

*New Year  
new me.*

# COUNTRYSIDE CURRENTS

*Hello  
January*

The monthly newsletter of Countryside Community Church



A look back at the opening dedication of the new church, April 2019.

## We Live Storied Lives

*by Rev. Dr. Keith Herron*

As human beings, we all have a collection of stories that make up our life experiences. These stories can range from happy and triumphant to difficult and challenging, and they shape the way we see ourselves and the world around us.

I know myself when I know my stories and savor them as mine. We create a life of meaning when we re-experience our stories to mine them for deeper truth. Buried in each story is some experience, some treasure, for us to discover. By viewing our experiences as episodes in a larger narrative, we can gain a greater appreciation for the breadth and depth of our lives.

My journey across the arc of life is not at all unique. It has a

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*January*

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**Church Office**

13130 Faith Plaza, Omaha NE 68144

[www.countrysideucc.org](http://www.countrysideucc.org)

P: 402-391-0350

E: [Office@countrysideucc.org](mailto:Office@countrysideucc.org)FB: [www.facebook.com/CountrysideOmaha](https://www.facebook.com/CountrysideOmaha)**Rev. Dr. Keith Herron, Interim Minister**[keithh@countrysideucc.org](mailto:keithh@countrysideucc.org)**Dan Loven-Crum, Director of Administration & Communications**[danl@countrysideucc.org](mailto:danl@countrysideucc.org)**Christine Kasel, Director of Communications & Support Services**[christinek@countrysideucc.org](mailto:christinek@countrysideucc.org)**Shari Garder, Financial Secretary**[sharig@countrysideucc.org](mailto:sharig@countrysideucc.org)**Steve Gomez, Administrative Assistant**[steveg@countrysideucc.org](mailto:steveg@countrysideucc.org)**Kris Hill, Administrative Assistant**[krish@countrysideucc.org](mailto:krish@countrysideucc.org)**Robyn Hubbard, Exec. Administrative Assistant**[robynh@countrysideucc.org](mailto:robynh@countrysideucc.org)**Chris Ciriaco, Building & Property Coordinator**[chrisc@countrysideucc.org](mailto:chrisc@countrysideucc.org)**Kris Nevins, Special Projects Coordinator**[krisn@countrysideucc.org](mailto:krisn@countrysideucc.org)**Diane Scott, Engagement Coordinator**[dianes@countrysideucc.org](mailto:dianes@countrysideucc.org)**Rebecca Morello, Director of Youth & Family Ministries**[rebeccam@countrysideucc.org](mailto:rebeccam@countrysideucc.org)**Emma Boyd, Youth Programming Coordinator**[emmab@countrysideucc.org](mailto:emmab@countrysideucc.org)**Alex Ritter, Directory of Arts Ministries**[alexr@countrysideucc.org](mailto:alexr@countrysideucc.org)**Tyler Gruttemeyer, Faith Singers Youth Choir Director**[tylerg@countrysideucc.org](mailto:tylerg@countrysideucc.org)**Adam Witte, Choir Director**[adamw@countrysideucc.org](mailto:adamw@countrysideucc.org)

# Welcome to Countryside!

Let us offer you a warm Countryside welcome. As a community, we place great value on welcoming ALL to an open and affirming community where we celebrate and rest in a God who loves us beyond our wildest imaginations. We invite you to journey with us as we work together with the guidance of the Spirit, seeking those places where we are called to participate with God toward the fullest expression of who we are created to be. As a congregation of the United Church of Christ, we believe the greatest expression of the Body of Christ is found in the local congregation, and each person in our community has a unique conversation with God that serves the whole. Countryside is a place where God is still speaking to us and to our community. Each of us is called to discern that voice and act on that discovery. We welcome you and invite you to participate with us in this calling.

**Our Mission** We're an inclusive, open, and affirming family of faith, welcoming all to God's table of love and acceptance. We're 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 promote peace, equality, and justice in our conflicted world.,

**New Visitor to Countryside?** If you're a first-time visitor to Countryside, please let us know! We'd like to present you with a gift of our gratitude for visiting with us. Please stop by the Welcome Center in the Church foyer!

