

The Common Thread

A monthly publication of Church of the Open Arms, UCC

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November 1, 2008

MINISTER'S ROUNDTABLE

We are blessed at Church of the Open Arms to have an amazing number of brilliant members and friends. One of the people I admire most is Conna Wilkinson. Not only does Conna have a gift for making music and helping others share music, she is also a genius at organizing great efforts for peace and justice in the world. Conna is one of the people who first helped me learn about the effort to promote nonviolent communications training. This training is a manifestation of the profound and faithful spirituality that Conna has herself. I want to be more like her, and nonviolent communications training can help me do that.

Over a year ago, we had a great staff member named Brenda who taught a class on Nonviolent Communications here at our church. I attended part of the class, and studied the materials carefully because I am convinced that this approach can dramatically improve relationships in families, friendships, and all organizations as well as international relations. Conna keeps our community informed about opportunities like that through the Peace Education Institute and the Peace House where she works with Nathaniel Batchelder. Although Conna is not organizing or teaching in this class herself, it was her work with the Peace Education Institute that hooked me up with the information about this class. Check out this invitation to join the class:

OKLAHOMA OFFERING A TRAINING CLASS

Nonviolent Communications Class

8 Two-hour Weekly Classes (7:00 PM to 9:00 PM)

Beginning Mon., November 3, 2008; Ending Mon. December 15

PLUS 4 half-hour Private Coaching Sessions

PLUS One hour per Week Practice Session Outside of Class

Class Size Limited

Details & Registration

Contact: TLMsolutions@aol.com 405-823-7801

Detail and registration forms available at www.peaceeducationinstitute.org under the NVC tab.

We love you, Conna! Thanks for sharing the beautiful spirit you have developed through the spiritual journey of your life. We need and appreciate your wisdom and teaching.

Still Learning,
Kathy McCallie

Fall Retreat Dates
November 7th, 8th, and 9th

WORLD AIDS DAY DECEMBER 1, 2008

Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise.

“Every 15 seconds someone in the world dies of AIDS-related illnesses, most often because of a lack of medicine. The hope that we now have in medicines that can offer a nearly normal life to people living with HIV makes only more tragic the fact that many continue to die. We have the scientific means to stop much of the dying from AIDS-related illnesses, but we lack the will to do it. This is a spiritual problem—not of those who contracted the disease, but of churches and societies. It is a problem that can be solved by LEADERSHIP. Leadership from you and me, from our churches and our politicians.”

Rev. Loyce Newton-Edwards

Justice and Witness Ministries- The United Church of Christ Barbara T. Baylor, MPH, CHES, Minister for Health Care Justice

What a joy it was to visit with Ms. Baylor at the recent KOCUUC Annual Conference Meeting, October 2nd-5th, 2008 in Wichita, KS. During our time together at the Justice and Witness Meeting, while making a presentation on UNNATURAL CAUSES to the commission, I discovered that Ms. Baylor and the UCC have already endorsed this powerful public health documentary. In mid 2009, Ms. Baylor is looking forward to training UCC Health Care Justice Advocates, aka “Crusaders For Justice,” to get the word out about this documentary. “Baylor has served the national offices of the UCC for 10 years in her current position. She assists the UCC in all its settings to understand health in a holistic way, and to encourage an understanding of health as an issue of social and economic justice. She is the immediate past president of the American Public Health Association’s Caucus on Public Health and the Faith Community.” I am the chair of the new KOCUCC Justice and Witness Commissions Health Care Justice Committee.
Rev. Loyce

Fall Retreat!

Its not too late to make plans to attend the Fall Retreat. The orange flyer included in this newsletter has all the info. Even if you just come out for part of the time, you will make new friends, get renewed, and enjoy the beauty of the fall colors. The hayride and campfire Saturday night are always a highlight. Remember, we have ample scholarship money, so pay what you can (or let others ease the burden completely!) and come join the fun and inspiration.

Christmas Parties begin

Friday, December 5th our congregation will have a church cookie sharing, decorating, game- playing, party from 7:00-9:00 p.m. All are welcome. Please bring a favorite holiday snack to share. Come ready to trim the tree and hang garland, sing carols, laugh, and start getting in the mood for celebration.

ALL Church Meeting

Monday, November 24, at 7:00 p.m., our church leadership council will hold our most important meeting of the year. Our November meeting is a time when we urge all church members to come vote on the officers and budget for the upcoming year. We will review the accomplishments and events of the past year as well. All our monthly meetings are always open to anyone who is interested, but the November meeting is especially important and interesting. There will be no Leadership Council meeting in December, so this will be the final meeting of 2008. Our president in 2008, Melinda Norton, has done an outstanding job of leading us this year. Despite many personal losses and challenges, she has been a diligent and inspiring council leader. Many thanks to Melinda!



