



Pastor: Rev. Jules Williams, Jr.

Telephone: 409.998.0339

December 1, 2021

Volume 1, Number 8

Thinking Out Loud

I have watched with great hope as God has continued to be with us guiding us from destination to destination along the way. I have observed us grow closer as a faith community/family during our ecclesial journey.

Now, we have arrived at a new destination surrounded by new people and possibilities. Throughout my journey with Open Arms, I have continued to pray for us and for our journey through the maze of struggles that often affects new churches. I continue to pray and believe in us and our cause. Our cause is to be an open and inclusive community living out the true meaning of what it means to be an authentic faith community in a world filled with hate, division, political discord, and supremacist mindsets.

May we continue to walk together even when we can't see the road!

*Blessings,
Rev. Jules Williams, Jr.*

Welcome Guests

We welcome our guests who joined us in worship this past month. Hannah Poenisch, Matt and Sandy Royster, Will Kearson, Adam and Julia Rinehart, Dr. Carolyn Moore, Crystal Gail Brown, Doug and Amanda and Victoria Spooner, Bob and Beth Cipraini.

We Remember in Prayer

Prayers has the power to heal and change the lives of those who are hurting in body or mind or spirit. We ask that you would send up prayers for:

- **Olive Baer**, who has limited mobility.
- **Cheryl Jett**, who has back issues.
- **Bud Spooner**, who welcomes prayers.
- The family of **Pat Spooner**, who died on November 11.
- **Marjorie Meier**, who is living in a memory care facility.
- **Paula Haley**, who is living with Parkinson's disease.
- **Gladys Barton**, who welcomes prayers.
- **John Rehling**, who is living with heart failure.
- **Kevin**, who welcomes prayers during his illness.
- **Anthony Maldonado**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Tammy Spangler**, who is receiving chemotherapy.
- **Mack Joseph**, who welcomes prayers during his illness.
- **Diane Mayo**, who welcomes prayers.

ALWAYS THANKFUL

We have just observed a time of thankfulness during that beautiful holiday of THANKSIVING when families get together and celebrate with good food and good cheer. Special events at the family of Open Arms merit a robust **THANKS** and should be celebrated in our fellowship!

THANK YOU to **Rev. Phil Hodson** our South Central Conference minister who visited us on October 31. He brought us encouragement as we embark on our quest to help those with special needs. We look forward to another visit from Rev. Hodson soon to cheer us on our journey to be a servant church.

THANK YOU once more to **Ian and Heather Says** and their efforts to put Open Arms “front and center” at the Woodlands Pride Festival. A visitor to the OA booth wrote to us, “The booth at the Woodlands Pride festival was set up very nicely and the people staffing it could not have represented the church better. Thank you for such a caring outreach.” Ian and Heather have been our public relations committee in other ways also. Thanks to both! See photo at end of newsletter.

THANK YOU to **Liz and Jim Lemm** for hosting us with one of their great fish fries, located in their outdoor dining room. What a fellowship. We had Lemm relatives and Open Arms folks together delighting in crispy catfish and all the sides that people donated. God blesses us with friends, especially these two loving and generous folks. May Liz and Jim be forever blessed! See photos at end of newsletter.

THANK YOU to **Pallotta’s** restaurant and family. We will be leaving their banquet room, but it has been a quiet spot to worship, affording the “comforts of home” and giving access to delicious food after church. Without this shelter, we would have been meeting on the parking lot.

THANK YOU to **Barlow Bradbury** for leading our Bible study group in an examination of the United Church of Christ’s three loves movement: “Love of Neighbor, Love of Creation, Love of Children.” Barlow zoomed from his home in Colorado to help us focus on the UCC vision of “a just world where all are welcomed, everyone is loved, and justice is inherent.” Barlow and Sylvia are our long-distance members, reminding us that our fellowship is not limited to Spring or the Woodlands; it reaches to the “whole wide world.” Thank you, Barlow and Sylvia, for joining our family.

THANK YOU to **Bert and Marge Nollmann** and Mount Tabor UCC in Missouri for sharing items from their sanctuary as they close their doors. We are sad to hear that this church is no longer a place of worship, but delighted to have the furnishings that will help us equip our church. **Thanks** also to **Sue and Ron Krueger** for driving to Missouri and bringing these items to us. See photo at end of newsletter.