**A brief look at Countryside**

- Sunday Service – 10 a.m. in person or streaming online.
- Nursery – Child care is available at Sunday service and Wednesday Recharge evening programs. The Nursery is located on the main level along the south hallway.
- Common Grounds Coffeehouse – Join us before or after Sunday service in the Commons for coffee and fellowship.
- Amplified Hearing Devices & Hearing Loop are available at the Information Station in the Foyer.
- Community Worship & Children's Church offered.
- Countryside Email list – If you'd like to receive Countryside's weekly e-newsletter, contact the [church office](mailto:office@countrysideucc.org) at [office@countrysideucc.org](mailto:office@countrysideucc.org) or call 402-391-0350.

Maundy Thursday

**Experience the drama of the Lord's Last Supper as part of *The Living Last Supper***



The Board of Arts Ministry is excited to present a reenactment of the Lord's Last Supper on Maundy Thursday, April 6. This special performance will recreate the moment when Jesus told His disciples that he knew one of them would betray Him. Each disciple is taken by Jesus' statement and reacts differently, making for a powerful and emotional scene.

But who were the disciples, and why did Jesus choose each of them to be a part of His ministry? "The Living Last Supper" will introduce you to each of the disciples and their individual relationships with Jesus. From the loyal Peter to the doubting Thomas, each disciple brings their own unique personality and perspective to the group.

The cast for this performance will be made up of Countrysiders, and we're looking for members interested in participating. Whether you have drama skills or have never acted before, there's a role for you. We also need people to help with lighting, sound, video, and costume design.

Interested in being a part of this special performance? Want more information? Contact [Dan Trombla](mailto:DanTrombla@dbtrombla@gmail.com) at dbtrombla@gmail.com or 402-763-7711. Casting and practices begin soon! Don't hesitate to get involved. We look forward to seeing you at "The Living Last Supper!"

## We Live Storied Lives

*Continued from page 1*

beginning, a middle, and an end as Aristotle and Billy Collins, and others have suggested as the basic building blocks of every story.

The stories appear to be linear, one after the other, but at the same time they are cyclical and the cycle of stories is commonly experienced by others whose stories are intersected.

A linear approach of examining one experience after another can purposefully take us from our beginnings, meander through the middleness of life, and come back to merge with one's endings. The challenge of life can be tracked as part of a large cycle of challenges, from dependence to independence to interdependence and eventually circling back to dependence.

The Board of Christian Education is holding two Saturday conversations, February 4 and 11, from 9 a.m. to noon. Participants will focus on exploring personal stories that individuals hold within the library of their life experiences. They'll also share and reflect on the meaning of their own stories and the stories of others. Watch the C-10 for details about registration for these dynamic events!

Pastor Keith Herron  
Intentional Interim Minister

**WEDNESDAY RECHARGE IS BACK!**  
**WEDNESDAY, JAN. 11, 6 P.M.**

*Impact Speaker*  
**John McCollister**

*Climate Change and the Shift to Renewable Energy*

## Get Connected!

Countryside offers many opportunities to connect with one another and the community. Read the weekly C-10 for current and expanded information on these and other groups, events, and programs.

**Social groups** meet for the sheer joy of connecting with friends old and new. Some gather at the same location week to week, like the Friday Art and Music Experience. This group meets each Friday in the Common Grounds for – you guessed it – activities that revolve around arts and music. Others, like the Lunch Bunch, meet once a month at various venues. A devoted small group of young Dungeons and Dragons aficionados meet each Friday evening for gameplay. On Sundays, a small group of junior high school students meets just for the joy of fun and games!

**Journey Groups** meet weekly to discuss and discover what our Still-speaking God calls us to do in our lives, community and the world. In the process, we form deep relationships offering support to one another through life's journey. Journey groups meet in person, although some groups offer a hybrid Zoom option. Journey Groups are always being formed. If you're interested in joining a Journey Group, contact the church office.

**Study & Interest groups** meet to expand their horizons on specific or narrow topics of interest. Some move beyond deepening their understanding and awareness to become involved in the greater community. Some of the existing purpose-driven groups that meet in person include the Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group, Banned Book Lovers Group (third Monday of each month), and Banned Books Small Group (Tuesdays at 6:30). Race in America, a weekly Wednesday night group, meets on Zoom only. Phoenix Affirmations meets at church each Sunday

morning before service, to delve into the 12 principles that guide Progressive Christianity. A new poetry-focused group is forming this month!

