

# **GAME NIGHT**

**September 26th**

**7:00—9:30pm**

**www.openarms.org**

**Check it out!**

**New changes include sermons and music online.**

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

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

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## **The Common Thread**

A monthly publication of Church of the Open Arms, UCC

Volume 12, Issue 9

September 1, 2008

### **MINISTER'S ROUNDTABLE**

Politics! I'm sick and tired of hearing speeches! How about you? If you are like me, you will be glad when this whole election process is over with. As a community of faith, we never endorse one party or candidate. However, we do encourage our members to be active citizens taking responsible action by voting and being involved in decision-making that affects our local community and our global relationships. I hope that you are registered to vote, and that you will vote in the upcoming election.

Someone said that politics really amounts to the matter of “who gets what and how much and how.” Issues of justice, equality, and peace-making cannot be separated from political process. That is why Gandhi said, “Those who think that religion and politics don't mix, do not understand either.” There must be some spiritual discipline in maintaining a balance between trying to change the things we can change and accepting the things we can't change. I am proud to know some of the activists in our community who inspire me by working for change through social and political process. Let's all get registered, get educated about issues, and know that we can't control all the outcomes.

God is good,  
Kathy McCallie

*Fall Retreat Dates*  
*November 7th, 8th, and 9th*

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

## Connecting with Hope.....

Church of the Open Arms is an exciting and dynamic congregation. We are constantly moving in and out of each others lives as we respond to the opportunities and demands that life presents to us. Sometimes it seems like I have met so many of the congregation at COA but have yet to really connect with most.

Small Groups are one way in which each of us can find that deeper connection with one another. The month of September is officially Small Group Month at COA. During September there will be opportunities for you to find out exactly what a small group is and to take advantage of opportunities to become part of a group.

If you have any questions or ideas for a small group please contact Suzanne Nichols or me.

Blessings, Mike DeArmond

## New Finance Team Leader

The finance team is grateful to Sandra Hoyt for accepting the position of team leader. You should have received your hope dinner letter this last month. So plan on attending our next Hope Dinner in November. In the meantime, Sandra would love to have some help with planning and executing the duties of the finance team. Consider joining this team in their not so glorious but, essential planning and work.

## N.A. 12 Step Meetings

Narcotics Anonymous meetings will be starting up at Open Arms again after Labor Day. A number of members of our church participate in this recovery group, and we have others who need the group who come from all over the city to attend. Meetings are held in the Study room that connects with the community hall. Participants can enter through the door that goes directly to that room from the parking lot, or by coming through the community hall. The meetings last about one hour. There will be a meeting every Wednesday night and every Saturday night at 8:00 p.m. For more information contact Robert W. - (405) 413-8741.

## K-O Conference, UCC

The churches in Kansas and Oklahoma that belong to our denomination, the United Church of Christ (UCC), have a conference meeting once a year. The dates for this year are October 3, 4, and 5<sup>th</sup> and the place is Wichita. A number of delegates from our church will attend and vote on decisions about shared mission and ministry projects. There are great workshops, worship services, and educational sessions at the conference. You might want to come up and sit in on part of the meeting. For more information, talk to our church president, Melinda Norton – or call the church office: 525-9555.

## Book and Magazine Exchange

Are you familiar with the rack right outside the doors of our sanctuary that holds flyers, brochures, and papers? That information rack is not well-used, so we want to try something new with it. We are starting a free book and magazine exchange. Please bring gently used magazines or books that you are willing to donate to be given away. People who come to church activities, including the food pantry, will be welcome to take books and magazines they can use. Children's books and magazines are needed, too. All are welcome to use this way of recycling reading material. Help yourself to materials there that you can use, and please bring items to donate if you have them.

## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

On Saturday, August 16<sup>th</sup>, church members met for the Bi-Annual Leadership training. Over coffee and donuts, about 20 people started the morning by listing and celebrating the many things accomplished in the church in the past year. Below is a partial list; perhaps you can think of others that weren't identified:

Mixed Company at K-O conference  
New Moon Services  
Ice Cream Social  
Pride Float and festival activities  
Staff/Leadership compiles job descriptions  
Prayers for the Nations Concert  
Chain saw ministry - clean up volunteers after ice storms  
Therapy Sisters Concert  
Dialogue on Race  
World Religion Class  
GLBT issues panel at K-O conference  
Premiere of "For the Bible Tells Me So"  
National UCC Educator workshop  
National UCC church vitality training  
Church directory  
Loyce's ordination  
Peace Camp  
Godly Play started

Sharon Doan Book Study  
Volunteer Fair  
Sermons on the Web  
  
Website Renewal  
Major clean-up downstairs  
new projectors in sanctuary  
hope dinner  
2007 Fall Retreat  
Christmas programs and parties  
Six year anniversary of weekly food pantry  
New Youth Project started  
Bo does outstanding work in kitchen!  
Wednesday night services start  
Jim's ordination  
  
Men's group  
Leaders went to Cleveland: Melinda, Connie, Carol...

