

JANUARY 2022



2022 - NEW YEAR NEW OPPORTUNITIES

SEE INSIDE:

- Sunday School
- Confirmation
- Core 56
- Bold Conversations on Race and Social Justice
- Countryside 101 classes
- Board Retreat
- Annual Meeting

Happy 2022! Make your new year's resolution to get more involved at Countryside Community Church. We have many opportunities coming up to choose from.

We will be welcoming our Sunday School, Confirmation and Core 56 kids back to onsite programming for the first time since the pandemic began. We're looking forward to seeing all the young faces in person again!

Pastor Tracey will be hosting a series called Bold Conversations on Race and Social Justice that you won't want to miss.

We will be offering Countryside 101 classes once again in January. If you've been thinking about joining or have a friend who may be interested, the new year is the perfect time!

Mark your calendars for the Board Retreat (February 12) and Annual Meeting (February 13).

MARK YOUR CALENDARS - ANNUAL MEETING - FEBRUARY 13

The Annual meeting will be on Sunday, February 13 following the single youth service at 10:00 AM. More details will be shared soon. The annual meeting is a really important event in the life of the church and, during this transitional time and the search for a settled minister, it will be especially vital. You will hear reports from church leaders and annual reports from each of the boards. New board members will be welcomed and retiring board members recognized. New church officers will be installed. Financial reports will be presented and the budget for 2022 approved. Please plan to attend and be informed and involved in the future of Countryside.

SUNDAY WORSHIP



WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US IN WORSHIP AT 9 AND 11 AM ON SUNDAYS

We invite you to join us in person at 9 AM and 11 AM on Sundays. Our services are also streamed live online through YouTube live ([countrysideucc.org/live](https://www.countrysideucc.org/live)). We still require masks inside the building. Thank you for continuing to LOVE your neighbor!

WE WILL CONTINUE TO MASK INTO 2022

We will still be wearing masks inside the church as the omicron variant makes its way through the U.S. The omicron variant is HIGHLY transmissible and multiplies much more quickly. The omicron variant has surpassed the delta variant in the U.S. within this past month (nearly 75% of cases). Even if it turns out that the disease from omicron is not more severe than delta, with the ability to quickly multiply and infect others, we will continue to overwhelm our hospitals.

Please vaccinate yourselves and your families when you are able to, and take precautions such as masking and social distancing when in public. Also, stay home when you are sick. Let's all pray together, for the health and safety of our healthcare workers, as they have been on the front lines of this pandemic for almost two years now.

COUNTRYSIDE 101 ORIENTATION CLASS

We will be having a Countryside 101 orientation class on Sundays, January 9 and 23, from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. in the Chapel.

Since our move to the new building, many have said "This building is everything I hoped it would be - and then some." Now is our opportunity as a congregation to attract and nurture new members. Three great things about Countryside are: (1) our involvement with the Tri-Faith Initiative; (2) our warm and inclusive welcome of the whole human family, not just parts of it; and (3) the number of ways Countryside makes faith relevant in everyday life.

If the present is any predictor of the future, I suspect that our future will be everything we hope it will be - and then some. Why not invite your friends to be part of it? These classes are designed to educate newcomers and visitors about the church, the church staff, and the many church programs. Indicate your interest by signing up on Sunday morning or contact Robyn Hubbard at 402-391-0350 ext. 224 or robynh@countrysideucc.org.

BOLD CONVERSATIONS ON RACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Small Group

Beginning Wednesday, January 12, Pastor Tracey Perry will be leading a small group - Bold Conversations on Race and Social Justice. We will engage in truthful, open and honest conversation on racism, the impact on Black people and people of color, and society. We will discuss each other's perspective, hear from white people, their beliefs on race, the impact of racism on the universal church, in society, and in our world. We will dispel myths that only condone and bring harm to race relations.

This is your opportunity to hear from an African American woman's subjective experience with racism, and the impact on Black people. So come and share in the conversation that is long overdue, but supports the mission statement and words that are carved in cement at the front door of Countryside - All Are Welcome Here.

Six Week Series

Beginning on Saturday, January 22, Pastor Tracey will be facilitating a six-week series on Bold Conversations on Race and Social Justice. There is an urgent need to discuss race and racism in all areas of life - personally, within families, in churches, in the workplace, in society, and in our world. The six-week series will be held at Countryside with a different topic each week. There will be time for Q&A and an opportunity to speak and engage in these conversations with an African American woman.

This series is open to members and non-members of Countryside as well as the public, so feel free to bring your neighbors, family, and anyone who would like to learn to engage in this conversation, and seek to be an agent of change and advocate for racial justice. See you soon!