**Bible Study groups** focus on developing and deepening our understanding of what it means to be a Christian in today's world. Some meet on a regular schedule, others for a specific period of time. Rev. Don Sartor's extremely popular Bible Study group's current series is *Understanding Our Roots*, a 10-week study focusing on Luke's work organizing the many oral and written accounts of Jesus.

**Educational small groups**, like Adult Forum, meet to hear about and discuss various topics of interest. This group meets each Sunday after church service. Its most recent series focused on the history of world economics. Some small group opportunities are less structured. For example, the Impact Speaker program brings in outside experts on trending and important topics, like the impact of immigration on Nebraska's economy. Impact Speakers are presented TBA, on Recharge Wednesdays.

### Volunteer Opportunities

Countryside has so many events and programs that offer volunteer opportunities, including office staffing, the Garden of Hope, Countryside Pantry, and special events such as the Ice Cream Festival, United We Walk, and Pride Parade. Check the weekly C-10 for the latest opportunities to get connected and make a difference!



## Small Groups

**Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group, 8 – 9 a.m.** The Sunday Morning Racial Justice Book Group resumes on Jan. 15, with *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church’s Complicity in Racism*, by Jemar Tisby. The Zoom link is on the church [calendar](#) at [countrysideucc.org/calendar](http://countrysideucc.org/calendar). Email [Sharon Royers](mailto:sroyers@centurylink.net), [sroyers@centurylink.net](mailto:sroyers@centurylink.net) for more information.

**Race in America, Wednesdays, 6 p.m., Zoom** resumes Wednesday, Jan. 11, with *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* by James H. Cone. For more info or to join, text Diane Scott at 402-707-1556, or [email](#) her at [dianes@countrysideucc.org](mailto:dianes@countrysideucc.org).

**Homosexuality, Faith and the Bible.** A one-time discussion of Homosexuality, Faith, and the Bible will be held in person at 9 a.m. on Sunday, January 8. If you are interested in joining this discussion, please contact Diane Scott at [dianes@countrysideucc.org](mailto:dianes@countrysideucc.org) or text 402-707-1556.

**Sermons for Life with Rabbi Aryeh Azriel resumes Jan. 9.** Join him **Mondays, 10–11:30 a.m.** in the Chapel, or Zoom in with the link found on the [church calendar](#), [countrysideucc.org/calendar](http://countrysideucc.org/calendar).

**Lunch Bunch is on hiatus through February.** The Lunch Bunch meets at noon on the second Monday of each month. Location varies. For more information, contact [Gloria Reid](mailto:g-g.reid@cox.net) at [g-g.reid@cox.net](mailto:g-g.reid@cox.net).

**Men’s Breakfast, Tuesdays, 8 a.m. at First Watch,** 72nd and Pacific streets. Everyone is welcome!

**Dungeons & Dragons, Fridays, 5:30–8 p.m. Sr. High-** age students, in the Youth Room. **Jr. High-** age students, Tamar.

**Jr. High Youth Group, Sundays, 5–6 p.m.** Open to ALL Jr. High-age students, grades 7 & 8.

**The Banned Book Lovers Group, third Monday each month, 6:30 p.m.** in Anna. For information call Leslie Summers-Day at 402-490-2983.

**The Banned Book Study Group, Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m.** in Common Grounds or Zoom. Link and passcode are available on the [church calendar](#), [countrysideucc.org/calendar](http://countrysideucc.org/calendar). For more information call Ann Huxtable-Scates, 402-670-9585.

**Adult Forum, Sundays, 11:10 a.m.** in the Deborah Room for an educational exploration of various topics and books. A Zoom link is also available on the church calendar at [countrysideucc.org/calendar](http://countrysideucc.org/calendar).

