

The Common Thread

A monthly publication of Church of the Open Arms, UCC

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August 1, 2008

MINISTER'S ROUNDTABLE

I recommend more silence and stillness for all people who want deeper discipleship with Christ and deeper spirituality. I have been rereading a book called, *The Other Side of Silence: A Guide to Christian Meditation*. In a chapter entitled, "Silence: Discovering the Way Inward," Morton T. Kelsey wrote: "The idea of linking silence with prayer may sound like an out-and-out contradiction to many Christians." We often think of prayer as talking to God, giving thanks, asking for help, expressing needs of others, etc. However, another type of prayer has become more and more powerful in my own life. It is simply a form of meditation with the goal of silence. "One's effort is to be silent enough to hear, first, the deepest needs of one's own heart, and then the prompting of the creative Spirit in whatever direction it may indicate." It is not complicated. It may even seem like day-dreaming or "loafing" at first. The important thing is to make friends with silence, stillness, and solitude.

Soren Kierkegaard wrote that a real Christian, "often feels a need of solitude, which for him is a vital necessity – sometimes like breathing, at other times like sleeping. The fact that he feels this vital necessity more than other men is also a sign that he has a deeper nature. Generally the need of solitude is a sign that there is spirit in a man after all, and it is a measure for what spirit there is."

Enjoying the stillness the heart requires,
Kathy McCallie

Leadership Retreat

Saturday, August 16th

9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.



See Page 3

HIV/ AIDS Support Group Ends

Unfortunately we will not be continuing the HIV/AIDS support group for an alternative group please contact the church office at 405-525-9555

New Moons **August 1 and August 30th!**

New Moon celebrations will begin at 8:00 p.m. out in the country at Conna's land on Friday, August 1st and Saturday, August 30th. It is unusual to have two new moons in the same month. Join in this time of connection with new friends and with nature to deepen your spirituality.

SHARE THE HOPE.....

Well it is August and that means that everyone who turned in a HOPE card at the HOPE dinner in May will be receiving a special correspondence this month. As the Finance Team discussed the logistics of mailing the cards, I was reminded that I hadn't acted on all that I had "hoped" to. One of my "Hopes" is to be a part of a small group.

You are all invited to share my hope of participating in a discussion group. This will be a great opportunity to not only get to see a movie with friends in the fabulous air conditioned sanctuary at COA, but to also explore our relationships with one another and God.

We will be watching a full length Movie shown on both screens utilizing the new projectors that were recently purchased. There will be a brief period of discussion and reflection following the movie.

Thursday Night Movie Discussion Group

Thursday July 31, 2008 7:00pm

Pride & Prejudice

(A retelling of Jane Austen's romantic classic in which true love confronts pride, prejudice, and society)

Thursday August 7, 2008 7:00pm

The Notebook

(A love story for young and old)

Thursday August 14, 2008 7:00pm

House of Flying Daggers

(A drama about a beautiful blind dancer torn between revolution and true love)

Thursday August 21, 2008 7:00pm

Spanglish

(A comedy drama about what really matters in life)

Thursday August 28, 2008 7:00pm

Rent

I hope that everyone will be able to attend at least one of the movies if not all of them. Let's grow in love as we grow to know and understand one another.

Praise be to God!

Mike

SONGS OF JOY SUNDAY

Sunday August 17th during our regular Sunday morning worship celebration time, we will enjoy a musical extravaganza of inspiration and joy. The entire morning will be devoted to making a joyful noise. Musicians are preparing an uplifting program, so be sure to come that Sunday.

Leadership Retreat

Saturday, August 16th

9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Come on in to the cool air-conditioned space with cool, new ideas for the future of our church! All are welcome and encouraged to join in this time of team-building, relationship development, planning and organizing for back-to-school and holiday months ahead in the ministry of our church. Even if you can only come for a few hours, we want you to come! Maybe you have never been involved in any of the leadership of the church, but you are curious about how things get done. Come learn more on this fun, inspiring day. All are welcome. Just because you come to the meeting doesn't mean that you have to take responsibility for anything at all. Of course, your help and input as a volunteer is always appreciated. Lunch will be provided. Bring a few dollars to contribute for the cost of lunch if you can. Child care can be arranged if requested at least one week in advance. For more information, call 525-9555.

The Open Arms Food Pantry is busier than ever due to the rising costs of food and fuel. Most of us think that you cannot get very much for a dollar. However, there is one place a dollar can go a long way, and that is through the local food bank.

Did you know that one dollar will feed seven families? This past week we spent \$54.00 on food for the pantry and received in excess of 1,000 pounds of food. This included formula, diapers, fresh fruits and veggies, meats and dry goods. Now, where else can you get this much food for only \$54.00? Just think about how many families we could provide not only food to, but peace of mind, for a donation of one dollar a week?

We are always in need of volunteers on Friday mornings at 10:00 am to help put food on the shelves and on Friday afternoons from 3:00 - 6:00 pm to assist with taking people through the pantry. I promise that you will go home feeling really good about helping these less fortunate people in our community.

If you know someone that it is need of food assistance or would like to volunteer on Friday, please call Heather at 525-9555.