Be blessed always,

Pastor Tracey

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COUNTRYSIDE CONNECTED



RACE IN AMERICA

For the last year and a half, Countryside has offered book studies, in various forms with various facilitators, on the subject of Race in America. We continue to offer multiple opportunities, as our congregation has shown a genuine eagerness to learn and grow their understanding. Due to the popularity of these studies, we will continue to offer them into 2022. Some of the books we have read are *White Fragility*, *Caste*, *How To Be An Anti-Racist*, *The New Jim Crow*, *So You Want to Talk About Race*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as told to Alex Haley*, *My Grandmother's Hands*, *White Feminism*, *See No Stranger* and more. All of these have served a purpose in continuing in our attempt to grasp this complex subject. Some of these will be revisited this year and new ones, such as *Four Hundred Souls* and *The Sum of US* will be added. Please join us. If you are interested or have questions, please contact Diane Scott at dianes@countysideucc.org or text 402-707-1556.

MINDFUL MEDITATION SITS WITH CARLOS, WEDNESDAYS AT 6 PM

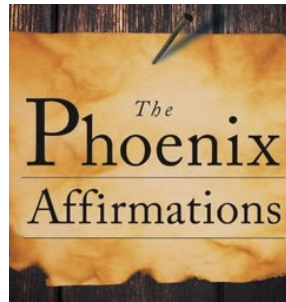
Mindful Meditation Sits with Carlos Figueroa are continuing Wednesday evenings from 7:00-8:00 PM via Zoom. You can access these sits through the Zoom link on the church calendar. If you have any questions or would like more information about these opportunities, please contact the church office at office@countysideucc.org.

FAME (FRIDAY ARTS & MUSIC EXPERIENCE) EVERY FRIDAY AT 10 AM

Join a fun group of seniors every Friday at 10 AM at Countryside for an art project, a yummy treat and to listen to some good music. We may also have visitors from time to time. It is a great way to get out of the house and enjoy time with friends for an hour. Everyone is welcome. No reservations are required. Masks are required right now for our indoor activities.

PHOENIX AFFIRMATIONS CLASS TO START SOON

Following our new members class, the study of the Phoenix Affirmations will once again be offered. Over 6 weeks we will study these 12 progressive principles, written by clergy, lay-people, theologians and Biblical scholars. This study is divided into three sections, each delving into one of the Three Great Loves: Love of God, Love of Neighbor and Love of Self. Anyone can join! We welcome new members, old members and members who have taken the class before. The understanding of these principles continues to change as God continues to speak. For information, contact Diane Scott at dianes@countysideucc.org or text to 402-707-1556.



GENESIS TO REVELATIONS BIBLE STUDY WITH PASTOR TRACEY

Get ready and get excited! On Saturdays 10 - 11 AM in the Chapel, Pastor Tracey leads an extensive examination of the Word of God from Genesis to Revelations. Scripture will be examined through exegesis, hermeneutics, archaeological evidence and discussion of Jesus the Man and Jesus, the divine being, as the Son of God. Come with your Bibles and let's study the word of God together. Study materials are provided. Email Pastor Tracey at traceyp@countysideucc.org for more information.

PRAYER WARRIORS MINISTRY

Thursday mornings at 10:00 a.m. Pastor Tracey is leading a Prayer Group Ministry. You are invited to come together to develop the spiritual practice of group prayer. We pray for our church, our families, our community, our country and the world. We come together of one accord to pray for any and all prayer needs and requests, for ourselves and others. All prayer requests are kept confidential and not shared. Contact Pastor Tracey at traceyp@countysideucc.org.

SATURDAY MORNING ZUMBA CLASSES VIA ZOOM

These sessions are free, introductory classes, open to all ages. For more information, contact Cynthia Lindenmeyer at cynthia@acrenactivismtoday.org.

MEN'S BREAKFAST, TUESDAYS AT 8 AM

Looking for fellowship and great conversation? Check out the weekly Men's Breakfast at First Watch on 72 and Pacific. Every Tuesday morning at 8 AM feel free to stop in and have breakfast. You can come every week or stop in once a month, it's up to you! All are welcome to attend!

LUNCH BUNCH - SECOND MONDAY OF MONTH

Lunch Bunch meets on Mondays, but will be on hiatus in January and February. If you're interested in joining this group, which is our traditional "circle" group from way back, please contact Gloria Ried at g-g.ried@cox.net. Thank you to Gloria Ried for her ongoing leadership of this program!