**Mindful Meditation, Thursdays, 7 p.m.** Zoom only, link is available on the church calendar.

**Friday Arts and Music Experience (FAME), Fridays, 10 a.m.** in the Common Grounds. No reservations are required!



Mindful Meditation  
ONLINE  
THURSDAYS  
7 PM  
[CountrysideUCC.org/Calendar](http://CountrysideUCC.org/Calendar)



Small Group Now Forming!  
Poetry Group  
Interested in joining the Arts Ministry's Poetry-focused small group?  
Contact Alex Ritter at [alexr@countrysideucc.org](mailto:alexr@countrysideucc.org)

## In Memorium: 2022

Bruce Van Blair  
 Judi Ried  
 Ed Huddell  
 Janelle Nash  
 Bill Besack  
 Virginia 'Ginny' Chick  
 John Adair

Ron Roskens  
 Ann Burdette  
 Sara Sellgren  
 Ken Hutton  
 Phyllis Miller  
 Jim Follon



## New Poetry-Focused Small Group!

Our growing Arts Ministry is excited to announce the launch of our new Poetry-focused small group! We invite all those who are interested in using their creativity to enhance our worship experience to join us.

One of the main focuses of this small group will be to crowdsource ideas and materials for a poetry-focused sermon series planned for the spring. This is an exciting opportunity for poets and poetry lovers alike to contribute their talents and insights to our worship planning team. We believe that poetry has the power to move and inspire us in unique ways, and we are excited to see how it can enhance our worship experience.

Whether you're an experienced poet or just have a love for the written word, we welcome you to join us in this new venture.

If you're interested in joining the Arts Ministry's Poetry-focused small group, please [contact Alex Ritter](mailto:alex@countrysideucc.org) at alexr@countrysideucc.org. We look forward to exploring the power of poetry with you!

## New Member Orientation Classes

Welcome to Countryside Church! If you are considering becoming a member of our community, we invite you to attend our new member orientation classes on January 15 and 22, 2023 at 11:15 a.m. in Marys' Hall. These classes are designed to provide you with information about our church, staff, and programs. They also give you the opportunity to ask questions and get to know us better. We'll even feed you lunch!

During the orientation classes, you'll meet church staff and learn about the various programs, involvements, volunteer opportunities, and activities that are available for you. You'll also learn about our values, beliefs, and mission as a church, and how we strive to live out our faith in our daily lives.

We understand that joining a new church can be a big decision, and we want to make sure that you have all the information you need to make an informed choice. Whether you decide to become a member or not is entirely up to you, and we respect your decision either way.

If you are interested in attending the new member orientation classes, you can sign up at the Information Station or Welcome Station on Sunday mornings, or [contact Robyn Hubbard](mailto:robbynh@countrysideucc.org) at 402-391-0350 ext. 224 or [robbynh@countrysideucc.org](mailto:robbynh@countrysideucc.org). We hope to see you there and welcome you into the Countryside Church family!



# RECHARGE WEDNESDAYS

Recharge  
Resumes  
January 11

Recharge night provides opportunities to nurture brains, bodies, and spirits. Break bread with us! Bring your dinner and eat with family and friends in the Common Grounds Coffee Shop before programming begins. There are places to walk, meditate, work, and read - you can even catch a little nap if you want. Parents, bring your kids for fun and bible shenanigans, and stay for yourself! Give yourself some time to be present in this space without expectation. Nursery care will be available for really little ones so that caregivers and parents can attend these other opportunities.

## IMPACT SPEAKER SERIES

### January's Impact Speaker Series focuses on Climate Justice



John McCollister opens this month's Impact Speaker Series On Wednesday, **Jan. 11** with *Climate Change and the Shift to Renewable Energy*.

He'll share his insights on the urgent need for a shift to renewable energy sources in order to combat the devastating impacts of climate change, discuss the need for renewable energy in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and the opportunities and challenges we face in

transitioning to a more sustainable energy system.

On Wednesday, **Jan. 25**, join us for a special screening of *The Last Prairie* with documentary filmmaker and Creighton University professor John O'Keefe. The event includes a Q&A session with O'Keefe following the screening.

*The Last Prairie* offers an intimate portrait of the Sandhills, presented through the voices of three different communities: ecologists who study the region's biodiversity; people who live and work there; and Native Lakota people whose ancestors were killed to make way for American westward expansion.

