

# The Common Thread

A monthly publication of Church of the Open Arms, UCC

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## MINISTER'S ROUNDTABLE

Years ago I dreaded winter. Like many people, I get blue in January and February. I am crabby because I can't get outside much. The drab, brown and grey world depressed me. Spring is a joy, full of energy and new life bubbling up everywhere. Summer is warm and rich with opportunities for play and growth. Fall is a splendor of color, crisp, refreshing air and satisfying harvest themes. But winter -- bah humbug! Once Christmas is over the rest seems like a frozen death when I barely hung on until signs of spring.

Then I started planting lots of evergreen shrubs and trees. I realized I needed to see the color and life in my yard. But, what really transformed my attitude toward winter was when I got hooked on watching the birds. I enjoy the birds all year, don't get me wrong. However, a few years ago I got captivated with watching them. So, I started feeding them more. I realized that only in winter can I fully enjoy them. When the leaves are off the trees, and the season is bleak and barren, the birds flock to my feeders. I have grown to recognize their habits, their schedules, their voices, their preferences. I spend entirely too much money on peanut butter, black-hull sunflower seed, and thistle seed. I make suet creations. I put out fresh water when everything is frozen. I think of the birds as my flock of chickens -- my friends. I love the red cardinals and the brash blue-jays. I love the Carolina wrens, the goldfinches, the purple finches, and the nuthatch. I even love the common masses of sparrows. The woodpeckers are my favorites. I even like the squirrels.

Now when winter is coming I look forward to my time with the birds. I could sit and watch them for hours. Maybe this winter I will give myself permission to take time and watch more. I hope you have ways of enjoying every day all year long. I wish for you surprising discoveries of connection and joy in life.

Sincerely,  
Kathy McCallie



**LEADERSHIP COUNCIL RETREAT**  
**JANUARY 19TH**  
**BE THERE!**  
**SEE ARTICLE ON PAGE 2**

# Servant/Leadership Council Planning Retreat

2009 promises to be a big year for our church. On **Saturday, January 10th** our servant/leader council will give a Saturday to team-building, planning, and organizing ourselves for our mission and ministry. Everyone who participates at Open Arms and has an interest in joining in is welcome. Maybe you just want to learn more about how decisions get made. Maybe you have some questions about why certain things never seem to get done. Maybe you would like to find ways to get more involved. You are welcome, and your help is needed. We usually have plenty of people with great ideas, but we are often short on "follow-through." We are grateful for the wonderful individuals who contribute many, many hours of creativity, work, and love to make things happen at the church. If you ever get the impression that the people in leadership aren't open to your contribution, please be assured that it is only because they are too busy juggling tasks to reach out the way they want to. Come get on board!

## Faith-Raising Drive

We need an elevator. We need a new parking lot. Our building needs some work, so that our ministry can touch more lives and have greater service to our community. It is an affirmation and encouragement that our church has received a generous contribution from Bob and MaryLou Lemon that makes it possible for us to look at some needed projects. Our challenge is to raise finances and faith-commitment to match this gift. Our best efforts will be called forth as we consider ways to take our discipleship and ministry to a new level. You might surprise yourself by getting excited about being part of this initiative! Soon you will be hearing more about dreams for improvement and expansion. What an exciting and uplifting time in the life of our church!

## Good-Deals-On-Wheels

The ancient practice of bread delivery is not frequently found in this "go-get-it-yourself" age. EXCEPT by some saints, from (where else !?) Church of Open Arms.

Many thanks to Myra Shirley, temporarily filling in for Sarah Ortiz, who has been picking up the Panera bread donation many, many months and to Nancy Nesser and Sandra Hoyt for having done it in the past, for several years. That well-known motto "We Deliver" should be completed with "Manna From Heaven" when applied to these folks!

***Our gratitude to you four for  
"enriching" Church of Open Arms  
and our food pantry.***

## 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!



# Shalom Ministry Team December 2008 Meeting Report

The Shalom Ministry Team Met the first Sunday of December 2008 after the Pot Luck to welcome the new Chairperson Annie Almond and to discuss potential activities for our team in 2009. Shalom could be interpreted as "The Peace": a peace personally felt, a deep calmness and mental balance, which is said to come to those who appreciate God. The team's work of overcoming injustice and intolerance includes ministry to persons living with HIV/AIDS, Prison Ministry, ending Hunger and Poverty, Environmental concerns, racial justice, ending discrimination and hate crimes, and political advocacy for education, health and welfare.

- 1) The team agreed that as we are able that the COA should be represented by participating in the January 19<sup>th</sup> Martin Luther King Jr. parade. Hopefully we will have enough people to carry our church banner. Contact **Annie for information at 921-4131**
- 2) HIV/AIDS Awareness, Educational and Testing programs in conjunction with community efforts will be developed by Pastor Loyce Newton-Edwards contact her at **loycee@;bcglobal.net**. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to help.
- 3) Bryan Fash has proposed developing a Devotional Group as part of a Prison Ministry. If you would like to participate or want to offer input email Bryan at **bryman42@gmail.com**
- 4) The Shalom Ministry Team also encourages support for the COA Food Pantry. Volunteers are needed on each Friday 10:00a.m. to 12:00 noon is Chair/table setup and Food Preparation. And then from 3:00p.m to 6:00p.m. we serve our Pantry guests. Even 1 hour of your time would be such a blessing to so many so please volunteer. **Contact Laura Choate at her home # 405-605-8316 or Mobile # 405-227-8406**

Shalom Ministry Team will meet every other month on the the first Sunday after the Pot Luck (next meeting Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> 2009)

We also will maintain Contact though E-Mail and Phone calls.

