

The Common Thread

A monthly publication of Church of the Open Arms, UCC

Volume 15, Issue 12

December 1, 2011

MINISTER'S ROUNDTABLE

As economic and political troubles continue in our society, fear and stress are on the rise. Many people have anticipated a catastrophe that would radically change the freedom we have taken for granted, our level of affluence, and our patterns of material consumption. Others say even without any catastrophe, the old carefree days of easy money and expectations of increasing financial well-being will not return. With high unemployment and rising prices we suspect that life may be harder for future generations. No matter what happens in the future, our peace and happiness depend on our connection with God's Spirit. Having to cut back on spending may feel like a problem or a failure, but what if it really is an opportunity for blessing?

Can you make a list of fun things to do that are free? What about creating holiday traditions that don't use natural resources or require spending money? Ironically, our spirituality may flourish when our finances dwindle. The biblical notion of "repenting" means turning around and changing direction when you discover that you have been going the wrong way. Jesus called for us to repent. That doesn't mean that he wanted us to feel guilty or anxious. He wanted us to change direction. Maybe less economic opportunity brings greater spiritual opportunity to focus on simple pleasures that come without cost.

Don't let financial worries steal your joy at this sacred holiday time of year. Check out the many free opportunities for celebrating listed in this newsletter and have a wonder-full Christmas.

Wishing you comfort and joy,
Kathy McCallie

Sunday, February 12th, 3:00 p.m.

Our Entire Congregation is Urged to Attend

City Wide Gathering

A Founding Convention of the OK Sponsoring Committee

Save the Date & Watch for Details!

“COUNT YOURSELF BLESSED”

Our “increase your giving” project has come to a close. It was an enormous undertaking and much thanks goes to Scott Blanton, Suzanne Flemming, and all the members of the Finance Team who helped execute this plan. There are many people not on the Finance Team who should be thanked as well--people like Gene Weidemann, Sue Shook, and Debbie Hall and the many members of Community Life.

We have received about 2/3 of the “increase your giving” cards back and they represent approximately 2/3 of the money we need to meet our 2012 budget. If you have not sent your card in, it's not too late. It will be handled in the strictest of confidence. If you have sent it in and you feel called to change your pledge, up or down, please know that you are welcome to do that at any time. It is a commitment between you and your God and for you to handle as you see fit.

Thank you all for your support, and blessings on your journey.

**'One united church on a shared mission for 11 powerful days
to feed the hungry and confront food-related injustice'
"Mission: 1" campaign set for 11.1.11 - 11.11.11**

**We did it! Congratulations on exceeding our goals for mailing hand-written letters to congress to urge programs that help the poor, gathering healthy items for our pantry, and collecting money for the Neighbors in Need offering.
Great job everybody!**

For the full update, check out: ucc.org/mission1



CONSTRUCTION UPDATE!



Just as we were entering the “home stretch” for finishing the construction we have run up against a major obstacle. The HVAC system we had planned to put in the new basement did not pass the mechanical inspection by the city. The main problem had to do with smoke retardation in case of fire. We are blessed in this situation because the Fire Marshall could have forced us to completely re-engineer our plans, which could have been a \$50,000 to \$75,000 makeover. Instead he is allowing us to include some smoke doors in the system we have planned. It will still be an add-on to the original bid money-wise, and it will cost us 4 to 6 weeks in construction time, but the situation could have been much worse. Thanks to everyone involved in this process and to each of you for your patience.

The blessings continue to flow from this project and our Lord is still in control.

FOOD PANTRY REPORT

The Food Pantry was closed for 2 weeks in October due to construction. 264 families were served in October, representing 232 adults and 122 children for a total of a cost of \$1.22 per family unit.

The Food Pantry is in need of volunteers (who are able to lift) on Fridays from 2-6:30 p.m. and to walk patrons from 4-6 p.m. Any time you have to offer during this period will be appreciated. If able to help sometimes or all the time, please let the church know by calling 525-9555.

(The pantry will be closed on the 23rd of December)

NOTICE

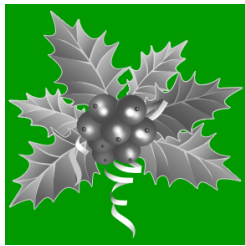
There will be no December meeting of the **HIV/Aids Support Group** at the church. We will be back at COA with meetings in the new year, the third Thursday of each month beginning January 19th, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

If you are interested in knowing more about the group, contact Dennis at 205-7460.