O'Keefe is a Professor of Theology and Journalism at Creighton University. His past academic research focused on the history and theology of ancient Christianity, especially in the area of ancient interpretation of the Bible, environmental theology, and rethinking Christian attitudes toward nature. The documentary filmmaker is also co-founder of the Backpack Journalism project, a social justice filmmaking initiative.



# RECHARGE WEDNESDAYS

## UNDERSTANDING OUR ROOTS: BIBLE STUDY WITH DON SARTON

We are excited to announce a new Bible Study, *Understanding Our Roots*, starting on January 11. Don Sarton will lead this 10-week series on Wednesday nights from 6-7:30 p.m. The study will delve deeper into the work of Luke and explore its spiritual roots. By looking at the text through the perspectives of various scholars and utilizing various resources, we hope to gain a more thorough understanding of the book.

Our goal is not just to gain an intellectual understanding of Luke. We also want to understand the spiritual foundations that allowed a diverse group of people, including Jews, God-Fearers, and Gentiles, to come together and form a movement centered on the belief in Jesus as the Messiah and the grace and love of God as revealed through him. We hope that this study will help us gain insight into the roots of the Christian faith and the ways in which it has evolved over time.

The series begins with the Resurrection Narrative and moves consecutively through the birth of John the Baptist to the crucifixion of Jesus. This is a unique opportunity to delve deeper into the roots of our faith and better understand the foundation of Christianity.

To register, please [click here](#). For more information, please email [Teri D'Agostino](mailto:Teri.D'Agostino) at [teridagostino@hotmail.com](mailto:teridagostino@hotmail.com). The Nursery is open for Wednesday night programming.

## CHOIR PRACTICE

**Handbell Choir**  
7:30-8 p.m.  
**C4 Adult Choir**  
6:15 - 7:30 p.m.



## FAMILY + YOUTH MINISTRIES

BYO dinner to the coffee house and join us for mealtime, catch up, and share some laughs. If you don't have a specific Wednesday night event you want to attend, you're still welcome to have dinner with us! And the church is available to study, watch Netflix, and walk around the campus. No matter how you want or need to use the space, it's a great opportunity to feel connected with yourself and or with God. Volunteering for service hours during this time is also always an option. Please don't forget, All Are Welcome!

## CHILDREN + YOUTH PROGRAMMING

Pre-K through grade six **Wednesday Wonderers** can bring their dinner and eat with staff and guests in the coffee house before the programs begin. at 6 p.m. The Wonderers explore scripture stories through storytelling and activities incorporating music, art and language. **Core 56** is included in this programming.

## NURSERY/CHILDCARE

The Nursery is open 6-7:30 p.m. for childcare during Wednesday Night Recharge programming.



# Youth & Family Ministries

[Rebecca Morello](#), Director of Youth & Family Ministries, 402-884-8036  
[Emma Boyd](#), Youth & Family Ministries Program Coordinator, 402-884-8035

## Sr. High Youth Group

Sundays, 6-8 p.m., Youth Room

**Jan. 1:** No Youth Group

**Jan. 8:** Welcome Back!

**Jan. 13-15:** Sr. High Youth Group Retreat. We'll discuss how we want to lead the Youth Sunday (Feb. 12) service.

**Jan. 15:** No Youth Group

**Jan. 22:** A2A Guidelines and Checklist. **Required for students attending the Summer 2023 Service Trip to Minneapolis.**

**Jan. 29:** Prepare for Youth Sunday (Feb. 12) and consider our role in larger communities.

## D&D group

All 7th - 12th grade age students are invited to join a Dungeons & Dragons campaign on Friday nights.

Fridays, 5:30-8:30 p.m.

Sr. High: Youth Room

Jr. High: Tamar

**Jan. 6:** D&D is back!

**Jan. 13:** No D&D

## Children's Ministries

Pre-K - 6th grade

Sunday Schedule:

**Jan. 1:** Community Church

**Jan. 8:** Children's Church

**Jan. 15:** Community Church

**Jan. 22:** Children's Church

**Jan. 29:** Community Church



## Jr. High Youth Group

Sundays, 5-6 p.m. in the Youth Room. All 7th & 8th grade students are invited!

