

The Common Thread

A monthly publication of Church of the Open Arms, UCC

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MINISTER'S ROUNDTABLE

I am excited about a new idea our church is launching! The Hope Dinner, coming up on Thursday, May 22nd at 7:00 p.m. will be a celebration of spiritual growth intentions. We are going to ask each person who attends to set some goals and hopes for their own spiritual growth in the next three months! It's easy enough to state intentions, but harder to stick to them. This program will help us all keep sight of our hopes for a closer walk with God. Here is the idea: no one will ever see or hear the goals you set. You will write your intentions on a "Hope Card," and place it in a sealed, self-addressed envelope. After a few months, the church office will mail that back to you as a reminder of your goals. This is strictly between you and God. The goals you set may be related to prayer, bible study, financial giving, church attendance, or any other hope for spiritual growth. Many of us will set a personal goal for the financial giving we hope to share in the next three months.

Attendance at the Hope Dinner requires that you fill out and turn in your own Hope Card - but, remember- no one will read your stated hopes except you. The dinner will be a lovely, catered dinner in our community hall at no cost to those who attend. Reservations for the dinner are needed, to help us prepare enough food. The dinner will also include a brief presentation related to the state of our church's financial health, and some fun entertainment. Don't miss this inspiring, enjoyable evening!

Sincerely,
Kathy McCallie

Hope Dinner
Thursday, May 22nd
at 7:00 p.m.

HIV/ AIDS Support Group

All those infected or affected by HIV/AIDS are invited to come join in the new support group forming at Open Arms. The group will meet twice each month on the first and third Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. in the community hall. Whether you are a person who has tested positive, a person who has developed illness, a family member, friend, caregiver, or partner, you are welcome. All sharing in the group will be confidential and respectful. The group does not promote any single religious perspective, but will be a safe, free opportunity to speak truth of our experience and share unconditional support. For more information, call 525-9555. The group had its first meetings on Thursday, April the 17th. The second meeting is May 1st.

NYP LOCK-IN Friday, May 16th

Yard sale organizing from 6:30-8:00

ALL ADULTS ARE HISTORY AT 8:00

Food, movies, games and friendship

(BRING A FRIEND)

Bring your favorite pop, music, and
pizza topping.

Ending the night with bible meditation

DON'T MISS THIS EXCITING OPPORTUNITY

It takes all of us to make Church of the Open Arms the vital, welcoming, extravagant and loving place that it is. I am proud to be a part of this congregation. I believe that a loving God has specifically placed each and every one of us in this community of believers. None are here by accident. In order for COA to achieve the goals presented in the annual budget it is necessary for all of us to examine our current levels of commitment.

As members of Church of the Open arms, we have promised to give of our time, talents, and finances. Where are you in these areas? Where should you be? Where would you like to be? These questions are very personal and I am sure that only you and God know the answer. The finance committee, in conjunction with the leadership council and pastors, has designed an exercise that can help each of us answer these questions and take action to achieve the goals that are inherent in the answers.

The first step is to prayerfully consider where God wants you to be when it comes to giving of your time, talents, and finances. It is important for each of us to have measurable goals in all of these areas. Perhaps you are interested in participating in the Food Pantry ministry; a measurable goal might be to volunteer one Friday a month. Or with giving, it might be to give \$50 a month. All goals are encouraged no matter how big or how small. The important thing is to participate

In a few weeks you will be provided with an "Hope" card. This card will include space for you to write down your "hopes" in the areas mentioned above. When the Card is completed you will place it in a sealed envelope addressed to you.

This letter, addressed to you, will be your admission to a dinner hosted by the Finance Team in May. In the fall the letter will be mailed to you. It will in essence be a report card for you to see where you are with what you had intended. Remember only you and God will know what you committed to and how you are doing.

At the end of approximately six months another dinner will be held, it is anticipated that there will be a lot of testimony and sharing of experiences regarding this exercise. This is not just an effort to raise money for the church although that will hopefully be one measurable results. This is definitely an exercise in spiritual discipline. It has been my experience that when we are intentional about spiritual growth that amazing things follow.

Be watching your mail and bulletin inserts for more information. Please make sure that the Church office has your correct address by filling out a blue card. You don't want to miss this opportunity.

Mike DeArmond, Finance Team.

Testimonies of Faith

*A nickel, a dime, maybe even a quarter...but I was always given a coin to drop in the collection plate when I attended church as a child. I must have wondered why I couldn't keep the money but I don't believe I ever did. Making that contribution was just part of the church-going experience. In my early 20s, I joined a church that stressed the payment of a full tithe (defined as 10% of your income). It was expected of every member to make this regular donation, including children, and it was regularly preached from the pulpit. As a devoted member, I complied, but I must admit, there were times when I was tempted to keep that money for bills, school costs, rent or whatever. And when I gave into temptation, that extra little bit never seemed to help. But over time, I began to notice that somehow, in a way that I still can't explain, I seemed to have better control of my financial affairs when I made this regular gift. The money stretched and my financial worries decreased. Even though I eventually left that church due to their oppressive views on homosexuality, I took with me my absolute belief in regular giving to my church. And since joining Church of the Open Arms 3+ years ago, I have found that regular giving somehow helps me budget more wisely, be more conscious of my spending habits and makes me feel a sort of 'ownership' in the church. More importantly, it is a way of demonstrating my love and support for this congregation and the mission and work of this church. **Melinda Norton***

It's already time for Pride '08

We have a design and a construction plan. Here is where you can play a major part in helping to represent our church in the OKC Pride '08 celebration. Before we begin construction we are asking for donations to offset the costs to the church. Please keep in mind that this is only a partial list of supplies and monetary donations are always accepted and appreciated.

