

The Common Thread

A monthly publication of Church of the Open Arms, UCC

Volume 14, Issue 9

September 1, 2010

MINISTER'S ROUNDTABLE

When you receive this letter I will probably be in Israel. As I write this before leaving on my trip, it seems unbelievable to think I'll be actually going. I will be gone the last two weeks of August and then one more week while I rest up on vacation back in the U.S. Visiting Jerusalem is like a dream come true. No words can express my gratitude for this opportunity. I am going with a passion for learning and bringing back all the insight and discovery I can share.

I was invited to go on this trip because of a connection that I made at our UCC general synod last summer. I am going with an organization called Christians for Fair Witness. We will be a group of twelve UCC pastors plus our trip leader. You can learn more about the organization sponsoring the trip at: www.christianfairwitness.com.

As stated in their mission: "Christians for Fair Witness on the Middle East advocates among mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics in North America for fairness in the churches' witness on issues related to the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors."

The conflict in the Middle East between Israelis and Palestinians is complex and heart-wrenching. I hope to be able to bring back to our community new awareness about the problems and potential paths to peace. No doubt the trip will enhance my understanding of the biblical stories and my faith. Special thanks to church leaders and guest preachers who are making it possible for me to be away. Please pray for me on these travels.

Sincerely,

Kathy McCallie

**ANNUAL FALL BEAUTIFICATION and MAINTENANCE
EVENT! SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 9:00am - 2:00pm**

CHOIR RETREAT—SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

Education Team Meeting Sunday, September 12

A brief Education Team meeting will be held on Sept. 12 right after church. We will need to finish by 1 p.m. due to another meeting, so come quickly and we'll get away fast. Light, healthy snacks will be provided so no one will faint before they can get to lunch. If you are teaching a class, would like to teach a class, are already involved with the Education Department or would like to be, please come and join us!

See you there! Donna Compton

Full-moon drumming to
be held at the
Peace Education Institute
on Friday, September 24
Vegetarian potluck at
6:30 p.m.
Drumming at 7:30 p.m.

ANNUAL FALL BEAUTIFICATION & MAINTENANCE EVENT!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 — 9:00am - 2:00pm

It is time to spend some quality time with our church facility. All are invited to join the **Building Team** as we attend to our building and grounds. No special skills are required.

Annual maintenance tasks as well as general area cleanup and preparedness for the upcoming season are planned. This is the perfect opportunity for the curious to find out what the **Building Team** is all about. If you are aware of something that needs attending, please consider participating on Saturday and making that your special project for the day. Ron Bashant, Carol Fasol, Denise Chadwick, Mike DeArmond are **Building Team** members who will be present on Saturday to assist you with any tasks that you may have in mind. The day should be a fun time with noticeable results!!!!

The **Building Team** is going to be exciting and busy in the coming months as Capital Campaign projects get underway. The new sanctuary seating has been ordered and is scheduled for production! Thank you, Mindy, for your leadership! Our team will be an active part of this major sanctuary improvement, which will include repair and repainting of the sanctuary ceiling! We will be forwarding updates as they arrive. Plan now to be a part of the removal of our old and installation of our new sanctuary seating!!

Architectural conceptual drawings have been approved for the elevator and basement renovation. Drawings are now being prepared so that the contractor bidding process can commence. Thank you to Ron and the **New Construction Team**!

Network and Resource Directory Coming Soon!

Work continues on the Resource Directory and we hope to go to the printer soon.

Please expect a call from Katie or a volunteer from the church office as they work to confirm and expand the information you provided. Please help them include as much as you can about yourselves and your families--what are your hobbies, what you do with your time.

If you have NOT filled out an information sheet there is still time to do so. The sheets are at the church, in the office.

Please help us make sure you are included.

This is a very exciting project for New Growth and for our church as we continue to grow as a family and as a community.

DON'T MISS BEING INCLUDED!