**Jan. 8:** Show & Tell ~ Christmas Edition

**Jan. 15:** Escape Room! (Off-Site)

**Jan. 22:** Giants, Wizards & Wolves

**Jan. 29:** Let's Make Snowpeople!

## Confirmation

7th & 8th grades

Sunday, 4-5 p.m. & Thursday, 5-6 p.m. classes:

**Jan. 1/5:** No Confirmation

**Jan. 8/12:** Welcome Back!

Review class structure and expectations, introduction to Affirmation 8

**Jan. 15/19:** Affirmation 8

**Jan. 22/26:** Prayer Practices - Art

**Jan. 22/Feb. 2:** Community Service Projects



## Wednesday Wonderers

Pre-K - 4th Grade

6-7:30 p.m., Blue Room, Green Room, and Tamar (Lower Level)

**Jan. 4:** No Programming

**Jan. 11:** Anna

**Jan. 18:** Baptism

**Jan. 25:** Jesus in the Wilderness

## Core 56

5th and 6th Grades

Wednesdays, 6-7:30p.m., Blue Room, Green Room, and Tamar (Lower Level). Same schedule as Wednesday Wonderers.

**Jan. 4:** No Programming

**Jan. 11:** Anna

**Jan. 18:** Baptism

**Jan. 25:** Jesus in the Wilderness



# Countryside News



## Free Webinar Promotes Advocacy

If you believe people of faith are called to engage in public policy discussions, please join FATE and the First-Plymouth Congregational Church Climate Action Team online, Tuesday, Jan. 3 from 7-8 p.m. for *Advocacy 101: Be an Effective Advocate for Policies You Care About*. No registration is required. Click [here](#) to join!

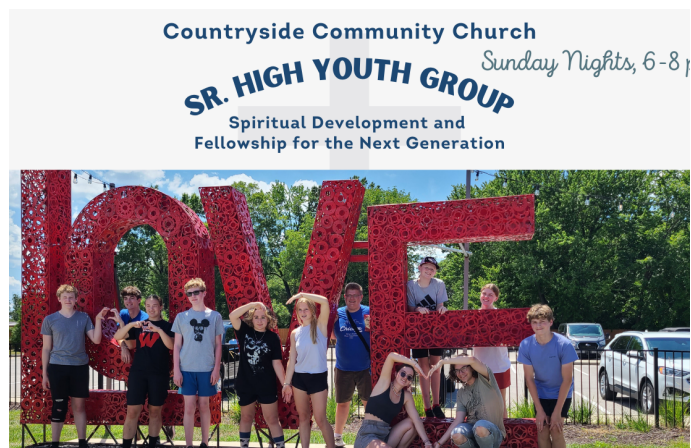
In this webinar, you'll learn the basics of effective advocacy so you can participate in public policy formation. Whether it's climate change, poverty, clean water and air, education, housing, reproduction, or the many other important issues in our society, you can build a tool kit to engage in the discussions. Learn how to engage with elected or appointed officials at the local, state, and federal levels; provide testimony for hearings; write a letter to the editor or op-ed; use social media effectively; and have respectful conversations with family, friends, and others. The skills learned will be useful for any public policy issue!

## The Box: January Box donations to Youth Emergency Services

The Board of Christian Outreach (BOCO) has named Youth Emergency Services (YES) as the recipient of the January Box donations. YES is an organization that has been helping youth experiencing homelessness or near homelessness for 50 years. They provide resources that enable these young people to become self-sufficient.

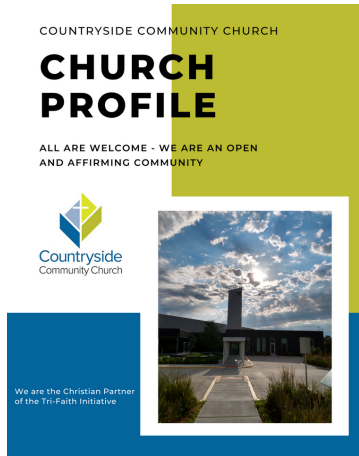
BOCO suggests donations of new hats, gloves, scarves, socks, and other cold-weather gear to YES. These items will be greatly appreciated by young people who are served by YES, as they struggle to survive in difficult circumstances. You can find YES's [Amazon Wish List](#) online, or you can bring your donations to the Box located in the entryway of the church.

