

# The Common Thread

A monthly publication of Church of the Open Arms, UCC

Volume 13, Issue 12

December 1, 2009

## MINISTER'S ROUNDTABLE

I am happy and excited about doing my holiday shopping through Heifer International. This year I want to buy goats, chicks, ducks, trees, honeybees, and rabbits! I can't think of anything more fun to buy for Christmas. Heifer International is an excellent project that offers a holistic approach to sustainable development. Here is how it works: I send a check to Heifer International for \$30, and they provide a bee package, the box, hive, and training in the latest beekeeping techniques to a family in Africa. By pollinating the crops on a family's farm, a healthy beehive can double fruit and vegetable yields. And income from the sale of honey, wax and pollen can make a big difference. You can choose to give a tree seedling for \$10 to help a family in poverty grow fruit or nuts. There are all sorts of options to be explored in the catalog from Heifer International. We have copies of the catalog at church.

For easy ways to give animals or trees to help those in need:

Call toll free: (877) 448-6437

Order online: [www.heifer.org/worldark/catalog](http://www.heifer.org/worldark/catalog)

Fax: (501) 907-2902

Mail the order form: Heifer International P.O. Box 6021  
Albert Lea, MN 56007-6621

I encourage you to find meaningful, environmentally responsible ways to celebrate Christ's birth this year.

Peace and Joy,

Kathy McCallie

***Christmas Eve Communion Service***

***8:00pm Thursday***

***December 24th***

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# Holiday Plans

*Wednesday - December 2<sup>nd</sup>*

7:00-7:30 p.m. Christmas Carol Sing and Advent devotional (pg 3)

7:30-9:00 p.m. Game and Craft night Bring a holiday snack to share

*Friday - December 4<sup>th</sup>*

6:30-9:00p.m. Holiday Decorating Party Bring a holiday snack to share

*Wednesday - December 9<sup>th</sup>*

7:00-7:30 p.m. Christmas Carol Sing and Advent devotional

7:30-9:00 p.m. Holiday craft night Bring a holiday snack to share

*Sunday - December 13<sup>th</sup>*

12:15 p.m. Santa Party after church

*Wednesday - December 16<sup>th</sup>*

7:00-7:30 p.m. Christmas Carol Sing and Advent devotional

7:30-9:00 p.m. Holiday game night Bring a holiday snack to share

*Sunday - December 20<sup>th</sup>*

10:45 a.m. Choir Holiday Musical Presentation

***No church activities on Wed., Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup>***

***No food pantry on Christmas Day***

*Thursday - December 24<sup>th</sup>*

8:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion

*Friday - December 25<sup>th</sup>* Christmas Dinner with the Family

Come join your church family for dinner.

Bring a covered dish to share if you can. (see more info on page 3)

**Decorating Party 6:30-9:00      Friday, Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>**

Start your holiday season with this fun opportunity for service and making new friends. Everyone is invited to come help trim the tree and hang the bows and greenery to spruce up our church for Christmas. Bring a favorite holiday snack to share. There will be decorating opportunities for children, youth, and adults. Come by for awhile even if you can't stay all evening.



The holidays are about spending time with family. We want to invite the whole church family to Christmas Dinner at Church of the Open Arms. We will start cooking early, so if you feel like dropping by in the morning, come by in your P.J.s! We'll have breakfast and hot coffee on! We'll start cooking at about 9:00 am. We will be spending time sharing favorite Christmas stories and playing games like Spades and dominos among other games. We'll share a special moment before dinner. The meal will be blessed and dinner served at 2:00 pm. You are encouraged to bring your favorite side dish or dessert. So, even if you have other plans for Christmas, drop by and share in the Christmas joy with us at the Church of the Open Arms!