Any questions, call Mark Van Dorn, Fran Kozz, or Marie Kizzia

Finance Team Brainstorming New Ideas

Pancake Breakfast? Spaghetti Dinner?
Woodstock-style Music Festival?
Turkey Bingo? Big-screen TV raffle?

These were some of the ideas discussed at the last Finance Team meeting. What ideas do you have? We'd really love to hear **your** idea—especially ideas that will build up our church and its members. Our church needs lots of support. We are the ones to provide it.

You are invited to join us **September 9th at 5:00 pm** at the church for a discussion about how we can all pull together to grow and strengthen our church.

Call Jim Stovall for more information at 204-0811.

New Group Starting Wednesday Nights at Open Arms

You are invited to be part of a new group beginning on Wednesday, September 22nd at 7:00 p.m. The group will be a time for people to come together, pray together and study together about what we believe. The basic format each week will include conversation around a 20-minute video segment and guided discussion around the relevance of Jesus Christ for today.

This event will occur in a relaxed setting, with a time for reflection and fellowship.

We invite you to join us for this new activity and bring a friend.

Call Jim for more information.

ENGAGE: Exploring Nonviolent Living

A serious, 12-week study in nonviolence that looks deeply at the power of nonviolence in social change and in our daily lives.

The goals of the **Engage** program are:

- To explore and experiment with nonviolence as a way of life;
- To examine our current beliefs and practices with regard to violence and nonviolence;
- To obtain practical skills for responding to violence;
- To connect with a community of people which supports, encourages, and challenges our practices of nonviolence; and
- To take nonviolence action together as a group.

During this journey, we will look at personal situations of violence that we face in our daily lives & the structural violence that exists in our community & world. During the last part of the program, we will look at the possibility of planning & implementing a non-violent action to promote a needed social change of our choosing.

The cost of joining this study is \$75 per person, which can be paid on a weekly basis if needed. This will cover snacks and materials.

The **Engage** study group will run 12 Thursday evenings, beginning September 2 and ending on November 18. Each session is 2½ hours, beginning at 6:00 p.m.

The recommended size of the group is 8 to 12. You can register by calling Conna (Peace Education Institute) at 204-6479, or email phwebmail@cox.net.

The choir has had a very interesting summer. Working around vacations and illness and all of the summer interruptions, I think we've been very successful filling in where needed and still preparing new work as much as possible. It brings my heart great joy when our group is all together and we work, play and laugh while creating beautiful music, which is such a great gift from God.

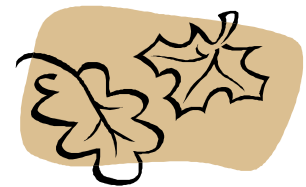
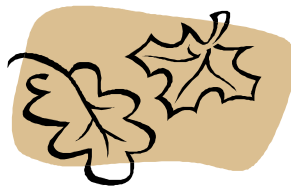
If you've been curious about what we do, and maybe want to give your vocal wings a try, I would encourage you to reach out to anyone in the group and to attend a rehearsal or two and see what you think.

September 25th is an excellent opportunity to try us out. We are having an all day retreat at Conna's place. We'll learn some new music, we'll eat, we'll play, have possibly a little one-on-one for anyone who would like some individual coaching. But the focus is as always to have fun, while serving God, do our best, (which doesn't mean we have to be the Mormon Tabernacle Choir) and learn a little something while we're at it. I'm hoping each choir member and anyone interested in learning a little about the choir will be there. You don't have to come the entire day (although it helps). If you've got plans work us in around what you have going on. But the more people there, the more fun we'll have.