Countryside has a strong and longstanding relationship with YES. We're proud to support their vital work in our community. By donating to YES, we can make a positive difference in the lives of young people who are facing challenging circumstances. Let's all do our part to help these young people succeed and thrive.



## Countryside News

### Church Profile Now on UCC Website: PSC Hard at Work on Pastoral Search



The Pastoral Search Committee (PSC) has been hard at work over the past few months, and we are excited to announce that the Church Profile has now been posted on the UCC website.

As you may know, the Church Profile is an important document that outlines the mission, vision, and values of our church, as well as the qualifications and characteristics we are seeking in our next Senior Pastor. It is our hope that this profile will help attract the right candidate for our church community.

The next step in the pastoral search process is for the UCC to review and vet applications for our Senior Pastor. Once approved, these applications will be forwarded to the PSC for review and consideration.

We are also pleased to announce that we have scheduled a retreat for the first week of January, where we will continue the process of prayerfully seeking the right candidate for our church. We will continue to provide updates to the congregation on the first Sunday of each month and through our monthly newsletter.

In the meantime, we encourage all congregants to view the full [church profile](#) on our church website. If you have any questions or concerns about the pastoral search process, please don't hesitate to reach out to a member of the PSC.

We appreciate your continued support and prayers as we move forward in this important process.

The PSC looks forward to the next stage of our Pastoral Search with a scheduled retreat for the first week of January. We will continue to provide updates to the Congregation on the first Sunday of each month and through our monthly newsletter. Congregants can now view the full church profile on our [church website](#). Feel free to [contact us](#) at [pastoralsearchcommittee@countrysideucc.org](mailto:pastoralsearchcommittee@countrysideucc.org) with any questions or concerns.



### 2023 Race, Religion & Social Justice Conference Call for Proposals

The Tri-Faith Initiative and UNO's Religious Studies department invite submissions for the second annual Race, Religion, and Social Justice Conference that will be held on June 8, 2023, on the Tri-Faith Commons. The conference will address intersections between race, religion, and social justice across different sectors of society. We invite multi-sector approaches - nonprofit and civic leaders, diversity, equity, access, and inclusion (DEAI) practitioners, community members, educators, health and mental health practitioners, artists, religious communities, and scholars. We are seeking papers and presentations that address topics associated with Building Bridges of Hope.

Hope is not simply wishful thinking; hope is an intentional, confident expectation that the social issues we are addressing ought to, and can, be overcome. This conference is making connections across differences — institutional differences, divided communities, and dissimilarities between individuals. Click [here](#) for more information.



**Church Office Hours**  
**8 AM to 4 PM**  
**Monday - Friday**

**Worship**  
**Sundays, 10 AM**

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## 2023 Annual Meeting

Mark your calendar! Please join us February 12 for Youth Sunday and the Annual Meeting! The Annual Meeting will begin immediately following the 10 a.m. service. More details to come.

## Pastoral Care

For pastoral care visits, prayer requests, and items for our Joys and Concerns, please contact the church office at 402-391-0350 or [office@countrysideucc.org](mailto:office@countrysideucc.org). Church staff will work with the Pastoral Care Board, Pastor Keith Herron, and Stephen Ministers to minister to the congregation's pastoral care needs.



Hello I'm  
Nice to meet you!!!  
*Your Name Here!*



## New Member Orientation Classes

Sunday, Jan. 15, 11:15 in Marys' Hall  
Sunday, Jan. 22, 11:15 in Marys' Hall

Contact Robyn Hubbard, 402-391-0350 ext. 224 or  
[robynh@countrysideucc.org](mailto:robynh@countrysideucc.org)



*Understanding Our Roots*

A 10-week Series  
Wednesdays at 6 p.m.  
Beginning January 11

BIBLE STUDY WITH DON SARTON

Register at [Countrysideucc.org/register](https://countrysideucc.org/register)

The poster for the Bible Study has a background of a sunset or sunrise over a field. The title "Understanding Our Roots" is written in a large, elegant cursive font. Below it, the details of the series are listed in a smaller, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the name of the study leader and the registration link are provided.