**Contact Annie Almond by phone 405-921-4131 or E-Mail at [anniealmond@yahoo.com](mailto:anniealmond@yahoo.com)**

*"We Wish you Peace for the coming New Year! Shalom."*



## Life improvement Course

I am so pleased that so many people are enthusiastic about the "Life Improvement" course I am offering beginning in January. The class is now full and I am keeping a list of those interested with the plan of offering a second session sometime in the spring or summer. Due to the University of Oklahoma's football team playing for the National Championship, the course will be pushed back a week and will begin on January 15, 2008. Classes will be held at the church, beginning at 7:00 PM.

Melinda

# **WHO AM I REALLY?**

## **Tuesday Night Program in January to Explore Questions of Identity**

Come to this 8-week discussion/reflection group to develop new friendships and deeper spirituality! Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, this eight-week Tuesday night group will enhance your life.

### **Take the following survey:**

I am:

1) Black 2) white 3) other

1) tall 2) short 3) other

1) conservative 2) liberal 3) other

1) rich 2) poor 3) other

1) uneducated 2) educated 3) other

1) young 2) old 3) other

1) gay 2) straight 3) other

1) male 2) female 3) other

1) religious 2) spiritual 3) other

1) interested in a discussion group that would explore these questions around identity 2) uninterested 3) other

We all have many labels: job, faith, gender, relationship status, race—among many others. For eight weeks, meet to explore many facets of identity, how they interrelate and how they inform and are informed by our relationships with, self, others, and the divine. Do our answers influence how we view God and one another? For eight Tuesday nights starting on January 20<sup>th</sup>, a group will gather at Open Arms to explore these and other fun questions. Join our special guest from Norman, Anna Holloway and Jim Stovall each Tuesday night at 7:00 for a lively discussion. For more information call Jim at 204-0811.

## **The New Youth Project is going to the movies!**

January kicks off the new year with studies from C.S. Lewis. It begins with a showing of the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe on January 7 with coinciding bible study the following two weeks. Then trumpets in the story of Narnia: Prince Caspian with two weeks of study following; the last of which is a study based on the video of Switchfoot's "This is Home". Just in case you aren't familiar with the works of C.S. Lewis, much of it is directly related to the bible in one way or another. It should be a very exciting series for the group.

As if that weren't enough, on March 5 the NYP "travels" to a different theater to begin a study on "High School Musical I, II, and III. Each has a bible study to go along with it with the last movie (HM III) being presented on April 1 and the last bible study being presented on Wednesday, April 8.

Please take note of all of the dates listed on the church calendar within this newsletter so you don't miss a thing. The "elders" of the church are welcome to join the youth on movie night if you've missed any of these yourself.

**JOIN IN THE FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE OF NARNIA!**

# January 2009

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>9:30 no choir rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship 12:00 Monthly Potluck <b>Worship team meeting</b></p> <p><b>4</b></p>	<p>6:00pm Meditation</p> <p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>6</b></p>	<p>6:00 Choir Rehearsal 7-8pm New Youth Project 7:00 Worship Service 7:30 Bible Study</p> <p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>New Years Day</b> <b>1</b></p>	<p>10:00-12:00 Food Pantry set up 3:00-6:00 Food Pantry servers</p> <p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p>
<p>9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship</p> <p><b>11</b></p>	<p>6:00pm Meditation</p> <p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>13</b></p>	<p>6:00 Choir Rehearsal 7-8pm New Youth Project 7:00 Worship Service 7:30 Bible Study</p> <p><b>14</b></p>	<p><b>7:00 Life Improvement class</b> <b>15</b></p>	<p>10:00-12:00 Food Pantry set up 3:00-6:00 Food Pantry servers</p> <p><b>16</b></p>	<p><b>17</b></p>
<p>9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship</p> <p><b>18</b></p>	<p>6:00pm Meditation <b>MLK Parade</b></p> <p><b>19</b></p>	<p><b>7:00 Identity Discussion</b> <b>20</b></p>	<p>6:00 Choir Rehearsal 7-8pm New Youth Project 7:00 Worship Service 7:30 Bible Study</p> <p><b>21</b></p>	<p><b>7:00 Life Improvement class</b> <b>22</b></p>	<p>10:00-12:00 Food Pantry set up 3:00-6:00 Food Pantry servers</p> <p><b>23</b></p>	<p><b>24</b></p>
<p>9:30 Choir Rehearsal 9:30 Sunday School 10:45 Worship</p> <p><b>25</b></p>	<p>6:00pm Meditation</p> <p><b>26</b></p>	<p><b>7:00 Identity Discussion</b> <b>27</b></p>	<p>6:00 Choir Rehearsal 7-8pm New Youth Project 7:00 Worship Service 7:30 Bible Study</p> <p><b>28</b></p>	<p><b>7:00 Life Improvement class</b> <b>29</b></p>	<p>10:00-12:00 Food Pantry set up 3:00-6:00 Food Pantry servers</p> <p><b>30</b></p>	<p><b>31</b></p>

**NOW  
IS A GREAT TIME  
TO JOIN A MINISTRY**

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

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