“UNNATURAL CAUSES

...is inequality making us sick?”

“Of all the forms of inequality, health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

PLEASE JOIN US!

Church of the Open Arms United Church of Christ

The Rev. Dr. Kathy McCallie, Sr. Pastor

3131 N. Pennsylvania OKC, OK 73120 405 525-9555

Town Hall Meetings: 7 Consecutives Sundays 4-6 pm

COMMUNITY PARTNERS: OK STATE DEPT. OF HEALTH & OK TURNING POINT COUNCIL

“This growing ‘health equity’ movement is reframing our national debate over health, focusing attention on the underlying social and economic conditions that render a zip code and household wealth even stronger predictors of health outcomes than personal behaviors, germs or genes.” www.unnaturalcauses.org

Episode One: IN SICKNESS AND IN WEALTH October 26th, 2008
The opening episode lays out the big picture: who gets sick and why? Set in Louisville, Kentucky, it shows how health and longevity are correlated with class status, how racism imposes an additional risk burden, and how solutions lie in making inequality an urgent public policy matter.

Episode Two: WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS November 2nd, 2008
African American infant mortality rates remain twice as high as for white Americans. African American mothers with graduate degrees deliver more low birth-weight babies than white women who haven’t finished high school. How might the chronic stress of racism over the life-course become embedded in our bodies and increase risks?

Episode Three: BECOMING AMERICAN November 9th, 2008
Recent Mexican immigrants, though often poorer, tend to be healthier than the average American. But the longer they’re here, the worse their relative health becomes. How do social inclusion, community ties and economic mobility play a role in maintaining health?

For more Info: www.openarms.org or call Rev. Loyce Newton Edwards 642-0124

Episode Four:

BAD SUGAR

November 16th, 2008

O'odham Indians living on reservations in southern Arizona, have perhaps the highest rates of Type 2 diabetes in the world. Increasingly, researchers are reconceptualizing chronic diseases like diabetes as a bodily response to poverty, oppression and futurelessness. A new approach suggests that regaining control over a collective future is vital to reversing this epidemic.

Episode Five:

PLACE MATTERS

November 23rd, 2008

Why are your zip code and street address such a good predictor of population health? What policies and investment decisions create radically different living environments-some that are harmful and others that are protective of health? What actions can make a difference, particularly in low-income communities?

Episode Six:

COLLATERAL DAMAGE

NOVEMBER 30TH, 2008

In the Marshall Islands, local populations have been displaced from a traditional way of life by the American military presence. Now that both their social and immune systems have been eroded, they contend with the worst of the "developing" and industrialized worlds: infectious diseases such as tuberculosis due to crowded living conditions and extreme poverty and chronic disease stemming from the stress of dislocation and loss.

Episode Seven:

NOT JUST A PAYCHECK

DECEMBER 7TH, 2008

How do unemployment and job insecurity affect health? Residents of western Michigan struggle against depression, domestic violence, and heart disease after the largest refrigerator factory in the country shuts down. Ironically, the plant is owned by a company in Sweden, where mass layoffs-far from devastating lives-are relatively benign, because of government policies that protect workers.

www.unnaturalcauses.org

a four-hour
documentary
series
exploring
America's
racial and
socioeconomic
inequities
in health

UNNATURAL CAUSES
...is inequality making us sick?

PBS

Produced by California Newsreel with Vital Pictures. Presented by the National Minority Consortia of public television. Outreach with the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute. www.unnaturalcauses.org. DVD available at www.newsreel.org.

K-O Annual Meeting

The churches in Kansas and Oklahoma that belong to our denomination, The United Church of Christ (UCC), have an annual conference meeting each fall. Our meeting this year was in Wichita on Oct 2nd-4th. There were ten members from Church of the Open Arms who attended, including four clergy: Kathy McCallie, Loyce Newton Edwards, Jim Stovall, and Suzanne Nichols. We were well represented. The annual conference is a time to elect officers and pass a budget for the conference work as well as setting goals for our shared mission. Kathy McCallie is serving this year as the president of the conference, so she presided over the meeting in Wichita.

Each year resolutions are proposed and studied related to issues of justice and our witness in the community. This year a resolution was passed urging all our churches to continue the “sacred conversations on race” that began last spring. The issue of racial harmony and racial justice is high on our list of priorities. Another resolution was passed proclaiming our opposition to a unilateral, pre-emptive war against Iran and encouraging diplomatic engagements and negotiations instead of military intervention. A third resolution was passed that we would research and study the ethical issues of eugenics. Lots of us had to do some research just to understand exactly what eugenics is anyway! Eugenics was used in the recent past to attempt to breed “undesireable” traits out of the human race. It was an attempt to support the birth of “desirable hereditary stock.” The history of that movement in the past is important because we now have more and more ability because of bioengineering, to make decisions that we could not make in the past. This has consequences for how people of color, the mentally ill, and GLBT people are viewed and treated. We will all learn a great deal about this complex issue in future years.

