

# The Common Thread

A monthly publication of Church of the Open Arms, UCC

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June 1, 2011

## MINISTER'S ROUNDTABLE

June is "Pride Month." I always groan inside when our congregation gets labeled as a "gay church." No matter what people say, we know that we are a diverse group of people committed to justice-seeking in the Way of Jesus. Many of us happen to be gay, lesbian, transgender, or bisexual, but many of us are heterosexual. Some of us are children who have not even discovered those sexual orientation labels yet. I have heard several people say that our congregation is the only one in Oklahoma City where sexual orientation is not an issue. It certainly does not define who we are. Nevertheless, June brings all the busy activities surrounding the Gay Pride Parade in our city, and it's an important time in our church.

Since pride is often associated with arrogance and sin, it is important to reflect on the reasons we celebrate *Gay Pride*. For people who identify with historically marginalized or shunned groups (like LGBT persons), self-loathing, shame, and depression can be pervasive problems. Shame may be the opposite of pride. Some people say that shame is when you not only feel guilty for making a mistake, you actually feel as if *YOU ARE A MISTAKE*. When we celebrate Gay Pride we are finding the courage to stand with dignity and claim a place in the sun as persons of sacred worth and value. We are not better than anyone else, but we are not less than anyone else either.

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross wrote: "The ultimate lesson all of us have to learn is *unconditional love*, which includes not only others but ourselves as well."

Pride is about loving ourselves and continuing the work of rooting out the seeds of internalized homophobia and heterosexism within ourselves, whether we are gay or straight. Have a safe, healthy, fun-filled Pride month!

Out and Proud,  
Kathy McCallie

***Whoever you are,  
where ever you are on life's journey,  
you are welcome here!***



# Pride Month



## !!THE CARNIVAL!!

This year Church of the Open Arms will be hosting a Carnival for kids of all ages. This is a fantastic opportunity for us, as a community of faith, to share our extravagant welcome to our community and neighborhood. The carnival will be held on Saturday June 25, 2011 on the new church parking lot. There will be a moonwalk, obstacle course, mountain climb, slide, and a dunk tank. We will also offer cold drinks, popcorn, snow cones and cotton candy.

The Carnival, as planned, is a significant endeavor and will take our entire church to make happen. In the coming weeks, be looking for sign-up sheets and other ways for you to indicate your willingness to get involved. The New Growth team is heading up the carnival and any greeter will be able to keep you up-to-date on what's happening and what help is needed. This is an excellent opportunity for us to show the love and welcome of Jesus, that we all experience on a regular basis, to our community and neighbors. Even if you are not actually able to "work" an attraction, you are needed to extend our extravagant welcome to all.

Please keep the Carnival and those who are organizing it in your prayers, as we strive to be the people and church that we have been called by Christ to be!

## !!THE PARADE FLOAT!!

This year's Pride festival and parade theme is "Powered by Pride," so we're working on the design and logistics of creating the church's float. There's a lot planned for this year's festival, and there will be a lot of volunteers needed for other activities the Saturday before the parade this year. If we can find a place close to the church to store the float, then we'll be able to make and decorate it the weekend before the festival. The parade is on June 26<sup>th</sup>, so we're hoping to work on the float the weekend of June 18-19. Announcements will be made at church to let everyone know when and where we'll be working on the float. It's always a fun and creative project. **Jeff Fuller** is coordinating the float activities this year, so you can call him at 514-3154 if you want more details. If you'd like a reminder call so you don't miss out on the fun, please call Jeff to give him your number. Also, if you have or know of a covered location we can store the float, please call in case we haven't found one yet. Thanks!

## !!THE ICE CREAM SOCIAL!!

Please help the **Community Life Team** sponsor our church's annual "after-the-parade" ice cream social, to be held Sunday evening, June 26 from 6:30 -8:30pm (Parade step-off is at 6pm).

You can (1) bring ice cream and/or toppings to the church on Sunday, June 26, and get them into the freezer/refrigerator, (2) volunteer to set up, decorate, service and socialize during the Social, or (3) help clean up afterwards.

Sign-up sheets will be in the church lobby until Pride Weekend, or contact me, **Debbie Hall**, at [DH LovesYou@gmail.com](mailto:DH LovesYou@gmail.com) or 923-5639. Thank You!

## !!!THE FESTIVAL BOOTH!!!

**The New Growth Team** will have a booth for the Pride Festival.

We will be there: Friday, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 5:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. & Saturday, the 25<sup>th</sup> 10:00 a.m. to 9:30ish p.m.

