

The Common Thread

A monthly publication of Church of the Open Arms, UCC

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April 1, 2010

MINISTER'S ROUNDTABLE

I don't know how to speak of spring or resurrection except with poetry. I offer this beautiful poem by James Wright with a hope that it blesses you as it blessed me.

A Blessing By: James Wright

*Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota,
Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.
And the eyes of those two Indian ponies
Darken with kindness.
They have come gladly out of the willows
To welcome my friend and me.
We step over the barbed wire into the pasture
Where they have been grazing all day, alone.
They ripple tensely, they can hardly contain their happiness
That we have come.
They bow shyly as wet swans. They love each other.
There is no loneliness like theirs.
At home once more,
They begin munching the young tufts of spring in the darkness.
I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms,
For she has walked over to me
And nuzzled my left hand.
She is black and white,
Her mane falls wild on her forehead,
And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear
That is delicate as the skin over a girl's wrist.
Suddenly I realize
That if I stepped out of my body I would break
Into blossom.*

May your spring season bring wonder, new life, and resurrection along with many other blessed surprises.

Happy Easter,
Kathy McCallie

EASTER - APRIL 4TH
ALL MUSIC SUNDAY - APRIL 11TH

Young Adults Events
COLLEGE – 30 SOMETHING

April 4 - TBA
April 11 - TBA
April 18 – no gathering
April 25 – Festival of the Arts in Downtown OKC
2pm, Meet at the Church

Youth Events
MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL

April 4 – Easter egg Hiding and Hunt
April 11 – Gathering 12-1:30 - Family Guy “Holy Crap”
- Exploring: Spiritual and Religious Tolerance

April 18 – no gathering

April 25 – Gathering 12-1:30 – Simpsons “Missionary:
Impossible” Exploring: What is Our Mission?

New Moon Gathering
April 16th

Full Moon Drumming
April 30th

held at the
Peace Education Institute,
11404 N. Midwest Blvd.
A vegetarian potluck
begins at 6:30,
and the drumming/intention-setting
starts at 7:30.
These activities are free.

ALL CHURCH WORK DAY
SATURDAY, APRIL 3RD

Our building team is asking for volunteers to come pitch in for awhile on the Saturday before Easter for some spring cleaning. Talk with Ron Bashant for more information.

Easter Events

Good Friday Service **8:00 p.m. April 2nd**

We remember the death of Jesus with our service of shadows and darkness. Join us for this quiet, reflective evening as we read the passion narrative recalling the last days and hours leading up to the crucifixion. We extinguish candles throughout the service of reading and music until we join in silence and darkness as a community honoring grief and loss. This is an important preparation for Easter. Please note that the service starts at 8:00 p.m. – later than usual because we wait for darkness. All are welcome. Childcare will be provided.

Easter Sunrise Breakfast **7:45-9:15 a.m.**

Come greet the dawn with friends at the church over Mike and Ron's great cooking! Hot breakfast and warm friendship served up with Easter joy!

Easter Picnic in the Park **Sunday, April 4th**

Immediately after our worship celebration service we will move to Swatek Park at N.W. 30th and Youngs. The park is just a few blocks from our church. There we will have our potluck/shared meal as a picnic and watch the kids hunt Easter eggs. Sign up to bring a dish. We hope for beautiful weather and a fun, relaxing time at the park.

Egg Hunt

Calling all kids! Get your Easter basket ready because we heard that the Easter bunny is coming our way. Join us at the Swatek Park on Easter Sunday for an egg hunt and picnic. Bring your friends, all are welcome.

Something to Think About...

This month, I'd like to talk about our homes. More specifically, I want to explore the attitude in which we view our homes. For me, my home is just as sacred as any church building. It is the place where I come to recharge myself, the place where I reconnect to my family, and it is a sanctuary where I can escape the storms of life. Unfortunately for many, home does not hold that place in their life. For many, the word "home" holds connotations of clutter, conflict, or overwhelming responsibility.

Taking back control of our homes doesn't have to be difficult, and it can be a joyous, freeing experience. Below are a few tips and ideas to help you on your path:

1. Clear the clutter, but don't let it overwhelm you.

I've shared before that I've been working clearing the clutter from our home. I found that if I even started to think about it as a whole that I felt completely stressed out and overwhelmed. Instead I broke it up into smaller projects such as; cleaning out the hall closet, reorganizing the kitchen, or going through our CDs and DVDs. Thinking of it in those terms turned it into a series of manageable evening or weekend projects.

2. Only keep the things that are functional, truly meaningful, or useful.

This was one area that I found called for harsh editing. We had a lot of things that were stored "just in case." I've never figured out what we were waiting on "just in case," but we were prepared for it when it happened.

After all the editing was completed, we felt free, not so weighed down by all our possessions. Housework became much easier because we're not having to work around so much stuff, and our possessions that are truly special have taken on a more special presence because they're not competing with everything else.

3. Be flexible with your plan and allow creativity to flow.

I started out with a plan in mind, which is a good thing, but as I continued through my projects, the plans were able to be adjusted. I found that I already had many things that I could reuse in new ways or that I didn't really need or something that I had planned to buy. In the end, being flexible and creative saved me a lot of money and gave me more satisfaction with my efforts.

