

AUGUST 2020



COYO Sr. High socially distanced Senior Night on July 27.

REBECCA MORELLO PROMOTED TO DIRECTOR OF YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

A search committee was formed on May 18, 2020 for the purpose of finding Countryside's next Youth Director. Special thanks to those who served: Jim Farho, who chaired the Committee, and committee members Kim Busher, Derek Kuhr, Stacy Ashley-Murphy, Zola Madson, Traci Copple, Megan Thom, Tracey Halvorson, Deb McCollister, and Eric Elnes. Thanks also to those who served as consultants along the way: Dan Loven-Crum, Anji Stanek, Rebecca Morello and Morgan Lenigan.

While the initial focus of the Search Committee was on hiring a Youth Director in the traditional sense, the Committee also explored a newer model of leadership implemented by Countryside's Music department, where a Director of Arts Ministries (Alex Ritter) was hired to manage multiple part-time staff whose areas of expertise are precisely tuned to their area of work (e.g., Baron Breland directs the adult choirs and Tyler Gruttemeyer directs Faith Singers). This new model is widely seen as responsible for Countryside producing some of the best, most

highly coordinated music and music programming in our history.

In the end, the Search Committee proposed that Countryside adopt this newer model of leadership, promoting Countryside's Director of Children's Education, Rebecca Morello, to a new position as Countryside's Director of Youth and Family Ministries. In essence, Countryside would combine two old positions into a single, new position and hire two or more part-time, highly specialized staff, to help Rebecca carry out the work.

What was particularly attractive to the Search Committee, and to the Youth and Christian Education Boards and Personnel Committee who affirmed the new position, is that Rebecca is highly esteemed by children, youth, and adults of all ages at Countryside. Her vision and creativity will help form a cohesive program that nurtures and engages children and youth and fosters both Christian discipleship and leadership at every level of our ministry. We hope you will congratulate Rebecca as you are able.

REBECCA MORELLO ON HER NEW POSITION:

I am beyond excited to work on improving our youth department by creating new programs and building on an already thriving Middle School program, while maintaining and cultivating our already strong children's programming. I will also be working to tie all these programs together under Countryside's mission to encourage our children and youth to participate in a wide variety of activities that build community and support them as they grow spiritually, socially, and emotionally in a safe and secure environment.

Our programming will be meaningful, instructive, and steeped in prayer practices to guide our children and youth in their faith journeys. Upon graduation, our students will leave knowing they are loved and supported, and that our church, both members and staff, expect them to come back and share their lives with us. Countryside Youth will find opportunity to engage in the search for their true vocation precisely when they are being asked to make decisions for the rest of their lives. Our parents will be encouraged to support them as they make these decisions based in Spirit and prayer. I want our students to move towards adulthood with less to unlearn about church and full hearts towards our community.



WORSHIP AND ADULT EDUCATION

COVID-19 CASES IN OMAHA ON THE RISE, WORSHIP REMAINS ONLINE

COVID-19 cases have been steadily increasing throughout the month of July, keeping Countryside squarely in the RED phase of the Countryside Worship Guidelines reopening set forth by the Countryside Re-Start Task Force and the Church Council. The church does not move to the next phase (ORANGE) until new cases are below 200 for two consecutive weeks. As of the printing of this newsletter, cases were 739 July 18 and 1108 for the week of July 25. For a detailed explanation of our four-phase approach you can check the website at countrysideucc/covid19.

WORSHIP ONLINE AT 11 AM AND KMTV CHANNEL 3 AT 11 AM

During the month of August there are two ways to catch Countryside Community Church on Sunday mornings. The first is online through Youtube live which you can connect with at countrysideucc.org or on KMTV channel 3. Both will begin at 11 AM and during the month of August will be 30 minutes. We encourage you to take your extra 30 minutes and try one of Countryside's additional Sunday offerings advertised in this newsletter. (Note: August 2 ONLY will be at 7 AM on Channel 3)

LIVING LIBERTY: A CHRISTIAN CALL OUT OF RACISM, AUGUST 9 - 30

Worship Series: Our next worship series, Living Liberty: A Christian Call out of Racism reviews the theological framework of freedom, and how the Gospel calls us each of us to be a liberating force within creation. We will explore the ideas of Liberty, Diversity, Language, and Racism through the lens of our faith to discover how God frees us from destructive patterns of behavior and frees us for deeper relationships with ourselves, each other, and with the Divine.

