when being there in person isn't possible.

But gathering in person creates opportunities that a screen can't fully capture. We build familiarity, offer comfort, discover common ground and get to know people beyond our usual circles.

We become more than individuals who share an interest. We become a community.

In a time when we can connect almost constantly, that's worth remembering:

Sometimes the most meaningful thing we can do for one another is simply show up.

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A Seat at the Table

As we turn the page on the calendar toward a table full of people we did not choose, I invite you to be present — for your own sake, and for the sake of the one seated beside you. For some of us the table will be smaller this year, and the empty chair will be loud. Presence counts there too and may count most of all. The silence is a comfort when we attune ourselves to what we hear...
It can be scary to put the phone down, but I do believe the alternative is the greater fear. The gravy may be lumpy, the pie may come from a box, the uncle will reach for your nose. For all the noise, for all of the chaos and children, and even for the quiet—may your attention be your journey.

The joy is already there, if we are attentive enough to see it.

Spirit is leading the way - Jenny

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Staff Directory

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Rev. Maggie Kennedy Morey, Associate Minister for Care, Connection and Formation
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Rev. Charlene Wozny, Congregational Care Chaplain
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Adam Witte, Director of Worship and Arts
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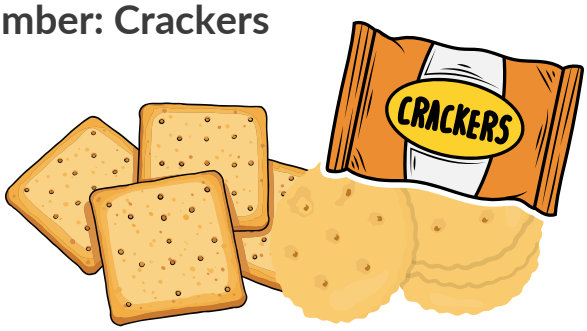
Social Justice & Outreach Board

THE BOX November

Let's work together to reach our goal of collecting 75 boxes of crackers 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.

November: Crackers



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

November Fingerprints
Juice Boxes!

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!

November: Juice Boxes
Thanks for helping neighbors in need—making lives a bit brighter, one thoughtful gift at a time! Questions? Contact Diane at dianes@countrysideucc.org.