If you are able to volunteer, please inform either **Gene Wiedemann** at [genall@hughes.net](mailto:genall@hughes.net) or **Scott Hamilton** at [SJHBrooklyn@gmail.com](mailto:SJHBrooklyn@gmail.com)

Come show your pride in COA by letting others know about us. We can use all the help we can get!



## CALLING ALL INSTRUMENTALISTS!!



I know it's early to be thinking about Christmas music; however, I happen to be doing just that. I'm also encouraging any instrumentalists (as well as singers) to begin thinking about joining us for that music. I'm hoping to find flutes, oboes, clarinets, horns, saxophones, strings and additional percussion, any or all of the above to help us with our Christmas cantata this year. If you've ever played an instrument and you'd like to pull it back out, or if you are just thinking about pulling it back out, please talk to Conna or me. I like to start these things early so there's plenty of time to make sure everyone is comfortable before we ever sing or play it in front of people.

We try to keep things simple, comfortable and fun. The choir and the instrumentalists have such a great time together and I would just love to add more instruments to our troupe to really help fill out the sound and make it even more stirring. So please, think about it, pray about it, and talk to some of us. WE NEED YOU!!! Not only that, WE WANT YOU!!!

As an instrumentalist, the cantata would actually be a short-term commitment and there wouldn't be a large number of rehearsals for the instrumentalists, so consider what a great opportunity it will be to brush up on something that could bring back great memories and produce lots of fun, new memories as well.

Daniel Willsey

### BUILDING CLEAN-UP DAY

Saturday, June 4<sup>th</sup> from 8:00a.m.-1:00p.m. the **Building Team** needs volunteers for a Church Clean-Up Day. We will paint the exterior doors and trim, spruce up the yard, and complete a few light clean-up projects inside. We need workers to come roll up their sleeves and help out for a few hours. Come make new friends and contribute to the mission of the church.

### DISABILITY PARKING SPACES

The police can ticket in our parking lot, so don't park in our new disability/ handicap spaces unless you have the correct permit displayed in your car window. Help extend a warm, caring welcome by parking farther away and leaving the spaces near the door if you are blessed with the good ability to walk a ways!



### RACHEL RETTINGER AND MINISTRY WITH YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Rachel Rettinger has accepted a new, full-time job that requires lots of out-of-state travel. Therefore, she has resigned from her staff position at the church. She plans to stay involved as a volunteer when she is in OKC. Our Staff/Leadership team will be working to fill that position, but we are expanding the position to include support for the Godly Play ministry. The title of the position will be: *Director of Christian Education*, and will still include ministry with teens and young adults. **We are grateful to Rachel** for her wonderful work and care among our community!

### BULLETPROOF FAITH: A Spiritual Survival Guide for Gay and Lesbian Christians By: Candace Chellew-Hodge

Many of us in the LGBTQ community have experienced the pain that is caused by hate speech directed at us. For me, at times it is so debilitating that it literally knocks the breath out of me. In her book *Bulletproof Faith*, Candace Chellew-Hodge "offers a blueprint for becoming bulletproof--able to deflect the bullets fired from loaded Bibles or the biased missives of misguided, and often professionally discredited, psychologists." This book outlines a faithful and loving response to the painful messages and attacks directed at the LGBTQ community while also preserving the dignity of all involved.



Beginning on Wednesday, 6 July 2011, at 7:30 p.m., Anna Holloway and I will be leading a 9 week study of this empowering book. The study will not only speak to those of us in the LGBTQ community, but we hope will also provide valuable insight and direction for LGBTQ and our allies.

Everyone is welcome to experience this opportunity to explore faith and interaction. Contact the church office if you are interested so we can get a count of those who are attending in order to obtain books.

If you have any questions, Anna or I will be happy to answer them for you.