TRI-FAITH INITIATIVE



UPCOMING EVENTS

ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS IN DIALOGUE COURSE: CRUSADES, HOLOCAUST, AND INTER-FAITH RELATIONS

January 4, 6, 11, 13 and 18, 6:00 - 8:15 PM CDT

Zoom (Registration required) - go to trifait.org/events to register.

Registration:

Students may register through the University of Nebraska - Omaha for credit or audit at normal tuition rates. Students may also register through Tri-Faith Initiative for a \$95 fee. Scholarships are available for those with financial need.

RELI 1000-820 Abrahamitic Religions in Dialogue - Crusades, Holocaust, and Interfaith Relations

This is the second course in a series of three on Abrahamitic Religions in Dialogue.

Abrahamitic Religions in Dialogue - Crusades, Holocaust, and Interfaith Relations is a one-credit hour course introducing the Crusades, the Holocaust, and their impact on relations between Jewish, Christian, and Muslim groups in the past and today in five sessions/modules. These modules will cover various topics, including how religious groups understand "holy war," 20th century anti-Semitism and religious change, and more positive interfaith models like al-Andalus.

Students will demonstrate their knowledge by identifying how historical conflict and catastrophe impact interreligious relations as well as self-understanding and identity.

This course has been designed, developed, and implemented in collaboration between faculty of UNO Religious Studies and staff of Tri-Faith Initiative.

Upcoming Course Dates:

January 4, 6, 11, 13, and 18 (Tuesday and Thursday evenings)

All sessions take place 6:00 PM - 8:15 PM CST.

Location: Online Only (Zoom)

Instructors:

Paul A. Williams, PhD in History of Religions, University of Chicago (Associate Professor and Chair, Religious Studies, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Nebraska at Omaha)

Jeremy Fricke, MA in Religion, University of Iowa (Education Director for Tri-Faith Initiative, Omaha, Nebraska)

Course Materials:

No textbook required. Students registered through University of Nebraska at Omaha (for credit or audit) will have access through the UNO CANVAS course system (with online course materials and embedded hyperlinks for additional online resources). Students registered through Tri-Faith Initiative will receive a PDF or a series of PDFs with course materials, including embedded hyperlinks for online resources.

Computer and internet access will be necessary to participate in the course.

WOMEN OF TRI-FAITH VIRTUAL LUNCH

Monday, January 10, 12 - 1 PM, online

The Women of Tri-Faith Virtual Lunch is an opportunity to meet new friends, stay connected, and build intergenerational bonds between women of all faiths and identities.

Join us for sisterhood and casual conversation over lunch!

Registration required - go to trifait.org/events to register.

Missed a Tri-Faith event? You can watch several past events online including the Unity in Hope: 20 Years After 9/11 by going to www.trifait.org/past-events.

RELIGION@WORK PODCAST

Religion@Work, a podcast from Tri-Faith Initiative, brings together diverse voices to share stories and discussion on the intersections of religion, faith, and spirituality in our work lives.

Join Tri-Faith Deputy Director Erik Servellon as he interviews diversity, equity, and inclusion experts, scholars, and workers from a range of industries. They'll talk about how we can better integrate religious diversity into the workplace by bringing our whole selves to work.

Listen to our premiere episode, "Pushing Interfaith Work Forward" with Wendy Goldberg, Executive Director of Tri-Faith Initiative, on Apple, Google, and Spotify Podcasts.

Go to trifait.org/ourwork/religion-at-work to learn more.

COUNTRYSIDE CARES



IN MEMORIAM

Kris (Steve) Hess's father, Ken Stenberg, passed away December 17. His service was held at Heafey, Hoffmann, Dworak, Cutler on December 23.

Dee (Rod) Bennett passed away on December 8. Her service was December 16 at Roeder Mortuaries followed by a reception at Countryside.

Ron Bennett passed away on the morning of Christmas Eve surrounded by the love of his family. Please pray for the Bennett family for peace and comfort after losing both Dee and Rod over the holiday season. We will update this information when we know the date of the memorial service.

Ron (De) Schmierer passed away on December 4. His memorial service will be December 30 at 1:00 PM at Countryside Community Church.

STEPHEN MINISTRY

January 4, 5:30 PM Leadership Team at Countryside

January 4, 6:00 PM Peer Support at Countryside

LUNCH BUNCH

The Lunch Bunch collected \$220 for Project Harmony.

They will be on hiatus in January and February as bad weather usually occurs during those months. They will meet again on March 14. If you have any questions about this group call Gloria Ried at 402-333-3115.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

by Debbie Vihstadt, Pastoral Care Coordinator

During the first phase of the pandemic I think I just went into survival mode. It was such a strange time, everything shut down overnight and over the next year so many of us were doing what we thought of as absolutely nothing but wondering why am I so exhausted all of the time? Looking at social media didn't help. You would see friends painting their entire houses, starting new hobbies, getting fit. Getting fit? In real life everyone I knew was packing on the pounds.