- **August 9:** Liberty: Freedom From, and For (Freed From: Objective Truth - Freed For: Justice, Righteous Relationships)
- **August 16:** United in Diversity (Freed From: Conformity - Freed For: Creativity and Expression)
- **August 23:** Language: The House We Live In (Freed From: Passivity - Freed For: Engagement)
- **August 30:** Racist Policy, Not People (Freed From: Personal Attacks - Freed For: Anti-racist Systems)

ZOOM OFFERINGS CONTINUE ON SUNDAY MORNINGS

We will still be offering a four-part lineup running through August:

- **10 AM** - Meditation with Eric Elnes - Join Eric for a 25 minute meditation.
- **10:30 AM**, coffee hour with Diane Scott and Bill Bolte
- **11:00 AM**, worship only for 30 minutes. This is via KMTV or online.
- **11:35 AM**, various staff members will have "office hours" to see people via Zoom.

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUPS FORMING VIA ZOOM

With the great success of our last book discussion (which we had to split into two groups) of *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* by Robin DiAngelo Diane Scott is looking at forming a new one in the next few weeks. Please contact her at twang56@aol.com if you are interested in being part of a new book discussion group. She is still trying to figure out what time and day of the week works best for those interested. *From a description of the book: "White fragility is characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue. In this in-depth exploration, the author examines how white fragility develops, how it protects racial inequality, and what we can do to engage more constructively."*

PHOENIX AFFIRMATIONS GROUPS FORMING VIA ZOOM

Diane Scott is forming 1-2 new Phoenix Affirmations Classes. The Phoenix Affirmations say that, as Jesus teaches us, our Christian love should be expressed in three ways: by loving God, neighbor, and self. In order to fully appreciate the content of the Phoenix Affirmations, they should be thoughtfully studied with others. A group study provides insights, connections, and resources that might not be readily discerned though individual study. This is a great way to really learn about what Countryside Community Church and the United Church of Christ believes if you are new to Countryside. It is also a great refresher or if you wanted to start a deeper dive into your faith. Please let Diane know if you are interested at twang56@aol.com. She will figure out class days and times according to interest.

NEW MEMBERS CLASS IN SEPTEMBER VIA ZOOM

Mark your calendars for our next new members classes on September 22 and September 29. More details will be in the September email. If you are interested in receiving information about the classes please email Robyn Hubbard at robynh@countrysideucc.org.

COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITY



THE NEW NORMAL - PLANNING A FUNERAL

Mary Watke has been the Funeral Coordinator at Countryside for the past few years. She has overseen a multitude of services for our members and their loved ones. She has come in the early mornings to make pots of coffee for families to drink before their loved ones arrive. She walks around to make sure flowers are arranged and she checks in with the pastors and the funeral homes to confirm all the plans have been gone over so everything will run smoothly.

Mary can usually be found at the funerals, talking to families and keeping a close watch to make sure each small detail is taken care of. "One of the nicest parts of the funerals are when the families stand around and talk outside the church, drinking coffee and telling stories about their loved one. I love to hear their stories and I know it helps in the healing process," Mary said.

Before Covid 19, Mary needed only a couple of volunteers for the actual service. One person to greet people as they came in and another person to help take care of any issues that arose. Fast forward to July 17, Countryside's first funeral for a church member during Coronavirus. It was such a different experience for everyone involved. "I had to have eight volunteers," Mary said. "One stationed at every door, volunteers to seat people and volunteers to hand out masks and remind people to social distance."

The church looked different as well. Large yellow and black signs reminding people to stand six feet apart, to wear masks, to only allow two people in the elevator. No coffee or water to enjoy while sharing stories about their loved one. Making a difficult day, even more difficult.

The family had chosen to stay in a conference room after the service and accept condolences through an intercom system. "At least we were able to safely find a way for them to interact with people who came to say good-bye to their loved one," said Dan Loven-Crum, the Director of Communication and Administration. "Not a perfect way to interact but still, a way to get around this virus and give the family some more closure."

