

The Common Thread

A monthly publication of Church of the Open Arms, UCC

Volume 12, Issue 12

December 1, 2008

MINISTER'S ROUNDTABLE

In this holiday season we remember the timeless, universal image of peace from the prophet Isaiah: "The lion will lay down with the lamb, and a little child shall lead them."

What would it mean to allow a child to lead us? Where would a child lead us?

The children of our church are inspiring me with their effort to buy a pig. Did you know that they have been saving their weekly offering from their Sunday School (Godly Play) to raise \$250 for a pig? You might wonder why they want a pig. So far, they have raised about \$200, but I expect that by the time you read this they may have almost reached their goal. The kids are buying a pig to enable a family to attain greater self-reliance through a project called "Heifer International World Ark." Their mission is: "ending world hunger and saving the earth." You can learn more about how you can give a gift of a pig, a flock of chicks, ducks, a goat, a hive of bees, seedlings or other life-giving resource to someone in great need somewhere in the world. To learn more check out

www.heifer.org/worldark or call (877) 448-6437

I am thankful to the kids of our church, and to Robert and Maria Watkins, for reminding me about the possibility of giving gifts that make a positive difference in the world at Christmas time. Our kids are great leaders! I am happy to report that I finished all my Christmas shopping before annual Buy Nothing Day (the day after Thanksgiving). Yes, that is a real international holiday with growing popularity. Now I can look forward to a sacred, magical, peaceful holiday season. May you have every blessing this holiday season.

With Peace and Joy, Kathy McCallie

SOUP, SINGING, AND STORIES:
WEDNESDAY NIGHTS
DEC. 3, 10, AND 17TH

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Soup, Singing, and Stories: Wednesday Nights

Dec. 3, 10, and 17th

Make your holiday rich in spirituality and friendships by spending Wednesday nights at church. We start with a hearty, healthy soup supper, followed by hymn singing, prayer, and devotion in the sanctuary. Then we share insights and questions as we wonder together about scripture stories. Adult bible study happens in the community hall. Ms. Elsa reads stories to the kids downstairs, and the youth will be meeting, too. Come when you can.

6:00-7:00 soup in the community hall

7:00-7:30 Hymn Singing, Prayer, and Devotion in Sanctuary

7:30-8:30 Bible Study/ Stories for all ages

Holiday Shopping with a Conscience

Fair Trade market open November 21- December 20th on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10:00am-7:00pm. This is a wonderful opportunity to do your holiday shopping where it makes a difference to makers and recipients. They will have handmade products from Central and South America, Africa, and Asia. All items in the shop are purchased directly from producers or from other Fair Trade organizations to ensure that a fair price, determined by the artisan, is paid for each product. Behind every product is an individual, a family, and a community, working together for a better life.

Located at 1120 NW 51 (Between Western and Classen on NW 51st). Sales will also benefit Pambe Ghana, where Alice Iddi Gubbels of Oklahoma City serves as Executive Director.