2021 came along and offered some new hope as vaccines rolled out. I was starting to breathe a little easier thinking the worst might be behind us all. Dare I hope? The security of the life I used to know never came back with the vaccines and the emergence of new variants was disappointing to say the least, downright depressing to put it bluntly. The constant bickering over vaccines, masks and social distancing has added to the exhaustion. Now looking back, 2021 almost felt worse than 2020. We have all now experienced two years of continual disappointment. Now 2022 is rearing its head with the Omicron variant in tow. Should I even make a New Year's resolution besides try not to get sick? I have decided that I am going to make one and in my heart, I made it a few months ago, when I was at one of my lowest times this year. There has been so much over these past two years that are completely out of my control but the one thing I always have is how I react to the world around me. I am choosing to be kinder this year. Kinder in my thoughts, words and actions. This includes myself as well as others. Calling on a friend I haven't heard from in awhile. Sending emails to businesses when I am treated well. I even call high schools from opposing teams my kids's school plays to compliment their students when I see the kids or even the parents do something good at games. I honestly get more out of those phone calls. The happiness on the other end of the phone almost jumps out sometimes. It's a pretty simple resolution, and I am cheating because I started it a bit ago but I think it will help ease the transition into an uncertain 2022.

THE BOX FOR JANUARY

The Box for January is providing diapers for the Refugee Empowerment Center. The center's mission is to provide holistic and culturally effective refugee resettlement services that empower newcomers to thrive in their new lives. They are a community-based, Nebraska 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.

The three areas they focus on are:

Resettlement: Meeting immediate needs of newcomers in their first 90 days: settling into their first home, establishing healthcare providers, enrollment in English classes, employment connections, and more.

Empowerment: Driving classes, financial literacy, access to higher education and job skill development, leadership and civic engagement opportunities.

Center: Expanding social support networks, creative space to share and celebrate home cultures, and the chance for former refugees to give back to their new communities.

To donate online go to: https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/l/HEIP5L7NJIJN?ref_wl_share





CHURCH NOTES

SYRIAN FAMILY UPDATE



JOIN THE CHOIR!

There's never been a better time to join our choirs! Get out and see your old friends and make some new ones. Contact Alex Ritter at alexr@countrysideucc.org if you are interested in joining our youth or adult choirs.



On November 4, the al Ghates family, one of the Syrian families Countryside previously sponsored, was honored with the Milagro Award for 2021 from One World Community Health Centers. A beautiful video of the family was shown at the banquet. In it, Kholoud, the mother, talks about how different life in America is. The Milagro Award ("milagro" means miracle in Spanish) was given to the family for having a "passion for life, advocating for their children's health, and navigating an entirely new health care system with energy, dedication and commitment." The al Ghates family has six children, three with developmental needs. Four of the children are enrolled in the Millard School District, and the two older children attend Metro. Khalid, the father, earned his CDL and drives for a van company. The family bought a new home near our church about a year ago. They are an American refugee success story!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Our church office is in need of volunteers who could come in when needed and assist with getting the monthly newsletter and other mailings ready to go out in the mail. This task involves folding, labeling, tabbing and sometimes sealing envelopes. It's an easy job and when 2-4 people work together it is an opportunity to get to know fellow members of the congregation while you work together. The time flies by. if you are interested in being a part of this low pressure, enjoyable group please email Pam Kregg at pamgg@cox.net.

COUNTRYSIDE FUTURE



CHURCH COUNCIL UPDATE

The next regularly scheduled church council meeting is January 20, 2022
Meetings are open and are held in Marys' Hall beginning at 6:30 PM.

BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION TOWN HALLS

As we step deeper into our discernment, the Board of Christian Education (BOCE), the staff and members of our congregation worked to create a fuller picture of our rich history—not only as a congregation but also within the our denomination. Many thanks to members of the Board of Christian Education for hosting the town halls and to Bruce Blanchard, Diane Scott, Mary Johnston, Ann Burdette, Mary Beth Link, Rev. Norm Pavey, and Dan Loven-Crum for enriching our understanding of the history of the United Church of Christ (UCC) and Countryside. Remember, videos of all these sessions are available on our Countryside YouTube channel or at countrysideucc.org/discernment. Our past topics included:

- History of the UCC
- History of Countryside
- History of Phoenix Affirmations at Countryside
- What does it mean to be a congregationalist church?