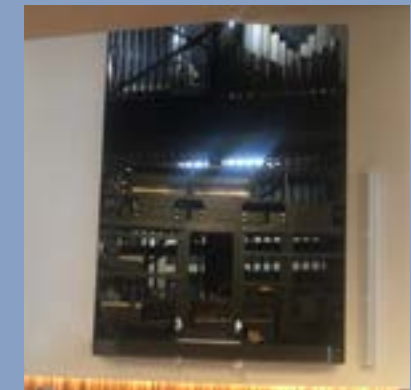
"I am grateful for the volunteers that came to help that day because I could not be there myself and I had to organize from afar," said Mary. "I know times are different and difficult, but being able to do this for the family and by having Rev. Elnes preside over the service, we were still able to give the family some peace and that is what we are here for."



Pictures from our Agape Team Christmas party in 2019. Our amazing volunteers who have always taken care of people who need a time of fellowship after their loss. Another way funerals are looking different during the pandemic. Pictured at top are Margie Bolte and Mary Watke. Bottom corner, Mary Watke and Jane Frey and the left picture is Karen Follon and Mary Watke.

ORGAN BUILDERS WORKING HARD TO FINISH

Every day since July 7, the sanctuary had been abuzz with organ installers finishing the installation of Countryside's new Buzard Organ. Slowly, the piles of boxes have been decreasing as more and more of the organ is being fitted into what used to be a gaping hole in the sanctuary. The few office staff that are working on site are very excited for the day that they start tuning the pipes. Hopefully, by the September newsletter we might have exciting news about the completion of our new organ!



ADULT EDUCATION AND SMALL GROUPS

Adult Education and small groups are still available to everyone through ZOOM teleconferencing via our church calendar. If your group would like to meet but is not sure how to set it up or how to connect via the calendar, please reach out to Chris Alexander at chrisa@countrysideucc.org and she will set you up!





TRI-FAITH INITIATIVE

MEET NATE SHAPIRO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT TEMPLE ISRAEL

Nate brings experience as a synagogue executive director and a strong knowledge of the Omaha Jewish community to this role. Coupled with his calm and easy-going disposition, great sense of humor, love of Judaism and friendly, outgoing nature, Nate's experience and know-how will make him an outstanding addition to Temple Israel's team. Nate previously worked as the Executive Director at Beth Israel Synagogue, the Director of Development for the Jewish Federation of Omaha, and a Campaign Coordinator for the United Way of the Midlands. He spent several summers at Camp Young Judaea in Waupaca, Wisconsin, and also served in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Nate has a degree in English with a minor in Judaic Studies from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. Nate and his wife Carly are members of Temple Israel and are active in the Jewish Community. Nate and his wife just welcomed their first baby, Naomi Yael Shapiro on July 7!



Interfaith Learning: What is Religion? - Thursday, August 6, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM, via Zoom

Interfaith Learning is a monthly class on religious groups, regions, and concepts led by Jeremy Fricke, Tri-Faith Initiative's Education Director. Past topics have included the Baha'i Faith, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Chinese Religious Culture. In this class, we explore the definition of "religion" from different perspectives and what that means in practice.

(Registration required - go to Tri-Faith web page at trifaith.org/events or find the link on Tri-Faith Facebook page, facebook.com/TriFaithInitiative.)

Crucial Conversations: Race and Religion - Tuesday, August 11, 6 PM - 7:30 PM via Zoom

Crucial Conversations are a way for community members to come together and discuss the difficult aspects of religion. Often at the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender expression, and sexuality, religion has played a role in limiting or erasing those identities. Yet, religion continues to play a large role within our society. This Crucial Conversation will focus on race, ethnicity, religion, and spirituality.

At Tri-Faith Initiative, we recognize the continued tension between such identities and religion and these conversations are essential to help bring our community together, to build empathy and understanding, and to celebrate the identities that make us who we are. This online event is welcoming and affirming to all to be open and willing to discuss these topics.

(Registration required - go to Tri-Faith web page at trifaith.org/events or find the link on Tri-Faith Facebook page, facebook.com/TriFaithInitiative.)