Whew! I'm tired just reading the list. It's good to remember what all we have accomplished, even while we acknowledge what more we have to do. Church of the Open Arms gleefully welcomes any and everyone who wants to participate in the leadership of the church. And whatever talents you may have, there is a place for you. Below you will find the dates for the rest of the Leadership Council meetings for the rest of the year. If you would like more information about leadership opportunities, feel free to ask anybody currently serving (their pictures are on the board in the lobby) or feel welcome to attend any of the meetings.

**September 22, 2008**  
**7:00 PM**

**October 27, 2008**  
**7:00 PM**

**November 24, 2008**  
**7:00 PM**

Peace,  
Melinda Norton  
President

3<sup>rd</sup> Annual  
**Be Counted  
 Concert Challenge**

A musical fundraising event,  
 hosted by your local open and affirming  
 United Church of Christ churches.

Singing our hearts out to raise funds for

**Our Church's Wider Mission.**

*(this fund supports national and local staffing, new church starts, mission work both nationally and globally, and much much more)*

*Participating churches are:*

*Norman UCC*

*Cathedral of Hope, OKC*

*Mayflower Congregational Church*

*Church of the Open Arms...Including "Mixed Company"*

*and special guests, "The Back Row" &*

*"Southern Hills Gospel Quartet*

**WHERE: CHURCH OF THE OPEN ARMS**

**NW 31<sup>ST</sup> AND PENNSYLVANIA, OKC**

**WHEN: SATURDAY SEPT. 20TH AT 7:00 PM**

*Admission is Free — Give as you are moved*

**September 2008**

| Sunday  | Monday  | Tuesday              | Wednesday   | Thursday                             | Friday   | Saturday  |   |
|---|---|----------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|---|---|
|   |   | 1<br>7:00PM<br>PFLAG | 2   | 3                                    | 4  | 5   | 6 |
| 7<br>9:30 Choir Rehearsal<br>9:30 am Sunday School<br>10:45 am Worship<br>12:00 Monthly Potluck<br>Worship team meeting | 8<br>6:00pm Meditation                                | 9                    | 10<br>6:00 Choir Rehearsal<br>6:00 Beginning Spanish<br>7:00 Advanced Spanish<br>7:00 Worship Service | 11                                   | 12<br>10AM OK Gay Natives<br>4:00-6:00 Food Pantry<br>6:30-8pm New Youth Project         | 13  |   |
| 14<br>9:30 Choir Rehearsal<br>9:30 Sunday School<br>10:45 Worship   | 15<br>6:00pm Meditation                               | 16                   | 17<br>6:00 Choir Rehearsal<br>6:00 Beginning Spanish<br>7:00 Advanced Spanish<br>7:00 Worship Service | 18<br>7:00PM Finance<br>Team Meeting | 19<br>4:00-6:00 Food Pantry<br>6:30-8pm New Youth Project                                | 20<br>Work Day 9-12<br><i>Be Counted</i><br>Concert 7pm |   |
| 21<br>9:30 Choir Rehearsal<br>9:30 Sunday School<br>10:45 Worship   | 22<br>6:00pm Meditation<br>7:00 Leadership<br>Council | 23                   | 24<br>6:00 Choir Rehearsal<br>6:00 Beginning Spanish<br>7:00 Advanced Spanish<br>7:00 Worship Service | 25                                   | 26<br>4:00-6:00 Food Pantry<br>6:30-8pm New Youth Project<br><b>Game Night</b><br>7-9:30 | 27  |   |
| 28<br>9:30 Choir Rehearsal<br>9:30 Sunday School<br>10:45 Worship   | 29<br>6:00pm Meditation                               | 30                   |   |                                      |  |   |   |

CHILD CARE  
 AVAILABLE ON WEDNESDAYS  
 STARTING AT 6:45PM

## Minister of Congregational Vitality

Meet Suzanne Nichols – our new staff person at Church of the Open Arms. Suzanne has agreed to lead a ministry to strengthen our New Growth and Welcome efforts. She will train, organize, and work with greeters and efforts to help newcomers connect with the church. She will also work with small group opportunities, "new member" orientations, and community-building opportunities to enhance relationships within the church. Suzanne is married to Bob, and the two of them just moved back from California where Suzanne attended seminary at Pacific School of Religion. They have two adult children, are native Oklahomans and are living in northwest Oklahoma City. Suzanne says: "This is a wonderful opportunity for me to serve God and the members of Church of the Open Arms. I look forward to getting to know as many of you as I can in the very near future. Thank God for Church of the Open Arms."