Looking

Forward to

December Events

Wonderful things are planned for **December** at Open Arms.

We will be worshipping in the Tamina Community Center and looking forward to meeting our neighbors in the community.

Watch for events which will bring us closer to our new friends.

Advent is upon us. Look for special observations of Advent as the month progresses.

ALSO, make a note that you must not miss the Christmas program at Open Arms on December 19 at 10:30 A.M. The program entitled, "Peace at Christmas," encourages us all to be agents of Peace as we remember the Prince of Peace. Open Arms members will sing and recite as we move toward the Peace the Christ Child brought and still promises us today. Carols and other festivities will contribute to the Christmas mood. All will be welcome here.

Thinking About Christmas??

And gift giving - and receiving?? Lots of laughter emerges from the ugly sweater stories. How about telling/writing your loved ones a note that says: "In your name, because we love you, we sent pigs to a needy family in Myanmar."

Or maybe baby fish to Honduras, chickens to Tanzania, a goat to Haiti. Beehives, cows, seeds, farm tools, a well, water filter, a doctor's visit, a month of formula and diapers, and soooooo much more.

Church World Service, an ecumenical ministry that began at the end of WW2 to help Europe and Asia recover, provides the means for this help to go where it's needed.

Sending chickens for your grandchild and telling the story can be a delight - and a blessing. Gail and I have done this Alternative Christmas giving for over 30 years. It's fun and meaningful to write the list and read it to family on Christmas day.

We'll bring the catalog to church for your perusal or - go to cwsbestgift.org. They really are gifts that keep on giving. **From Bill Royster**

What Can I Do?

Ever wonder what you, one little person in this great big world, can do to help others? At Open Arms we have two projects that all can contribute to: the Tamina Community Food Pantry and “Food for Friends” dinners for Spring Heights patrons.

On the **last Sunday of the month**, bring foodstuffs for contribution to the food pantry at the community center. We want to keep the larder stocked so that no one in the area is lacking this winter.

On the third Sunday, you can contribute an item for the five dinners we provide for certain Spring Heights citizens. These are folks who can’t cook for themselves or who need contributions of prepared food at the end of the month when Social Security funds are running low.

Yes, you can help in these two ways. One small donation from you can be a large donation for someone else.

Good News!

The United Church of Christ offers a number of grants and scholarships to groups and individuals for doing Christ’s work. One such program, the “New Spiritual Communities and Renewing Churches’ grant program” plans to invest in programs and ministries “based on how applicants seek to embody in their ministries the values of the UCC and the impact from those values within the local community.” Open Arms applied for certain of these grants, hoping for help in carrying out their work and projects in the year to come. **Fortunately, two of these grants for a total of \$20,000 have been awarded to Open Arms.** Of course, the congregation of Open Arms is grateful to the UCC grant program for their assistance and even more grateful that OA has been recognized as a new church deserving of support. **Good news indeed!**

Lit Wits — November and December

Thanks to Kate Flagge for hosting Lit Wits in November. Kate's book of choice was *Proof of Heaven*, by Eben Alexander. Alexander, a neurosurgeon, who, during a serious illness, had a near death experience details his NDE in the book. Although Alexander describes many things, his account of a loving and forgiving God at the heart of the universe is an appealing part of his narrative. Sue Krueger reports that Kate's "chicken soup was just what we needed to warm our souls and our fellowship" as we discussed the book.

For December, there is no chosen book for reading, but we will instead meet at Sue's for a Christmas Gathering where we can plan and discuss books and hosts for 2022. If you are interested in Lit Wits, this would be a perfect opportunity to join us for a lively evening. Sue will provide soup, bread, and beverages. Those who attend can bring a snack or just bring themselves with ideas for future books.

The time is Tuesday, December 14, at 6:00 pm, at 27815 Geneva Hills Lane, phone 281-884-6998.

If you have friends who love to read and discuss literature, this is where they need to be. Bring them along.

Pat Spooner Fund

As we all know, our dear friend, Pat Spooner went to be with God a few weeks ago. We shared a Celebration of her life during worship a few Sundays back. She will be missed - by Bud, her family, numerous friends, and by us!