**We ho-ho-hope to see you there!**

## Something to Think About...

*In an earlier article, I talked about how sometimes when we start down a path, we end up at an unexpected destination. That happened to me recently when I started tackling some clutter in our home.*

*In an effort to create a little more storage space, I started cleaning out two closets that were filled with boxes that we had never unpacked from our last move a year and a half ago. Sorting through those boxes, I was shocked by what I found and kept wondering why I had kept so much junk. I finally asked Daniel if he knew why we had found it necessary to pack and move trash! Picking up each item and going backward in my mind, I began remembering feelings of insecurity and fear as I was deciding what to keep, what to pack, and what to send away. That was one of those "Aha!" moments that Oprah talks about.*

*As these thoughts continued to develop for me, things began to fit together like puzzle pieces. For me, I realized that the condition of my home mirrors the condition my emotions. Here's how it all broke down for me.*

*1) The public rooms in my home are nicely put together. - Most of the time, I can always put on a good face for the public. If I can't; I can usually come up with some sort of excuse to get out of any explanation.*

*2) The private rooms are unfinished. - I still have a lot of growing to do. In addition, Daniel, Joe, and I have a lot of room for continued growth within our family.*

*3) There were two closets filled with crap that I was holding on to. - With some thorough soul searching, I discovered that I was harboring some old feelings. They were there protecting me from harm, or so my ego thought. In truth, those feelings were preventing me from moving forward on my journey. Yes, keeping those feelings alive and fresh helped me to protect myself from being hurt, but they also insulated me from realizing the full potential and joy available.*

*A lot of this wasn't easy to stomach, but the truth often isn't. Eventually having felt the weight of burdens being lifted, I begin tackling other projects. I cleaned out more closets, both figuratively and literally.*

*Terry*

# Price Tags

by Robyn Lemon Sellers

Most of you know that the man I have been shacking up with for several years now, gave some money to this church last January, which led us to thinking about the possibility of having a Capital Campaign to help alleviate two big problems: a terribly inadequate parking lot—even dangerous for some—and a very underutilized building, due to the lack of an elevator—at a time when we really need more space.

So a Capital Campaign was born—and here we are at Celebration Sunday.

We may—or may not—be able to fund all that we want to do. For some of us at this church, this is not a time when we can responsibly take on an additional financial commitment—and we have had to say, “No, I cannot make a pledge at this time.” Other of us have said, “Yes, I can, and I will.” But this morning I want to remind myself, and you, that those decisions pale in comparison to other ways we decide to contribute to this church.

Several Sundays ago, my Dad and I were sitting together here during the worship service and he turned to me—he had been watching Christa sign, and he said, “What she does is worth far more than money anyone can give to this church.”

Today is Celebration Sunday for our campaign, and I’ve been thinking about Dad’s words. Implicit in them is a good reminder that while a Capital Campaign is all about money and financial gifts—what we are all about—and what the campaign is only a part of, is the overwhelming diversity of gifts that truly make up the body of Christ, and that this congregation firmly relies on to make it the extraordinary place that it is.

So this week, as we approach this special day, I started thinking about value and worth—not just cost. I took a little trip—a little mental tour through our sanctuary—pretending I had a calculator—OK: Christa: How could you even place an adequate value on Christa’s work for those who do not hear? Put a price tag on that blessing. I punched in A WHOLE LOT on my calculator. I went to the far corner there. Kyle: Every Sunday he’s back there. Kyle, Nancy, and their support crew—running the sound, the screens.... I entered more in my calculator. Next I hopped to this corner: Gloria. Who lives the furthest away? Who gets here before the rest of us? Every Sunday, driving from Shawnee. Most churches don’t even have a drummer, and ours is exceptional.

Robert and Maria: I hardly ever see them anymore—I ran downstairs, and found them in that beehive of children, and believe you me—when we do see all those children Sunday mornings on the story quilt—you can be assured a lot of that is because Robert and Maria are here—every Sunday—to be with those kids. So, I had to add extra “zeroes” to that one.

My calculator was starting to feel warm, and after I punched in Steve Ross’s and Daniel Willsey’s gifted musical leadership, followed by Laura Choate, Jim Tomaney, Ray Davis, Ron, Victor, Corky! Mindy! Cyndy! Kenny! Bo! On my gosh, the calculator started smoking! I had to quit—and I hadn’t even scratched the surface. It was nearly to a billion dollars—another million and it would be. That’s when I thought of Orra Compton. I wondered what Orra would say if you asked him, “Orra, what does it mean to you to be welcomed by our exceptional greeters on a Sunday morning?” If you heard Orra’s testimony last Sunday you would agree that Orra might say “A MILLION BUCKS!!!”