The UCC is taking the lead in various social issues. Anyone who wants to learn more about these resolutions can contact our church office (405) 525-9555 to request more information. The annual meeting was a time to connect with friends in other UCC churches, learn about new ideas and programs, and share our love for our own congregation with others.

Food Pantry

Open Arms has a wonderful food ministry! Last week I went by the Food Pantry just before they opened. The shelves were stocked and Cheryl Berry was waiting for the right timing to put out additional refrigerated food. Kent Norris was ready to keep the shelves stocked. Boxes and sacks were ready to be filled. Laura Choate had ordered enough food for 100 families. The volunteers were ready to check in the customers and there were already 65 families signed up. And yet there was still a great need. There was a need for you. The Pantry needs you to help on Friday afternoon to walk with customers as they get their food and get them to their cars.

Consider if you have a few hours Friday afternoon to personally participate in this wonderful activity. Arrive around 3:30 so you are ready to work. Or come later and stay to clean up. Just knock on the door and tell them you want to volunteer.

Suzanne Nichols
Minister of Church Vitality



Halloween Party

Do you want to stay home and give away candy or would you like to meet some members of Church of the Open Arms and make some new friends?

We are having a safe and sober party at Church of the Open Arms on Halloween night, October 31st from 7 till 9. This will be part of the regular monthly game nights. Come play games and cards or just hang out and eat candy! My personal favorite. Wear a costume or not, bring something or not but just be there!

Remember October 31 at 7 PM in the Community Center at Church of the Open Arms!

Preaching Schedule:

Sometimes a person will get more out of church if they read the scripture ahead of time. Here is a list of Kathy McCallie's sermon plans for upcoming weeks. She will be offering a series of sermons on the Gospel of Matthew before beginning Thanksgiving themes. Advent begins November 30th this year. Make church a priority for the rest of the year!

October 26 – Matt 22:34-46, Kathy McCallie
November 2 – Matt 23:1-12, Kathy McCallie
November 9 – Matt 25: 1-13, Kathy McCallie
November 16 – Matt 25:31-46, Kathy McCallie
November 23 – 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, Kathy McCallie
November 30 – Rev. Loyce Newton Edward's preaching!
December 7 – Isaiah 40: 1-11, Kathy McCallie

A New Season of Hope.....

It takes all of us to make Church of the Open Arms the vital, welcoming, extravagant and loving place that it is. I am proud to be a part of this congregation. I believe that a loving God has specifically placed each and every one of us in this community of believers. None are here by accident. In order for COA to achieve the goals presented in the annual budget it is necessary for all of us to examine our current levels of commitment.

As members of Church of the Open arms, we have promised to give of our time, talents, and finances. Where are you in these areas? Where should you be? Where would you like to be? These questions are very personal and I am sure that only you and God know the answer. The finance committee, in conjunction with the leadership council and pastors, has designed an exercise that can help each of us answer these questions and take action to achieve the goals that are inherent in the answers.

The first step is to prayerfully consider where God wants you to be when it comes to giving of your time, talents, and finances. It is important for each of us to have measurable goals in all of these areas. Perhaps you are interested in participating in the Food Pantry ministry; a measurable goal might be to volunteer one Friday a month. Or with giving, it might be to give \$50 a month. All goals are encouraged no matter how big or how small. The important thing is to participate

Hope Cards have been mailed to all the current addresses of our congregation. This card will include space for you to write down your "hopes" in the areas mentioned above. When the Card is completed you will place it in a sealed envelope addressed to you.

This letter, addressed to you, will be your admission to a **dinner hosted by the Finance Team on November 13, 2008 at 7:00pm.** In a few months the letter will be mailed to you. It will in essence be a report card for you to see where you are with what you had intended.

Remember only you and God will know what you committed to and how you are doing.

At the end of approximately six months another dinner will be held, it is anticipated that there will be a lot of testimony and sharing of experiences regarding this exercise. This is not just an effort to raise money for the church although that will hopefully be one measurable results. This is definitely an exercise in spiritual discipline. It has been my experience that when we are intentional about spiritual growth that amazing things follow.

Be watching your mail and bulletin inserts for more information. Please make sure that the Church office has your correct address by filling out a blue card. You don't want to miss this opportunity.

Mike DeArmond, Finance Team

Halloween Game Night

Oct. 31st 7-9pm

Hope Dinner
November 13th 7:00pm

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

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www.openarms.org