4. Remember that you're not in competition with Martha Stewart or on a deadline.

I like for my home to look nice. Actually, I'm insistent that my home always looks, "WOW!" I view that as part of my duty as a gay man. But, that's not what these projects were about. This process was about my family gaining independence from our possessions and creating a space that helped reinvigorate our spirits instead of draining them.

I hope you find these tips useful and that each of you are able to create a space that nurtures your souls and reflects the best parts of who you are.

Terry Ellis

COA-OP

The first demonstration COA-OP,
Fair Trade-Home Made swap meet has made history.

FAIR-TRADE and HOME-MADE

Why are we doing this?

First, we are building our community of highly innovative, creative, and justice-oriented people. We have many hidden and obvious talents and enterprises among us and we'd like to know and see what they are.

Second, local economy and self-sufficiency practices (growing and making, and exchanging our own stuff) are important building blocks in creating a society where we are more in control of the ecological and humanitarian practices involved in the production and distribution of goods.

If you'd like more information, about this, visit the following website.
[http://www.publicradio.org/columns/sustainability/greenwash/2007/11/
is_a_buy_local_economy_really.html](http://www.publicradio.org/columns/sustainability/greenwash/2007/11/is_a_buy_local_economy_really.html)

<http://www.sierraclub.org/trucostoffood/>

"Cheap: The Hidden Cost of Cheap Goods"

<http://arabnews.com/lifestyle/article21633.ece>

or just "google" self-sufficiency and/or local economy.

If you are interested in participating by offering something you have made, grown, or acquired from a fair-trade source, here are the guidelines.

1. Fair Trade means that the craftsman, grower or creator of your product received a fair wage or price for their work.
2. Home-made means stuff you or someone you know personally made.
3. Personal skills, like computer repair, handy man work, lawn care, music lessons, shoe shines, etc. can be included.

You set your own price.

Items must be brought in by **9:00 a.m.** on the first Sunday of each month, and you will need to take home with you whatever is left after 1:00 p.m.

Fill out an info tag for each item you are offering and attach one to EVERY item.

Call Conna at 204-6479 for tags and space-use planning.

AND, we encourage everyone to consider a donation to the church if you participate in the COA-OP.

**April's COA-OP will be held
on April 11th due to Easter.**

Finance Update

A decision has been made on how to move forward with the Capital Campaign projects and loan. We are going to pay off our existing building loan with the funds we currently have in our Building and Capital Campaign accounts. We will still have an outstanding loan for the land, which has a 0% rate and for which we pay \$700/month. We will take out a construction loan for \$450,000, and we will only borrow against that loan as projects are completed and invoices become due. Within 6 months we will have completed all projects and will begin making monthly payments only slightly larger than our existing building loan payment of \$2,225.

This accomplishes three things. First, we won't have to pay any building payments out of the General fund. This is very important because our monthly offering is just covering our monthly expenses, so adding mortgage payments would require a significant increase in giving. Second, we will be saving interest while we complete the projects. Third, our Capital Campaign receipts will be able to accumulate so that we will have a cushion built up to ensure we can always pay our new mortgage on time.

There is still a need to increase our monthly offering since we are fully expending the General fund each month. The offering has been increasing over the last several months, but we have exhausted the extra funds we had built up early last year. We will continue to encourage the use of our electronic giving option, which makes giving simple and helps keep the offering more consistent. You can set up an account for electronic giving on our website, www.openarms.org. We encourage everyone to sincerely evaluate their level of giving, and we will keep the congregation informed of our General fund needs through announcements at church and through the newsletter.

Jeff Fuller, Treasurer

A decorative border consisting of a series of musical notes and stems, forming a rectangular frame around the central text.

Mixed Company Concert

May 1st
Watch for details

April 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Easter 9:30 choir rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 12:00 Monthly Potluck 12-1:30 YOUTH GROUP Fair Trade Fair	5 7:30 Flag Dancing	6	7 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 7:30-9pm Women's discussion group	8 1-1:45 food pantry drop off	9 10:00-12:00 Food Pantry set up 3:00-6:00 Food Pantry servers	10
11 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 All Music Sunday 12-1:30 YOUTH GROUP	12 10:30 Sr Rink Coffee 7:30 Flag Dancing	13	14 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 7:30-9pm Women's discussion group	15 1-1:45 food pantry drop off	16 10:00-12:00 Food Pantry set up 3:00-6:00 Food Pantry servers 6:30 pm New Moon at PEI (see pg. 3)	17
18 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 12-1:30 YOUTH GROUP	19 7:00 Leader- ship Meeting 7:30 Flag Dancing	20	21 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 7:30-9pm Women's discussion group	22 1-1:45 food pantry drop off	23 10:00-12:00 Food Pantry set up 3:00-6:00 Food Pantry servers	24
25 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 12-1:30 YOUTH GROUP 12:00 COMMUNITY POWER: HEALTH CARE	26 10:30 Sr Rink Coffee 7:30 Flag Dancing	27	28 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 7:30-9pm Women's discussion group	29 1-1:45 food pantry drop off	30 6:30 pm Full Moon at PEI (see pg. 3)	31
May 1st - Mixed Company Concert						

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Sermons now on the web!
www.openarms.org

Easter Breakfast 7:45-9:15 a.m.

**Easter Picnic in the Park
and Egg Hunt at Swatek Park
immediately after church**

"Never place a period where God has placed a comma." -Gracie Allen