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL ORGANIZING DAY

January 14th, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Did you ever wonder about how to get more involved in service through our church? Are you ready to stop assuming that other people will take care of all the business of the church and step up to share the responsibility for making it happen? Would you like to try activating your spirituality through opportunities to make new friends and help others? Your time and service are needed on our ministry teams at church. There are numerous opportunities for service. Whether you are willing to make coffee, make phone calls, fold or label newsletters, replace light bulbs, plant flowers, join the choir, help in the food pantry, or volunteer with kids, your gifts are needed. All are welcome to come join the **Leadership Council** on Saturday, January 14th as we share training and planning for the year. Mark the date on your calendar now.



Join Us for Holiday Joys



Tree-Trimming Party & Game Night

Friday, Dec. 2nd 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Bring your favorite holiday snacks to share. Come decorate the tree and stick around to play cards, board games, make new friends, and relax!

Santa Party ~ Sunday, December 11th ~ Noon

Bring the kids, neighbors, and the young-at-heart for a visit with Santa. Don't miss this opportunity to tell Saint Nick what you want for Christmas and get some great photos with him. The magic of the season will thrill the senses as we share cookies, punch, and the children's excitement.

Children who want to participate in a Christmas pageant will don angel and shepherd costumes earlier that morning. Contact the church office (525-9555) for information about getting your little angel involved.

Merry Musical Marvel ~ Fundraising Event

Friday, Dec. 16th, 7:00pm

This is a holiday concert featuring Mixed Co. and the Back Row to raise funds for the COA Food Pantry and to raise joy and Christmas spirit in celebration of the wonder of the blessed season. Suggested donation is \$10 and all are urged to sell tickets and build up the pantry funds for 2012.

Christmas Musical Cantata ~ Sunday, December 18th 10:45 a.m.

Come let your spirit soar with the beauty and mystery of the ancient celebration of incarnation. All are welcome & nursery care is provided.

Winter Solstice Celebration ~ Thursday, December 22nd 7:00 p.m.

Gather in this circle of warmth, cheer, and friendship for the longest night of the year. In this earthy, elemental service we let go of the things that are slipping away with the past year and begin to welcome new beginnings in the year to come.

The light shines in the darkness.



Candlelight Communion

Christmas Eve ~ Saturday Dec. 24th, 8:00 pm

Please join us for readings and carols in the sanctuary.



Christmas Brunch & Worship Celebration

Sunday, December 25th 10:00 a.m.

Share coffee & warm goodies around tables in the community hall as we reflect together through readings, prayer, and song. We celebrate God's mysterious beauty shining through all creation.

Christmas Dinner ~ Noon, bring a dish to share


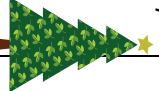



New Years Brunch & Celebration of Epiphany

Sunday, January 1st, 10:45 a.m.

Don't miss the festival of gifts as we wonder together about those who follow a star. Join us in the community hall as we sing, pray, lift up inspirational readings and greet the new year.



December 2017

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|---|-----------|
| <p>Buy your gifts from the COA-OP, Every Sunday this month Before 5 After Church</p>  | | | | <p>7:15 am RISE & SHINE 1:45 Food Pantry drop-off</p> | <p>2-4 pm Food Pantry Set-up 4-6 pm Food Pantry Servers 6:30-9:30 Game Night & Tree Trimming</p>  | <p>3</p> |
| <p>9:30 Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Lightning Round 10:45 Worship Monthly Potluck</p> | <p>5</p> | <p>6</p> | <p>7</p> | <p>8</p> | <p>9</p> | <p>10</p> |
| <p>11 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Lightning Round 10:45 Worship Noon—Sawta Party</p>  | <p>12</p> | <p>13</p> | <p>14</p> | <p>15</p> | <p>23</p> | <p>17</p> |
| <p>18 10:00 Lightning Round 10:45 Christmas Musical Cantata Noon—Leadership Council Mtg.</p>  | <p>19</p> | <p>20</p> | <p>21</p> | <p>22</p> | <p>23</p> | <p>24</p> |
| <p>25 10:00 Christmas Brunch & Worship Celebration Noon: Christmas Dinner</p>  | <p>26</p> | <p>27</p> | <p>28</p> | <p>29</p> | <p>30</p> | <p>31</p> |