Daniel Willsey

Fall Retreat Oct. 15th-17th

Nature Deficit Disorder is when the lack of time out in nature weakens your joy of life, spiritual zest, and mental health. In our busy society it is a challenge to take enough time to rest, play, and renew ourselves and our relationships. That is why our church retreat is an essential part of our programming. Come out on Friday night and spend about 40 hours (that biblical number!) without getting in a car. You will be surprised what it can do for your relationships with friends and family and with God. The woods are beautiful at the camp. The meals are cooked for us. There are walking trails, canoes, a campfire, a hayride, crafts, bible study, meditation time, and inspiring story-telling. The adventure begins at 7:30 p.m. on Friday night, Oct. 15th and ends at 11:30 a.m. on Sunday, Oct. 17th. Some of us will come back for church on Sunday morning at Open Arms, and others will stay out at camp and enjoy an out-door worship experience there. The cost is \$80 per adult. All children and youth are covered by scholarship money. There is additional money to help with scholarships for adults. Please pay what you can, but most importantly, please come! Fill out a registration form or call the church office (405) 525-9555 to get your place reserved for the retreat.



Nicaragua Mission

Kathy McCallie will be leading a mission team to Nicaragua to promote the scholarship program, develop partnership with friends in Nicaragua, and foster discipleship Dec. 27, 2010-Jan 2, 2011. WE plan to have a group of approximately 10-12 people travel to Nicaragua, make friends, grow in wisdom and grace, come back willing to promote the scholarship program and build partnership with friends in Nicaragua.

We will fly from OKC to Managua on Monday, December 27th – return Sunday, January 2nd. The cost will be approximately \$1,300 per person. That is a lot of money, but don't assume you can't go just because of the finances. If you are interested, talk to Kathy about possibilities for fundraising for the trip. A commitment to go and a non-refundable deposit of

GUIDED MEDITATION CLASS

Every Tuesday and Thursday evening from 7pm - 8pm, beginning on September 21, Stephen Dillard-Carroll will be facilitating a class in guided meditation. Many people would like to practice meditation but don't know how. Stephen will facilitate that learning through each of the classes. This will be a free class to anyone that is interested, but there will be an opportunity at each class to make a donation.

In each class we tackle a topic and through gentle guided general meditation we would connect to spirit. We would then take the lessons learned through spirit and apply it to our everyday lives. These would be stand alone classes. Participants would not have to commit to any length of time beyond the hour they are in class. Here is a description of a typical class:

The first day of class, September 21, 2010, is the U.N. International Day of Peace. So the focus for our discussion and meditation is peace. Participants will sit in a circle and for the first 20 minutes of class we will discuss what peace means to us. How can we achieve peace? What can we do in our communities, state, region, country and world to promote peace? We will have a chalkboard or an easel with paper and marker to jot down the various ideas we as a class brainstorm to develop. After we have exhausted all ideas on brass tacks ways we can achieve peace, the meditation will begin.

It's important to note that regardless of their spiritual background these meditations can be useful. These meditations are "dogma free". It's set up that way so that anyone can use them in their everyday life. The leader will light a candle in the middle of the circle, lower the lights, and through various muscle and mind relaxation techniques get the class into a state where communication with spirit can begin. Once connection with spirit has happened, the leader will guide them through the various points of peace we discussed in the class and ask them to relay that information to spirit along with the commitment to spirit to use those points of peace in their everyday lives. Then there will be silence for a moment to let free communication between the participants and spirit happen. After the moment has passed, the leader will slowly bring them out of the meditative state and back to the present. From start to finish the meditation portion will be at maximum 20 minutes. Then the leader will bring up the lights and for the last 20 minutes facilitate sharing. What did we get from the meditation? What did we get from the class? How will those lessons learned help us in our everyday lives? As the class is sharing, the leader will pass around the donation bowl. If you can give, fantastic. If not, I still hope to see them in class the next time. We close the class by having everyone hold hands and sharing a benediction prayer. For more information call the church office.

A NEW LOOK AT THE FOOD PANTRY

The Food Pantry at Church of the Open Arms offers food to people whose income falls below the economic guidelines established by the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma City.

What may not be so apparent is the fact that we also offer a wide variety of resource material to help our clients economically & socially. Laura Choate, volunteer leader of the food pantry, attends local meetings to learn what resources are available, including location of other food pantries, help with utilities & medical care.