—Mike DeArmond

# June, 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 10:45 Worship 12:00 Monthly Potluck 12-1:30 Youth Group	6 10:30 AM Sr. Rink Coffee	7 7PM Beginning Tai Chi/Meditation	8 6PM Choir Rehearsal 7PM Spanish Class 7-7:30 PM Chapel Service 7:30PM Mary Daly Group	9 1:45 Food Pantry drop-off 7PM—World Religions Class	10 10AM Food Pantry set-up 3:00 - 6:00 Food Pantry Servers	11 8am—1pm Building Clean-up Day
12 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 10:45 Worship 12-1:30 Youth Group	13 10:30 AM Sr. Rink Coffee	14 7PM Beginning Tai Chi/Meditation	15 6PM Choir Rehearsal 7PM Spanish Class 7-7:30 PM Chapel Service 7:30PM Mary Daly Group	16 1:45 Food Pantry drop-off 7PM—World Religions Class	17 10AM Food Pantry set-up 3:00 - 6:00 Food Pantry Servers	18
19 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 10:45 Worship 12-1:30 Youth Group 2PM Leadership Council Meeting	20	21 7PM Beginning Tai Chi/Meditation	22 6PM Choir Rehearsal 7PM Spanish Class 7-7:30 PM Chapel Service 7:30PM Mary Daly Group	23 1:45 Food Pantry drop-off 7PM—World Religions Class	24 10AM Food Pantry set-up 3:00 - 6:00 Food Pantry Servers	25  <b>CARNIVAL!!</b> 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
26 9:30 Choir Rehearsal 10:45 Worship 12-1:30 Youth Group 6:30 p.m.— <i>Ice Cream Social</i> 	27 10:30AM Sr. Rink Coffee	28 7PM Beginning Tai Chi/Meditation	29 6PM Choir Rehearsal 7PM Spanish Class 7-7:30 PM Chapel Service 7:30PM Mary Daly Group	30 1:45 Food Pantry drop-off 7PM—World Religions Class		

Full-moon drumming to be held at the Peace Education Institute Friday, June 17—7:30 p.m.

## A Call for Peace Action from UCC

By Nathaniel Batchelder for the **Social Justice Committee**

In 1985, the UCC declared itself to be a Just Peace Church. This placed the UCC General Synod in “opposition to the institution of war.”

One of the most pressing issues facing our nation is the war in Afghanistan, which continues to cost far too many lives and huge sums of money. President Obama has committed to beginning a redeployment of troops from Afghanistan in July; however, it is likely that many in Congress and in the Administration will seek to delay this timeline. It is often seen as more symbolic than real.

The UCC asks congregations and churches to act in support of a bill introduced this year, H.R. 1735, entitled “The Afghanistan Exit and Accountability Act.” We are asking members of Congress to support and cosponsor H.R. 1735.

Authored by Reps. Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Walter Jones (R-NC), the bill supports the President’s proposed timeline to begin redeployment. H.R. 1735 currently has 35 co-sponsors (!) and calls upon the President to present an exit strategy and submit regular reports to Congress on the human and financial costs associated with both continuing missions and redeployment.

Please write to US Representative James Lankford, US House of Representatives, Washington, DC, 20515 (same address for any US Representative). Oklahoma's five US Reps are John Sullivan (Tulsa), Dan Boren (Muskogee), Frank Lucas (western OK), Tom Cole (Norman and south), and James Lankford (OKC).

Your letters will help bring the troops home.

### World Religions Class

Eight Thursday nights in June and July, an intergenerational group will meet to learn more about different religious traditions. The group will study Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. We will go on field trips to visit houses of worship related to each tradition. The gatherings will begin at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Each week we will read sacred texts or scriptures, contemplate questions, and increase our appreciation for the diversity of thought and practice that makes faith mysterious and intriguing. Children age ten and older, all teenagers, and adults of all ages are encouraged to sign up and participate in the group.

### **Dear Friends and Fellow Congregants:**

As many of you already know, I co-chair the **Peace and Justice Team** with Conna Wilkinson. One of **the Peace and Justice Team’s** goals for 2011 was to have at least four **Stuff Exchange** events, one per season. In theory this certainly seemed feasible. However, in practice the Stuff Exchange has turned out to be too large a project for just one person, or even two or three people, to tackle and may have to be abandoned entirely. The reason we began the Stuff Exchange Event was to combat the vicious cycle of consumerism and waste, and I believe it is a good idea... maybe even a great idea. But without the help of volunteers, the Stuff Exchange cannot continue. We need about ten dedicated volunteers for each Stuff Exchange Event to help collect, unpack, repack and then donate any leftover stuff. Please see either Conna or me if you are interested in volunteering and helping to continue the Stuff Exchange.

**Angele Fahey**

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**CHURCH BUILDING  
CLEAN-UP DAY**  
Saturday, June 4,  
8 a.m.—1 p.m.

The graphic features a light blue background with a purple border. On the left, there is a black silhouette of a church building with a paintbrush icon. Below it, a person is shown mopping the floor. On the right, there is a paintbrush icon with paint splatters.

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