CARE TEAM REPORT

Birthdays

| | | | |
|------------------|------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| Cecilia Caldwell | December 2 | Abraham Wolfe-Mischler | December 8 |
| Barbara York | December 3 | Donna Compton | December 12 |
| Lee Chenoweth | December 5 | Robyn Lemon-Sellers | December 13 |
| Cindy Lasyone | December 5 | Rocinda Dangerfield | December 20 |
| Ginger McGovern | December 5 | Nathaniel "Batch" Batchelder | December 20 |
| | | Adam Jackson | December 20 |

Anniversaries

Mark Peterson & Mark Van Dorn—December 23

Suzanne & Bob Nichols—December 27

Birthday and Anniversary Blessings to you all!

(Note: we are always trying to update our records of birthdays and anniversaries. If we missed yours, please contact the church office at 405-525-9555 or at openarmsok@aol.com).

The "blue card" in your bulletin every Sunday has a space for prayer requests. You can fill it out and put the card in the offering plate. Prayer requests during the week can be made by calling or emailing the church office, or via the Open Arms prayer request e-mail list. To make a request or to add your name to the list, contact Mindy Hellwege at hellwege69@aol.com.

The Open Arms Care Team meets during the Pot Luck Meal after worship on the first Sunday of every month. Feel free to stop by, have a bite, and share your ideas for building a more effective Care Team.

If you've been looking for ways to get involved in the Open Arms community, the Care Team may be for you! Opportunities for service include hospital, home or phone visits; prayer chain; helping with funeral/memorial services; and carpool or ride assistance. Also, in January, the Care Team will begin hosting the monthly Extravagant Birthday celebration, so if baking or party planning is your thing, please let us know! For more information becoming a Care Team volunteer, contact Pastor Kathy, Pastor Scott, the church office, or Bruce Saunkeah (bruce@rinkgallery.com). Finally, to everyone who has been a part of this very important team throughout the year: ***Thank You for Caring!***



COME HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Every Christmas there are some people who don't have anyone to spend Christmas with. They may think that no one cares and many feel they don't deserve to experience the joys of Christmas. They often end up at the bar or alone at home. The suicide rate spikes incredibly during the holidays. We feel that absolutely no one should have to spend Christmas alone.

We invite not only the congregation of the Church of the Open Arms, but we invite the congregation to invite others. You see, Christmas just happens to fall on Sunday this year. This is a superb opportunity to bring a friend to service or someone who has never heard of our church. This is your chance to share the love with others!


This year, on Christmas morning, the Community Café will be open at 8:00 a.m., offering coffee, hot apple cider and other Christmas goodies. Feel free to bring your own Christmas goodies to add to the table. There will be dominoes, cards as well as other games available. So join us early to make some memorable Christmas morning memories.

Christmas brunch and morning worship service will begin at 10:00 and child care will be available. Christmas dinner will be served following worship service (approximately 12:15). Child care WILL NOT be available. Christmas dinner will work much like a potluck. Carol Fasol and Cindy Las-yone have each donated a turkey and Scott Hamilton has donated a ham. We are asking everyone to bring a favorite holiday dish. In order for us to get a good idea of how many will be there and who is bringing what, a sign-up sheet will be available in the foyer of the church.

RSVP IS APPRECIATED Contact Bo or Kenny for more information 405-684-4539

THANK YOU!!

We would like to thank everyone who participated in and came to the Thanksgiving Dinner on Saturday, November 26th.



Merry Musical Marvel ~ Fundraising Event Friday, Dec. 16th, 7:00pm

This is a holiday concert featuring Mixed Co. and the Back Row to raise funds for the COA Food Pantry and to raise joy and Christmas spirit in celebration of the wonder of the blessed season. Suggested donation is \$10 and all are urged to sell tickets and build up the pantry funds for 2012.

Church of the Open Arms, UCC
3131 N. Pennsylvania Ave.
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
405-525-9555
openarmsok@aol.com

Non-Profit
Organization
US Postage
PAID
Oklahoma City, OK
#.1229

Address Service Requested

Sermons now on the web!
www.openarms.org

Homemade and Fair Trade COA-OP



Will be held every Sunday until Christmas
Before and after Church! Come, bring homemade or
fair trade items to sell or trade and buy or trade with
your friends for Christmas gifts and goodies!

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