The family has asked that a special fund be established in her name with Open Arms. She was excited about our move to Tamina and the Ministry/Mission possibilities there. So, The Tamina Children's Ministry Fund in honor of Pat Spooner has been established. Our gifts to the Fund are welcome!

DECEMBER MISSION –

OPEN ARMS UCC GOES AROUND THE WORLD TO INDIA



DEEP BAL SEWA &
MAHILA KALYAN



Chhattisgarhi is the most widely spoken language, followed by Hindi; both are official languages of the state. *Since Open Arms has no one who speaks either of those languages, our mission this December will refer simply to this agency as DEEP.*

Chhattisgarh is a state of east-central [India](#). It is a rural area that struggles with literacy, Ignorance, superstition which are major hindrances in any significant development process.

Children and women face the consequences of apathy of social, economic, cultural, and political processes.

DEEP is the lamp to bring hope to the marginalized section of the society. So that communities can realize their rights and aspire for a new society. DEEP is nothing but a calling for the civil society to participate in the process. **“The DEEP LAMP was lighted to bring HOPE IN DESPAIR.”**

CHILDREN: Since 1982 Deep has been a Social Service Organization, serving women and children in rural areas. Children do not get adequate food, child care, education, health care etc., as their parents work from daybreak to sundown to meet the basic needs of the family. As a result of which, children incur diseases, worm infections and regular episode of diarrhea which make them mal-nourished and limit their mental and physical growth. Many of the pregnant mothers are anemic and iron deficient; improper pre-natal and post-natal care has resulted in child mortality, low birth weight and threat to the mother's life during delivery. A safe mother program teaches nutrition, health practices & hygiene behavior, prevention of common disease, first aid skills, home nursing etc.

Thanks to our own Rev. Krueger for the suggestion to fund mission money to DEEP. He has known staff from there and is familiar with their good work.

Day Care centers run for three hours every day in villages where children learn and practice hygiene, behavior, and creative expression. The teachers teach moral values through storytelling, games, songs, craft, skits and exposure. They keep a health record of every child, and provide special lessons for baby sitters.

WOMEN: Programs aim to make women realize their potential and develop a transformation process for individuals and communities to form a just society from an oppressive system. The results of the old caste system are still in place. Gender sensitization classes enable women to think critically to counter these marginalizing forces.

ADOLESCENT GIRLS: The organization arranges short term courses for the adolescent girls to enhance their capacity to face the future challenges. The program provides awareness on the importance of balanced diet, health & hygiene, sex education, child care, home management, skill development for economic independence (through tailoring, food preservation etc.) to make them confident and self-reliant. Their mothers are taught not to discriminate their daughters from their sons and that every child should be treated equally. The teachers counsel the families to motivate them to educate their daughters.

After a study of the extensive programs of DEEP, one is even more impressed with the vision for a five-year future program:

~ Providing regular nursing training teacher's training and job-oriented training to 50 girls from lower socio-economic background in a year. ~ Reach 500 students through 10 day care centers. ~ Ensure good health of 100 pregnant mothers every year. ~ Train 200 adolescent girls on life skills every year. ~ Support 50 girl students every year to continue studies.



? Wondering why a mission around the globe for Advent and Christmas? Jesus was a baby and then a child. DEEP has comprehensive programs that minister to babies and children in need. Seems like a fit!!! And India is much closer to that stable in Bethlehem!!

The mission folks at Open Arms have set a goal for December giving to DEEP:

- Health checkups for 40 mothers (\$200)
- Life skills training programs for 25 girls (\$500) = **\$700 Total for Advent through Christmas Eve and December**

OPEN ARMS CAN STRETCH



ALL THE WAY TO INDIA

“Deep, the lamp is lighted to bring hope to the marginalized section of the society. So that the children and women lead a healthy and happy life.”

Happy Birthday

Sue Kreuger – December 4

Mustapha Williams – December 4

Margaret Smith – December 8

Liz Lemm – December 8

Sandy Royster – December 15

Greg Mayo – December 15

Chris Teese – December 18

Liz Herrick – December 21

Ian Says – December 24

Carol Foss – December 27

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

**Fish Fry After Worship at James and Liz Lemm's House
November 14, 2021**





**Heather Says at the Open Arms Booth - The Woodlands Pride Festival
October 30, 2021**

Bert and Marge Nollmann - Mount Tabor UCC in Missouri