Making the Familiar Strange: Rising Waters - Noah, Tuesday, August 25, 2020 at 12 PM - 1 PM

Making the Familiar Strange is an opportunity for interfaith dialogue that inspires people of different religious and nonreligious backgrounds to read the same text together. Rather than providing answers, creating arguments, or shutting down conversation, Making the Familiar Strange gives attendees an opportunity to investigate and share different perspectives on the same texts.

While not required, the program is best if you have access to the texts in question, which can be a physical copy or online copy of a Bible, Tanakh, or other text that includes the biblical book of Genesis.

(Registration required - go to Tri-Faith web page at trifaith.org/events or find the link on Tri-Faith Facebook page, facebook.com/TriFaithInitiative.)

TRI-FAITH GARDEN AND ORCHARD

Connect with nature, meet new friends, and help feed the Omaha community by volunteering with the Tri-Faith Garden and Orchard! Volunteers are needed year-round to assist with preparing soil, planting, watering, tending, harvesting, and transporting fresh fruits and vegetables to local food banks.

The Tri-Faith Garden and Orchard is located next to Temple Israel on the Tri-Faith Commons.

We are seeking a volunteer leader for night and/or weekend work sessions. Contact Amanda if interested, alryan@trifaith.org.



CARING TOGETHER



IN MEMORIAM

Betty Salistean passed away June 20 and her family is planning a Countryside memorial at a later date. She's been interred next to her husband in Omaha.

Virginia Reinders died July 4 and was honored at Mallard, Iowa, on July 10 and then buried next to her beloved husband Raymond.

Lucille Brawner died July 10 and her life was celebrated at a family graveside service in Omaha with Rev. Dr. Eric Elnes as officiant.

Sybil Pavey's memorial service was held at Countryside on July 17 and was officiated by Rev. Dr. Eric Elnes.

CIRCLE OF SONG: MAKING MUSIC THROUGH GRIEF AND LOSS - BEGINS AUGUST 3

The Board of Pastoral Care invites you to consider a new opportunity: "Circle of Song: Making Music Through Grief and Loss." This group will be led by Countryside's own Emily Wadhams, MT-BC. Emily is a board certified music therapist with almost 20 years experience and owner of Omaha Music Therapy LLC.

Circle of Song will use the power of making music combined with sharing our experiences of grief and loss to help us minister to one another. Research indicates that singing together through our grief shows remarkable physical and emotional benefits for participants. There is no musical ability or experience required.

During COVID restrictions, this group will take place over Zoom, but when we are able to meet in person again, we will gather at Countryside. **Meetings will be held on four Mondays from 6:30-7:30 PM, beginning August 3. Cost is \$70/month.** Please contact Emily at info@omahamusictherapy.com to register. Space is limited. To learn more about Emily and Music Therapy, please visit www.OmahaMusicTherapy.com

BOARD OF PASTORAL CARE'S SUMMER WISDOM OF THE AGES - INDEPENDENCE

This month, the Pastoral Care Board is sharing two summer-related poems with you. The first one is from Jan Brown; she wrote it after a 2004 summer tornado in southeast Nebraska - a tornado which ripped through her sister's farm south of Lincoln. The second poem is a classic from Emily Dickinson who writes about the passing of summertime.



Jan Brown

The Spirit reminds us of the juxtaposition of endings and how we eternally, optimistically continue to look forward to the promise of renewal and new beginnings. We hope you enjoy the words of two women writing from different times, grappling with how we are always saying goodbye to what we hold dear, but that we also continue to look forward to the beautiful moments which wait for us just around the corner.

WHAT REMAINS - BY JAN BROWN

After the storm rages through
we pick up the pieces with our
hands
or with less fragile tools
depending on the size of the
debris.
We stare at bits of the past,
cherish shining moments,
grieve at our losses,
rejoice that we had once been
blessed with abundance, and then

we make patchwork plans to
stitch over the gaping holes
of our homes and hearts.
Surviving the tornadoes of
goodbye
is not for the faint of heart -
still, each day we awaken with a
question:
Can I do this one more time?
Always, the answer is yes.
Strong storm shelters mean

when the winds of change come,
and they will,
we can hold on
despite the fears,
our tears,
many years.
We are here
and the song continues.
Praise be.