Upcoming up town halls (dates and times to be announced):

- What does it mean when we say, "All are Welcome?"
- Language of Faith led by Rebecca Morello
- Ministers 101
- Living into Tri Faith as a Christian

BOARD RETREAT AND BOARD CHAIR RETREAT

The board retreat will be on Saturday, February 12, from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM in Marys' Hall. This retreat is for all board members. For those of you currently involved on boards and for those of you who are new, without your time and committment, Countryside wouldn't be the great place that it is. The retreat will focus on personal goals for 2022 as well as a model for discerning the goals of each board. The opportunity to gather with your individual board will also be available.

You will learn about the nuts and bolts of board service like:

- Board Mission
- Calendar with board meeting dates and events
- Roster of board members with contact information
- Committees and job descriptions

You will also have the opportunity to get to know your fellow board members and learn more about Countryside Community Church and the Tri-Faith during this important year as the search for a settled minister continues. There will also be an opportunity for board chairs to gather on Thursday, February 10, from 6:00 to 9:00 PM.

COUNTRYSIDE MISSION STATEMENT

We are an inclusive, open and affirming family of faith, welcoming all to God's table of love and acceptance. We are diverse, yet united by Christ's example. We care for one another, support one another and challenge one another to become all that God creates us to be. We work together to nurture our community and to promote peace, equality and justice in our conflicted world.

RESOURCES FOR DISCERNMENT

During discernment Countryside members will be asking themselves the following questions:

1. How do we want to be challenged spiritually and intellectually?
2. What is our call to serve?
3. What does it mean to be the Christian partner of the Tri-Faith Initiative?

To prepare yourself to better answer these questions here are some resources you can take some time to look over at your leisure before attending a small group session.

Information about Tri-Faith, check out their website at trifaith.org or the Countryside website about their involvement in Tri-Faith, countrysideucc.org/relocation.

Download the Countryside bylaws and the 2020 annual report countrysideucc.org/discernment. How to be an active listener and a guide to hard conversations can also be found at countrysideucc.org/discernment.

COUNTRYSIDE YOUTH

SENIOR HIGH YOUTH

On Sunday, January 9, both the Youth Group and the Faith Singers will reconvene after our short Christmas Break. This month, our Youth Group will focus on preparing for Youth Sunday on February 13, and preparing for the upcoming annual meeting, and a Dungeons and Dragons game night. No experience necessary to play DND as our Dungeon Master will guide us through the process of creating characters game play.

Sunday nights will remain 6:00 PM dinner for vaccinated participants and 6:30 PM activities for everyone! Be sure to check your texts for specifics and updates. If you are not receiving the Youth Info texts, now's a great time to let us know so we can get you on the list. It's the best way to stay in the know with Youth shenanigans.

Faith Singers will sing in worship towards the end of this month. As soon as we have a date...we'll let you and your students know. We're super excited to get our singers back into worship so please be sure to attend Sunday rehearsals.

CONFIRMATION

Confirmation classes will resume on Sunday, January 9. Both the Sunday group and Wednesday group will begin meeting again that week at their regular times. We'll be adding another in-person group to the schedule so please, please, please watch your email for info about that. This month, we'll be talking about church structure including board, lay leadership, and council systems, how we as a community organize ourselves and how these structures are influenced and guided by our mission statement, the Phoenix Affirmations, and the 8 Points of Progressive Leadership.

Just a heads up—Confirmation Sunday is Sunday, April 24, at the 11:00 AM worship.

CHILDRENS MINISTRIES

Sunday School will be back in session starting January 16! Here's a brief rundown of what that looks like so you, and your Sunday School student, can be prepared. We're starting off slow with just our K-6th grade groups and all classes will be masked. We will meet the 16, the 23, and the 30 and we'll be diving into stories about Jesus's early years. While registration is not required for your student to attend, if you hit me up with a quick "hey you can plan on us being there" email, it would be greatly appreciated so we can plan materials, class sizes, etc.

The Nursery will remain closed until COVID numbers are more reasonable. However, we are setting up a spot in the coffeehouse for families of young kids, including pre-k aged kids, to hang out and watch worship. There will be toys, books, and coloring sheets available. This area will be unstaffed although there will likely be very nice folks willing to make you a latte or other delicious beverage. For the record, your baby/toddler/young one is always...ALWAYS...welcome in worship complete with their little sounds, fussiness, giggles, grumps, and wiggles. All are welcome means all are welcome.

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*Pictures below:
Top - Youth students watching Taylor Swift's new song. (As it turns out...Jake Gyllenhaal is the villain.)*

Bottom, Students listening to a presentation on Seasonal Depression.