August 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
CHILD CARE AVAILABLE ON WEDNESDAYS STARTING AT 6:45PM						
3 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 am Sunday School 10-45 am Worship 12:00 Monthly Potluck Worship team meeting	4 6:00pm Meditation 6:30 Society for Creative Ancestrists	5 7:00PM PFLAG	6 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 6:00 Beginning Spanish 7:00 Advanced Spanish 7:00 Worship Service	7 4:30 Meet at Ingrid's	8 10AM OK Gay Natives 4:00-6:00 Food Pantry 6:30-8pm New Youth Project	9 10AM Frontier City
10 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	11 6:00pm Meditation	12 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 6:00 Beginning Spanish 7:00 Advanced Spanish 7:00 Worship Service	13 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 6:00 Beginning Spanish 7:00 Advanced Spanish 7:00 Worship Service	14 4:30 Meet at Ingrid's 7:00PM Finance Team Meeting	15 4:00-6:00 Food Pantry 6:30-8pm New Youth Project	16
17 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 4:20 pm Peace Program	18 6:00pm Meditation	19 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 6:00 Beginning Spanish 7:00 Advanced Spanish 7:00 Worship Service	20 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 6:00 Beginning Spanish 7:00 Advanced Spanish 7:00 Worship Service	21 4:30 Meet at Ingrid's	22 4:00-6:00 Food Pantry 6:30-8pm New Youth Project	23
24 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	25 6:00pm Meditation	26 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 6:00 Beginning Spanish 7:00 Advanced Spanish 7:00 Worship Service	27 6:00 Choir Rehearsal 6:00 Beginning Spanish 7:00 Advanced Spanish 7:00 Worship Service	28 4:30 Meet at Ingrid's	29 4:00-6:00 Food Pantry 6:30-8pm New Youth Project	30

Deb Roberts' Gratitude for Open Arms

By Nathaniel Batchelder

How was I so fortunate as to be a listener as Deb shared with me, unguardedly, her unabashed gratitude for all that Church of the Open Arms has meant to her over the past four years. I made a date to visit Deb at her home to take some notes and try to get this right.

Deb said she first visited Open Arms four years ago when she was fired from her job as choir and youth leader at an Oklahoma City church. Some legal mistakes of family members not living with her had become a public embarrassment, and her church, apparently, was unable to support Deb through her crisis. In tears, Deb drove directly to a place she had never been before, Church of the Open Arms, "as though to a magnet." She explained, "I had heard that Open Arms welcomed everyone, and I had also heard negative things about it being a gay church; maybe that attracted me, but I sure needed some support."

It was Kathy McCallie's day off, but she happened to be at the church as Deb drove in. She listened to Deb's grief and gave her emotional support as Deb poured out her feelings. Deb believes the coincidence was meant to be, and - touched by Kathy's support - decided to give Open Arms a try. "I felt comfortable and at home from the first moment," she said.

Hearing Deb's beautiful singing voice, Sara Swift soon encouraged her to join Mixed Company, and Deb has been a pillar of the ensemble ever since, in church, and as Mixed Company has been our ambassador choir to other churches.

Deb says Open Arms has supported her whole family in ways she had never experienced before in her lifetime of associations with churches. Through her husband Ron's illness, she says, they have been loved and visited, and Ron has even attended with Deb sometimes ... "a man who decided long ago that church was not for him." Ron found the churches of his youth "stifling and hypocritical."

Last year, through Deb's father's final months on earth, during Kathy's sabbatical, her mom and dad were visited at the hospital by Loyce Newton Edwards and Brenda Fletcher, officially representing the church, and by others concerned. Deb's mom has often been a guest at church, an expression of her warm feelings about Open Arms.

And Deb has frequently graced our worship celebration with songs during the offering, sometimes by herself, and sometimes accompanied by her daughter Allison and Allison's dad Tim. Deb says that the welcome her whole family has received has been healing for her, even expanding her conception of what is possible for a church.

More recently, and somewhat incredibly, Deb was moved from her music and art teaching job with middle school youths, to a pre-kindergarten job at the school. She says it is clear to her that her liberal politics and even her association with "that gay church" prompted the move, another blow to her spirit that the indomitable Deb will not allow to shake her faith. "Open Arms has sustained me through it all," she said.

Deb loves the way our children are incorporated into worship at Open Arms, taking up the "Pennies From Heaven" collection, and jumping onto the Story Quilt for their moment with Kathy before going to children's programs. She loves our "purple post cards" that folks are encouraged to write notes on to others, and says she has received her share of them at her own home. She loves the openness and respect at Open Arms for other religious traditions, and the UCC axiom and belief that, "God is still speaking." She loves the diversity in our pews: old and young, women and men, gay and straight, people of many colors, worshipping together.

"I can't thank you all enough," Deb said. "You welcomed me when I needed support and helped me get back on my feet. You prayed me back to health, and you welcomed my whole family when some others would not, in births to daughters and in my dad's death. I am so fortunate to have found you, my church family." Deb even wrote us a song she titled "Open Arms"

A place of openness; a place of love.
A place where people can be themselves, just because.
A place where God is still speaking, and feet are put to faith:
A place of Open Arms; a place of God's embrace.

It is said in God's World, "Perfect love casts out fear."
It is said that God shall dry all our tears.
When we come to God, just as we are,
God embraces us, and heals every scar.

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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Check out our website
www.openarms.org