For more information, contact Karen Spradlin karen.spradlin@bcglobal.net

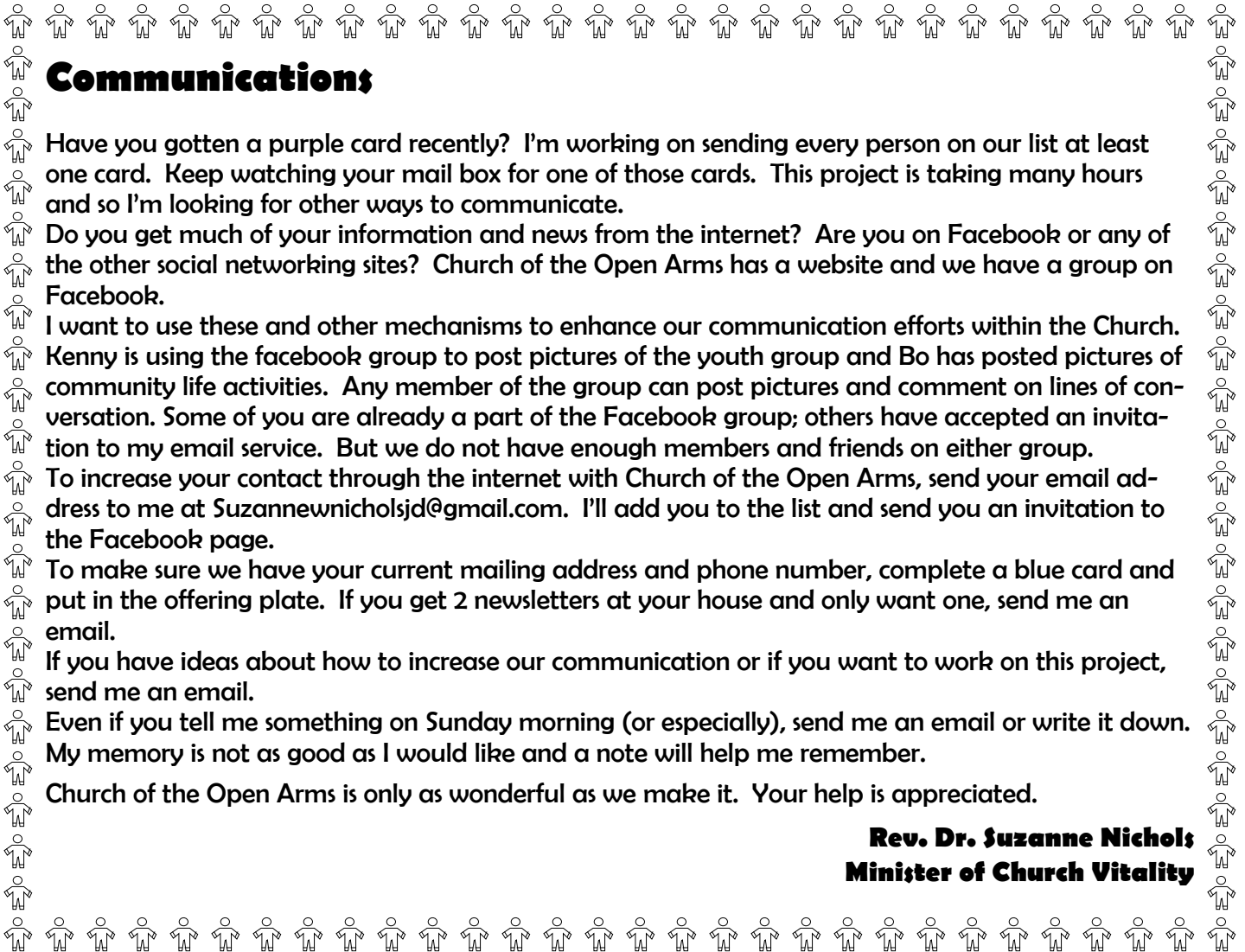
Life Improvement" course to begin Jan 8th, 2009

Beginning January 8th, Melinda Norton will be providing a six week course on "Life Improvement." The course will focus on six different areas such as communication skills, anger management, self esteem, relationships, and so on. The classes will involve discussion, lecture, and activities for sharing. Since the course will result in closer relationships, those interested are being asked to make a real commitment to attend all six weeks. The course is limited to 12 individuals and those interested need to contact Melinda in person or via phone at 405-426-9664. (FYI - Melinda is a licensed professional counselor and licensed alcohol and drug counselor but the course will not be group therapy.)

Peace, Mel

New Year's Eve Party!

We hope you'll join us in bringing in the New Year at Church of the Open Arms! Our clean and sober celebration will start with a concert by Covert Union from 8 – 10pm. After the concert, we'll move into the Fellowship Hall where there will be music (spinning CDs), dancing, games, and refreshments until 1am. The entire night of entertainment is completely free, but if you'd like to bring a snack to share, it would be welcome and appreciated. Start your New Year off right with friends, in a fun, relaxing, and sober environment!



Communication

Have you gotten a purple card recently? I'm working on sending every person on our list at least one card. Keep watching your mail box for one of those cards. This project is taking many hours and so I'm looking for other ways to communicate.

Do you get much of your information and news from the internet? Are you on Facebook or any of the other social networking sites? Church of the Open Arms has a website and we have a group on Facebook.

I want to use these and other mechanisms to enhance our communication efforts within the Church. Kenny is using the facebook group to post pictures of the youth group and Bo has posted pictures of community life activities. Any member of the group can post pictures and comment on lines of conversation. Some of you are already a part of the Facebook group; others have accepted an invitation to my email service. But we do not have enough members and friends on either group.

To increase your contact through the internet with Church of the Open Arms, send your email address to me at Suzannewnicholsjd@gmail.com. I'll add you to the list and send you an invitation to the Facebook page.