AS IMPERCEPTIBLY AS GRIEF- BY EMILY DICKINSON

As imperceptibly as Grief
The Summer lapsed away -
Too imperceptible at last
To seem like Perfidy -
A Quietness distilled
As Twilight long begun,
Or Nature spending with herself
Sequestered Afternoon -
The Dusk drew earlier in -

The Morning foreign shone -
A courteous, yet harrowing Grace,
As Guest, that would be gone -
And thus, without a Wing
Or service of a Keel
Our Summer made her light
escape
Into the Beautiful.



Emily Dickinson

THE BOX FOR AUGUST

We will be collecting backpacks and school supplies and distributing them to families who will have children in schools and those who will be at home being schooled according to their school schedule. We will make the donations available to the food distribution centers who are having drive thru opportunities for families. Whenever and however school begins for these children they will need supplies. School will be a very different experience this year so a backpack and school supplies to rely on will be one less worry for a child. Thank you for giving backpacks and pens/pencils, rulers, erasers, and notebooks. BOCO appreciates your help and they will too.

School supply ideas

- Backpacks
- Markers
- Crayons
- #2 Pencils
- Erasers
- Safety Scissors
- Hand Sanitizer
- Rulers
- Notebooks
- Kleenex
- Paper
- Pencil bags
- Glue sticks
- Folders
- Colored pencils
- Pencil sharpeners

TIMELINE OF COUNTRYSIDE PROPERTY

HISTORY OF COUNTRYSIDE PROPERTY

TIMELINE OF COUNTRYSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH PROPERTY

TRI-FAITH INITIATIVE PURCHASED A PARCEL OF LAND THAT WAS PART OF THE OLD GOLF COURSE

Abraham's Circle Bridge was planned to honor the strong relationship between each of the three faiths and the role that harvest and bounty play in the ceremonial and celebratory aspects of faith.

COUNTRYSIDE RECEIVES \$125,000 GRANT FROM NET FOR "BRIDGING FAITH AND THE ENVIRONMENT"

Plan includes water conservation, storm water management, native plants, improved soil health.



Ironwood clubhouse being demolished in 2011.



One of the first editions of the Sterling Ridge plats from 2011.



Native Nebraska grasses and wildflowers have roots that can grow up to 15-20 feet deep, penetrating the water table and stabilizing the soil. This means you never need to water them, even during the dry season. The second great thing about the roots is that they provide a sort of natural filter for groundwater. When runoff and rainfall infiltrate the ground in the city, they often take with them an assortment of things that ought not to be there (like runoff from roads – think chemicals from cars and leaks). Plants, especially native grasses with their extensive, deep root system, have the ability to filter a lot of this pollution out naturally. Bonus - they supply untold amounts of food for birds and small animals.

NET GRANT HELPS COUNTRYSIDE RESTORE ECOSYSTEM AROUND PROPERTY

From 1924 to 2010, the land where the Tri-Faith Commons now sits was part of an eighteen-hole golf course. If you have lived in Omaha for any amount of time you probably remember it, you might have even golfed on it. You might also remember that week in late March of 2011, when the beautiful old trees that were plucked from the golf course by the Army Corps of Engineers to regrade the property for development. It was a heartbreaking sight. In a radio interview on KFAB, the president of Lockwood Development, Chip James, said that the company did their best to save as many trees as possible and relocated approximately 200 of the trees that were removed. To be fair, golf courses in general, are not that great for the environment. They pollute ground water with the use of pesticides, degrade natural habitats, alter or damage wetlands and increased conflicts with wildlife. (*sourced from www.audoboninternational.org)

Fast forward to 2018 and Countryside Community Church became the recipient of a one hundred twenty-five thousand dollar grant from The Nebraska Environmental Trust, also known as NET, for the "Bridging Faith and the Environment – church campus as a resorted, biodiverse plains ecosystem" project. It was a perfect fit for Countryside, a community that works diligently to promote spirituality through environmental education, advocacy and simple acts at Countryside Community Church and beyond.

With the NET grant, a landscaping master plan was developed to simultaneously unify the thirty-five-acre site and invite all members of the public

to take in its visual messaging, walk along its inviting paths, and learn about the elements included in its restored ecosystem. The project involved the implementation of a sustainable landscape plan on Countryside's portion of the Tri-Faith Commons. This plan included water conservation, storm water management, native plants, and improved habitat and soil health.