As I ended my make-believe tour I thought: How do you put a price tag on this place? A place where you are taken seriously, and are listened to? A place where people desire to know you rather than to try to change you? A place where it is safe to be who you are and have the freedom to express your deepest needs, and wishes, without fear of losing someone’s love, or being condemned? A place where you are received with respect for the way you feel, the choices you make, and the personal traits with which you were born?

I think the calculator blew a fuse at that point—it doesn’t go into the trillions.

So, our celebration today is to celebrate our campaign’s financial gifts, but also so much more. And let’s remember: each of us here today—RIGHT NOW—right this very minute—each individual person is giving the largest, most significant gift anyone can give: OUR PRESENCE. When we are here anytime on a Sunday morning, a Wednesday night, perhaps Thursday or Friday at the Food Pantry—  
WE HAVE A LOT TO CELEBRATE.

I have nothing to do with the Food Pantry at the Church of the Open Arms, but today I am writing to you with a simple, but much needed plea. Why am I writing with this plea? What makes it so important to me? It's because my husband volunteers with the food pantry and so it matters to me.

When food is delivered to our church, it is bundled onto large pallets and each pallet can weigh as much as 600 pounds. When our foyer received its much needed face lift, it became impossible to move the pallets into the foyer and out of the weather; the weight of the food would eventually crack the tile. So, we are at a point where food is being delivered off of the truck and dropped off underneath the carport. While there are many wonderful volunteers on Friday morning and afternoon, Thursday afternoon is lacking. Most of the time Laura Choate and Bo Bass are the only ones at the church unloading pallet after pallet. Occasionally they are blessed with a couple of other pairs of hands, but not often. The problem with this comes when temperatures outside begin to drop.

We are all aware of how awful Oklahoma winters can be.

So, this is where I make my plea. I don't want my husband coming home with the flu. That may seem a bit selfish, but I love him and care about his health. Laura and Bo simply can't continue to do this on their own this winter. Please... PLEASE, if you have time on Thursday afternoon (it only takes an hour with two people) stop by the church and give them a hand. If you are able to volunteer a little time please call *Laura Choate at 227-8406 or Bo Bass at 208-8969.*

Being part of "Draw The Circle Wider Campaign" has been a wonderful experience for me, both spiritual and emotional, working with everyone involved, gave me the opportunity to get to know them better. One of the most amazing part of being an Ambassador was meeting with Ken Naves and Tim Ozment. We had a wonder visit and I got to learn more about their lives. It was an eye opening experience. Ken is hearing impaired and you'd think it would be difficult to have an informative visit with someone with no hearing, however, I learned , with Tim knowing sign language, I could still have conversation with both of them Therefore, meeting with them, I learned I should not be uneasy about visiting with hearing impaired persons. I also enjoyed meeting with people that I already knew, which made being an Ambassador very enjoyable. A big thank you goes out everyone for your generosity and hospitality.

Sincerely, your friend and Ambassador,  
Carol Fasol

# December 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
9:30 choir rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship <b>12:00 Monthly Potluck</b>	6:00pm Meditation		6:00 Choir Rehearsal <b>7:00 Carols and Advent Service</b> 7:30 Game and Craft Night	1-1:45 food pantry drop off	10:00-12:00 Food Pantry set up 3:00-6:00 Food Pantry servers <b>6:30pm Decorating Party</b>	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	6:00pm Meditation		6:00 Choir Rehearsal <b>7:00 Carols and Advent Service</b> 7:30 Holiday Craft Night	1-1:45 food pantry drop off	10:00-12:00 Food Pantry set up 3:00-6:00 Food Pantry servers	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Santa Party after church			6:00 Choir Rehearsal <b>7:00 Carols and Advent Service</b> 7:30 Holiday Game Night			
9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School	6:00pm Meditation		No evening activities	NO food pantry drop off <b>8:00 pm Christmas Eve Communion Service</b>	NO Food Pantry set up NO Food Pantry servers <b>CHRISTMAS DINNER (SEE PG. 3)</b>	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
<b>10:45 Choir Christmas Music Program</b>						
9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	6:00pm Meditation					
27	28	29	30	31		

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## **Draw the Circle Wider Capital Campaign**

**TOTAL AMOUNT PLEDGED  
\$195,495**

**WE'RE APPROACHING OUR GOAL OF  
\$250.000**

***Special thanks to all who are making this happen.***

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