To make sure we have your current mailing address and phone number, complete a blue card and put in the offering plate. If you get 2 newsletters at your house and only want one, send me an email.

If you have ideas about how to increase our communication or if you want to work on this project, send me an email.

Even if you tell me something on Sunday morning (or especially), send me an email or write it down. My memory is not as good as I would like and a note will help me remember.

Church of the Open Arms is only as wonderful as we make it. Your help is appreciated.

**Rev. Dr. Suzanne Nichols
Minister of Church Vitality**

Exploring Forgiveness on Sunday Mornings

If you are new at Church of the Open Arms you may not know that there is a small meeting room just west of the community hall. You are invited to walk into that room next Sunday morning at 9:30 (grab your coffee and donuts first) and meet with a small group of people that will be glad to see you. Do not be afraid. For the next few Sunday mornings we will be watching a video documentary followed by a discussion regarding "The Power of Forgiveness".

This documentary examines the power of forgiveness in alleviating anger and grief caused by the most dramatic transgressions imaginable and those that are more commonplace. Among its subjects, the film features families of victims from the tragedy of 9/11 and forgiveness education in Northern Ireland, where unforgiveness has been a way of life for generations

Food Pantry Donations

For the holidays this year lets give stocking stuffers. When you're poor, everything is needed. However, lets focus on hygiene products, and small and useful items. Lets use our imaginations. We have approximately 2 dozen people over 60 who attend our pantry and about 100 kids. We fed 343 people last week. This is truly God's work.

Thanks, the pantry volunteers.

WINTER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION:

Sunday, December 21, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.

Do you ever wonder why so many religious holidays take place in December? It is widely believed that both Christmas and Hanukkah were originally linked to the Winter Solstice which was almost universally celebrated by pre-Christian cultures. On that day, due to the earth's tilt on its axis, the daytime hours are at a minimum in the Northern hemisphere, and night time is at a maximum. That doesn't make the Winter Solstice the darkest night of the year, but it certainly makes it the longest.

Our ancestors could not know precisely what day would be the shortest day, but could begin to notice the change within a few days afterward . . . probably very near December 25. It is easy to understand their fear and uncertainty as to whether the slowly shortening days would lead to a complete loss of sunlight and warmth, and to feel their joy and relief at noticing the gradual increase of sunshine in the sky. Perhaps we can connect some of the depression that many of us feel during the holiday season to this same phenomenon.

At our Winter Solstice celebration at Church of the Open Arms, we celebrate the return of the light to our darkened days. We talk about what we hope the coming light will bring for us . . . the new light we wish for in our own lives. And we talk about what we want to leave behind with the receding darkness.

This year the Winter Solstice falls on Sunday, December 21. We will celebrate it at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. Please plan to join us. Bring a dish for the shared meal following the ritual.

WHAT THE HECK IS UP WITH THE NYP?

The New Youth Project is moving! No, not out of town or even across town. We're just in a new time slot. The NYP, a group of 12-18 year olds sharing a journey in faith and Christian education, will be moving from Friday nights @ 6:30 to Wednesday nights @ 7:00-8:00 PM. This is all part of the Soup, Singing and Stories time that is new for Wednesday nights. So, please make note of this change beginning Wednesday, December 3. (And note: No group on Wednesday, December 24 or December 31.)

Also, the NYP will be selling Jade Tree plants in the foyer throughout the first of the year. The plants would make wonderful Christmas gifts for the plant lover in your life. This will also give us each a chance to have a little special part of our church brought into our homes.

The plants are young and range in price from \$5 to \$15.

DECK THE HALLS WITH BAUGHS OF HOLLY.....

**December 5, 2008
6:00PM to 7:00PM**

Please join us for a church decorating party. A fun Friday evening is sure to be had by all. *Bring Christmas cookies or that new appetizer that you have been wanting to try.* We want to taste your favorite holiday goodie. We will share in decorating the sanctuary and church and ring in the start of the season with good food and community.

Should you have any questions you may contact the church office or Mike DeArmond.

Hope to see you all there!