## Community Development Project

**Attention: All church leaders and those concerned about helping our community!**

Mark your calendar now for **Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup>** for a four hour workshop at Mayflower Congregational Church from **9:00-1:00**.

Church of the Open Arms is sponsoring Oklahoma City's only grassroots, Congregational Based Community Organizing Organization, and your support and involvement will be critical to its success. Please join us for this one day workshop to :

Reflect on our mission and vision for justice in our community

Understand why beliefs and traditions of the United Church of Christ encourage our involvement in this organization

Understand the new opportunity that Church of the Open Arms has to change the way Oklahoma City responds to needs of families.

Workshop will be led by Robin Meyers, Kathy McCallie, and Kris Ausdenmoore, Community Organizer. Three hour workshop will be followed by lunch and time of dialogue. Please plan to pay \$7.00 for lunch, or bring your own.

Dorothy Day, founder of Catholic Worker Movement, said "When I feed the hungry, they call me a saint. When I ask why people are hungry, they call me a Communist."

As Christians and members of the United Church of Christ, we are called to not only feed the hungry, but to ask "why do we have hungry", and to respond by acting for change. Congregational Based Community Organizing will help us work across the community with other people of faith to ask these hard questions and address pressures facing families in our community.

### **BUILDING TEAM BACK IN ACTION HERE AT CHURCH OF THE OPEN ARMS.**

We are planning a clean up day on Saturday, September the 20th from 9:00a.m. till 12:00 noon.

Please come help us clean up around the Church and get ready for the fall season. Before we know it the holiday season will be here and we will all be busy then so come share in the fun of making our church shine. Bring your gloves and lets get busy.

Additional information or questions feel free to contact Ron Bashant, Building Team Chair, 405-604-7434, or email. [MrHoneyDoMan@aol.com](mailto:MrHoneyDoMan@aol.com)

## A Food Pantry Update

The results are in and you will be happy to hear that the Open Arms Food Pantry has helped an enormous number of people from January through June in 2008. This number will only continue to grow due to the rising costs of fuel and groceries.

We would like to thank the Cathedral of Hope for the donations they will soon be contributing.

Our contributors and volunteers are WONDERFUL!!! This effort would not be possible if it wasn't for all of the help that the congregation has given to the food pantry.

If you would like to volunteer we are always happy to see your smiling faces on Friday morning at 10:00 am or Friday afternoons at 3:30 pm. Monetary donations and food donations are ALWAYS great, our food pantry clients appreciate everything you do, no matter how small you think it might be.

Please call Heather at (405) 525-9555 if you have any questions.

### **SEPTEMBER FOOD PANTRY WISH LIST**

**SEPTEMBER 7– PEANUT BUTTER, SEPTEMBER 14 - TUNA,**

**SEPTEMBER 21 -**

**BER 21 -**

Below you will find the statistics from the first 6 months of our Food Pantry in 2008.

|               | Number of Households | Households w/ Children | Adults | Children |
|---------------|----------------------|------------------------|--------|----------|
| January       | 150                  | 75                     | 310    | 205      |
| February      | 160                  | 89                     | 334    | 238      |
| March         | 209                  | 117                    | 446    | 281      |
| April         | 268                  | 140                    | 505    | 327      |
| May           | 181                  | 90                     | 384    | 209      |
| June          | 225                  | 147                    | 446    | 359      |
| 6 month Total | 1193                 | 658                    | 2425   | 1619     |

## VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE

**AT POTLUCK SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 7**

The Oklahoma Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus will have a table in the Fellowship Hall during Potluck Sunday September 7 where you can get registered to vote. Also, if you have moved since you last registered, you can also do an address change. In addition there will be information brochures & forms available to let you know of the options of early & absentee ballot voting.

As required by law when this is conducted in a church, this is a totally nonpartisan service and there will be no promotion of a candidate or party, so you don't need to worry about a lecture or preaching except that you need to be registered and voting. It's free and easy, and you'll be part of making this country what you want it to be.