There is also the opportunity for the volunteers to become acquainted with the unique needs of each patron. One patron, who has since become a volunteer with the food pantry, talked about her problem with diabetes with Laura, who is very familiar with that condition, and helped educate her about proper nutrition, encouraging her to change doctors. Her diabetes is now under control and she feels much better. This patron credits Laura with "saving her life".

You, too, can help someone in need by donating or volunteering at the food pantry.

News From OSC Training

Eight members of Open Arms committed nearly 20 hours of their time on August 12-14 to attend a leadership development training presented by the Oklahoma Sponsoring Committee (OSC). These members include the co-chairs Nathaniel Batchelder, Jim Stovall, and Linda Manaugh; Kathy McCallie, Lisa Ward, Debbie Hall, Beverly Wood, and Trish Forsyth. We were trained by several highly-skilled, well-read and knowledgeable organizers from Baton Rouge, Los Angeles, and South Texas. We learned and practiced the skills needed to identify and recruit leaders, to identify and understand the power brokers in our community, and to identify ways to approach those in power with our agendas of concerns for families and how we can work together to make our community a better place for those families.

The OSC coordinates and supports the work of the core teams within its member organizations. Currently, there are 23 churches who are members with several more looking for membership. The primary mission for the OSC and its nationwide affiliate, Industrial Area Foundation, is to work with other institutions, including public schools and civic groups, to learn to use the democratic process effectively so that families can have a voice in what happens in their neighborhoods, schools, and the greater community.

To this end, we will continue our process of listening to the stories of individual members, hearing their concerns and passions, and identifying leaders among us. This is a process that takes time but has the potential to affect critical change.

CONGRATULATIONS TO
CHURCH OF THE OPEN ARMS MEMBERS,
DORIS AND ORRA COMPTON,
MARRIED 70 YEARS AGO ON
SEPTEMBER 29, 1940



Report on Godly Play Training

Dear Donna, Kathy, and Open Arms Family-

Sorry for taking so long to send an update for the Godly Play training. Thank you for approving the funds for Steve and I to attend. The teachers were encouraging and helpful and the students were all eager to participate. It was one of the most peaceful groups I have been surrounded by in a long time. We learned many things and we will be discussing them over the next few months to see what changes we can make to improve the experience the kids have. Here is a summary of the things we learned:

The Structure of Godly Play

The types of stories break down into:

Sacred Stories - The flood, Creation and others

Liturgical Action Stories - Christmas, Easter and stories unique to our UCC traditions

Parables - Stories that Jesus told

These Stories are effective because:

Children already know about God and these stories allow that knowledge to come out (as opposed to be used to shape their understanding based on our understanding)

We don't only learn about God from a book. We need to use our senses and a sense of discovery.

Children know stories

Children know play

There are many mysteries and our work is to reflect that mystery to them, but do not try to explain it.

These stories center around our faith

Customizing Godly Play

The UCC has a strong history of being called into action. These stories and tenants they are based on should be available to our children as part of their time in Godly Play.

Other Items of Interest

Overall, we are running our Godly Play room in line with what the trainers discussed. There were lots of ideas for changes to the room to make it better meet the needs of the children. None are critical and we may be implementing some of these over time. There are churches that provide Godly Play to 3-4 year olds in one room, with only 6-8 stories and a limited set of art supplies. Using IKEA furniture, a room can be mostly furnished for around \$200.

Thank you again for allowing us to take advantage of this opportunity,
Robert

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**COMING SOON ...David Rovics Folk Concert
Friday, November 19**

Traveling troubadour David Rovics will give a concert at Church of the Open Arms as part of his 2010 national tour. In the tradition of Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, & Phil Ochs, David is a singing “peace poet” who is “an excellent antidote to the pervading feeling of gloom felt by so many”, said one review.

This concert is being brought to us by friends of the church, Jim Hughes and Joanne Levine, who say our sanctuary is the perfect place for David to perform.

MORE INFO IN OCTOBER NEWSLETTER!

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