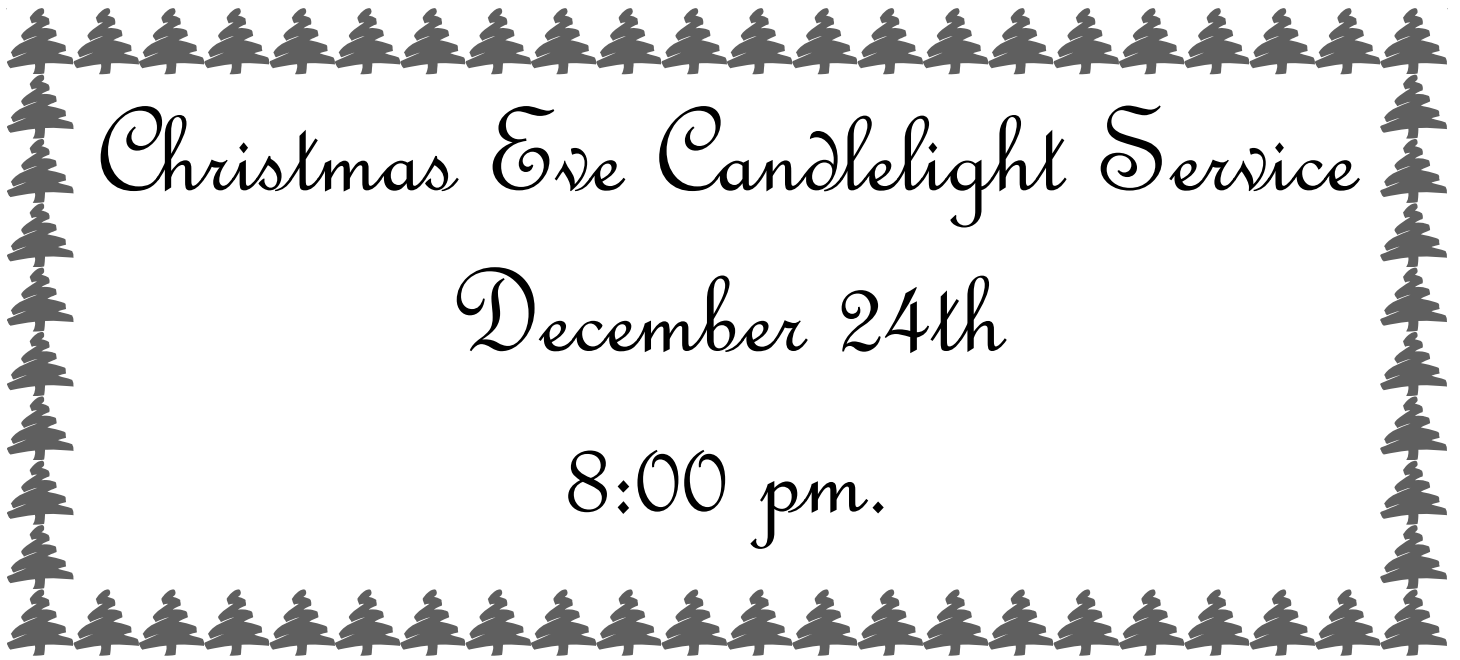
Fall Retreat 2008



December 2008

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 12:00 Monthly Potluck Worship team meeting	6:00pm Meditation		6:00 Choir Rehearsal 6:00 Soup Supper 7-8pm New Youth Project 7:00 Worship Service 7:30 Bible Study		4:00-6:00 Food Pantry 7-9pm Decorating Party	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
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10:45 Christmas Choir Cantata 12:00 Food Pantry Volunteer Appreciation Lunch						
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 12:00 Santa Party 7:00 pm Winter Solstice Celebration	6:00pm Meditation		8:00pm Christmas Eve Service			
28	29	30	31			
9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship	6:00pm Meditation		8pm-lam New Years Eve Party			

CHILD CARE
AVAILABLE ON WEDNESDAYS
STARTING AT 6:45PM



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

December 24th

8:00 pm.

FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DINNER

Sunday, December 14, after church

Our food pantry volunteers, currently led by Laura Choate, are doing an incredibly demanding and rewarding job of helping feed the hungry in the Oklahoma City community. Open every Friday afternoon from 4-6, these volunteers are helping to feed up to 90 families a week.

In order to open the 2-hour food pantry, lots of preparation takes place. Food must be ordered, received and stored, the waiting area must be set up (and then taken down), the community hall must be set up and accurate records kept. More volunteers are always needed.

**Join us to honor those who are helping Open Arms
to actualize this vital ministry of mercy in our community.**

DECEMBER 14TH
CHRISTMAS CHOIR CANTATA &
FOOD PANTRY VOLUNTEER LUNCH

Christmas Eve
Communion Service 8:00pm

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

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Address Service Requested

Check out our website
www.openarms.org

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