- ** 3 bundles of chicken wire, bailing wire (5 ft. will do)
- ** 3 sheets of plywood (4x8 if I'm not mistaken)
- ** 10-2x4's (non-treated)
- ** screws (cordless drills/screwdrivers)
- ** staples (and staple gun)
- ** extra hammers, pliers, tape measures etc.
- ** circular saws, jig-saws
- ** white paint, brushes, trays, rollers
- ** tissue paper-all colors-IN ABUNDANCE
- ** PVC pipe (2"- 4 10ft.) T-connections, PVC (3"- 10ft)
- ** PVC bonding
- ** small generator
- ** bubble blower

We need someone willing to drive to Shawnee to pick up the trailer that we will be using. A.S.A.P. The sooner, the better. Call Kenny at 208-8969 or 821-9654 or Bo at 464-9510

Prayer Concerns:

- ⇒ Dr. Kathy McCallie's son, Jesse Stephenson, is in Afghanistan for 15-18 months beginning March 16th. Please keep Jesse, his wife, Amy, and their family in your prayers.
- ⇒ Bruce Saunkeah continues to recover from chemotherapy. Please keep him and Jeff Graves in your prayers.
- ⇒ Country Johnsons has a nephew who died from an accidental gunshot wound. And another nephew battling cancer. Please keep her and her family in your prayers.
- ⇒ Jo Wheelers sister, Jane, died on April 19th. Please keep her and Jim and their families in your prayers.

If you know of any prayer concerns you would like to go out on the Email prayer chain, or if you would like to be added to the Email prayer chain, send an email to Mindy at hellwege69@aol.com.

Church of the Open Arms presents...

Prayers for the Nations



Racial Reconciliation Sunday, May 18, 7:00pm
A Service of Worship by Loyd Larson

Prayers for the Nations is a worship experience built around prayers for the seemingly elusive goals of peace, unity, justice, healing and hope. It includes prayers for world leaders who are charged with the responsibility of ensuring freedom and the pursuit of happiness for all. It also includes prayers for all who serve in relative anonymity in their own communities.

Donations will be accepted, a portion of the proceeds will benefit the Church of the Open Arms Choir and a portion will go to create a program budget for the new Kansas–Oklahoma Conference Peace & Justice Coordinator

Racial Harmony Class Every Sunday in June 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Our society is desperately in need to greater awareness and dialogue regarding issues of race relations. This small discussion group is an opportunity for increasing insight about racial harmony and the need for it. Can you arrange your schedule in June to join this class?

New Moon Service

****Attention-read for changes****

The new moon service will be held in the great outdoors during the summer months. Join us at Conna's at 7pm for relaxing or hiking or bring some food to cook on the fire. Service will start at 8pm. Take I-35 to the Hefner Rd exit. Go east to Midwest Blvd (second stop sign). Go north to second driveway (look for red reflectors).

An Invitation to Choir

The Open Arms Choir has been hard at work preparing new music for worship and for a very special worship service Sunday, May 18. Several new members have joined us, and we would love to continue to add to those numbers. I wanted to take a moment and let everyone know without doubt, the Open Arms Choir is open to anyone who wishes to join us. We rehearse Sunday mornings at 9:30 and Wednesday Evenings at 6:00, just before the Wednesday service. Come to whichever practice is most convenient, or to both if you are able. We have several goals that we attempt to meet. First and foremost to serve God, and to that end we aim to have fun in our rehearsals and in our anthems! I believe a large part of serving is enjoying what God's given. We also strive to do our best as we work. But I am always very quick to follow that statement with the question, "Does that mean we have to be any good?" The answer to that question is "No." The third goal is to learn a little something along the way. So if you ever thought, hmm, I might like to sing in the choir, come give it a try, at the very least, you'll have a little fun, and hopefully learn a little something. If you find that you have fun enough to stay with us...Fantastic!! If not, there's no pressure to stay with something you don't enjoy or feel comfortable with. We'll be here every week, and Conna and I will gladly help anyone who wants some extra practice, or just needs reassurance individually.

"Prayers for the Nations" is a special worship service on

May 18th at 7:00 pm and is being shared in conjunction with the UCC Racial Reconciliation Sunday.

It is a service of Worship with music, narration and responsive readings.

"We live in a world on edge because of terrorism, racism, homophobia, health and economic issues, and tyrannical, selfishly motivated leaders. We are reminded daily that we are truly part of a "global village," a community replete with the widest array of cultures and ideals. Rather than celebrating this phenomenon, however, we find ourselves engaged in territorial battles that would enable one group to triumph over another. "Prayers for the Nations" is a worship experience built around prayers for the seemingly elusive goals of peace, unity, justice, healing, and hope. It includes prayers for world leaders who are charged with the responsibility of ensuring freedom and the pursuit of happiness for all. It also includes prayers for those of us who serve in relative anonymity in our own communities. It is global in scope, not nationalistic. It is also unapologetically Christian in nature, with prayers that the church will take the lead in responding to a world in need as Christ called us to do. May we be motivated to be "salt and light" (Matthew 5:13-16) to a world that needs to be changed by the grace of God." —Lloyd Larson

Please invite your friends and families.

Wednesday Night Services

7:00pm, Every Week

**Come for a refreshing mid-week spirit lift. Request your favorite hymn.
Stick around and get to know others in a sharing circle.**

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