After nearly two years of construction, the stunning new Earth-friendly and sustainable site is now complete and open to the public. A goal of the project is to educate and inform people about landscape stewardship, including members of the three Tri-Faith congregations, residents of the greater Omaha community, and anyone who wants to visit from across the state and nation. And take time to enjoy the trees.

Countryside will be hosting a Virtual Press conference/media event for our NET (Nebraska Environmental Trust) Dedication at 10 AM on Wednesday, August 5. It will be focusing on how Countryside used the \$125,000 grant from NET to landscape with plants native to Nebraska. We will have 2-3 speakers and a short video about our landscaping project. We will post the link on our church calendar on the day of the event.

SUMMER CONCERT SERIES VIA LIVESTREAM AND YOUTUBE

Stages across the world remain dark, but we are turning the lights on here at Countryside for you!

- **Friday August 7, 7 PM: Edem Soul Music** - Edem K. Garro is a Ghanaian-American composer, vocalist, multi-instrumentalist. As a skilled hand percussionist and vocalist, Edem's West African-American heritage remains the core foundation of her music. Edem Soul Music is the 2018 Capitol District Musician in Residence as well as the 2018 Omaha Entertainment Arts Award winner for Best Soul. Whether she is playing the ukulele, electronic compositions or the harp with her flautist, Edem's work primarily focuses on cultural preservation and identity. She uses her native Ga language in much of her work. Although Edem was born as a first-generation American, she utilizes the culture that was taught to her in hope that young people will remember where they came from - to know who they are, and where they are going.
- **Friday August 14, 7 PM: Kusi Taki** - Experience the Andean cultures of Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru and Chile through an acoustic journey and storytelling. The award-winning Lincoln-based Andean musical group Kusi Taki (Quechua for 'Enchanting Music') will play traditional South American instruments including the Quena (flute), Zampoñas (panpipes), Charango (10-stringed small guitar) and Bombo (goatskin drum) and sing in Spanish and Quechua to bring alive the cultures and history of the indigenous people of the Andes.
- Director Oscar Rios Pohirieth is a professional musician and has performed throughout Mexico, the United States and Europe.
- **Friday August 21, 7 PM: A Side of Soul**
- **Friday August 28, 7 PM: Dr. Kristín Jónína Taylor and the UNO Piano Studio** -This concert will feature Dr. Kristín Jónína Taylor along with students from her piano studio at UNO. COVID-19 has taken away many performance opportunities for college students, so we are going to provide a performance space for them and hear masterworks played by up and coming talent.

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YOUTH CORNER

COYO Jr. High, Sr. High and Faith Singers are on break for the Summer.

CORE 56 will still continue to meet during August. Contact Rebecca Morello at rmorello@countrysideucc.org for Zoom information.

COYO JR. HIGH MOVIE NIGHT - AUGUST 2

On Sunday, August 2nd we will have an outdoor movie night for CoYo Jr. High. This outdoor socially distant event will be from 8-10PM. In the back of the building (where we had our Tri-Faith picnic last year). We will be watching, "Penguins of Madagascar The Movie" and catching up!

Things you will need for the event: Your chair/blanket, Your own snack Your own water bottle.

(We cannot share between households)

A MANDATORY Covid 19 policy will be available to read and sign at the event. Again, it is MANDATORY that a parent or guardian read and sign this waiver before you participate.

We are so excited to see you in person from a distance!

A NOTE FROM REBECCA - OUR DIRECTOR OF YOUTH AND FAMILY AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

Some of our students have enjoyed creating something as a prayer practice, like intentional quiet drawing time or other artistic medium, where they are encouraged to express their prayers in art. Others have used baking or cooking as their practice, intentionally considering all that went into creating the ingredients as well as our prayers for those who will consume the dish or baked good. Some do yoga or a walking meditation. One of the goals with this activity is intentionally reserving time with God, with the Spirit, so sometimes an activity that might not seem particularly prayerful can still help us learn to cultivate our connection to the Divine. All this is to say, its cool to let them pick something that seems out of the box and thanks for helping them establish this habit!