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Pastor: Rev. Jules Williams, Jr.  
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### *How Did I Get Here?*

**D**own through the years of ministry, I have grown enormously in my understanding of God (God is still speaking). For years, I grappled with my new knowledge and being part of a rigid church culture. During a moment at one of my churches, I banned a preacher from ever setting foot in that church's pulpit as long as I was the pastor. I did this because he thought it was funny to bash gay people. I had enough and was ready to leave my old denomination and the ministry.

However, while researching schools to begin my doctoral studies, I found Eden Seminary, and I was born again. While at Eden, I learned about the UCC and that I would be a good fit based upon my worldview and the depth and breadth of my theological understanding. While at Eden, I met Rev. Douglas Anders, Rev. Mary Albert, and David Gerth, and other members of the Committee of Ministry in St. Louis, which led me to meet with Rev. Leslie Jackson and the Houston Association. The rest is history.

Today I am proud to be a UCC pastor. I got to this point in my life because I was tired of not living my truth. Never be afraid to live your truth and live your best life now. I could have stayed in my old denomination and lived a life of misery or left the ministry, but I decided to take a risk. The risk I took put me in a place where I am free to be me. Take a calculated, life-changing, life-transforming risk, and one day you can look back and say, *How Did I Get Here?*

Jules William, Jr., MA/CE, LCDC

### **REV. JULES BECOMES OFFICIAL**

**O**n May 15, Rev. Jules Williams, Jr., at the Spring Meeting of the Houston Association of the United Church of Christ met with his Ecclesiastical Council with the purpose of leaving his former denomination and gaining Ordained Ministerial Standing in the UCC. To achieve this status, Rev. Jules was asked to give a brief bio, tell why he was seeking standing in the United Church of Christ, and answer questions relating to the UCC Constitution. He successfully completed these requirements and was awarded the desired Standing. At present, Rev. Williams is enrolled in the Doctoral program at Eden Seminary and is the revered pastor of Open Arms UCC, a new church in the Spring-Woodlands area.

## Welcome Guests

**W**e welcome our guests who joined us in worship this past month. Brenda Mayfield, friend of David Durham and Kenneth Reaves; Leru Poenisch, Bill and Gail Royster's daughter; Matt and Sandy Royster, Bill and Gail Royster's son and daughter-in-law; Liz Herrick, Bill and Gail Royster's daughter.

## We Remember in Prayer

**P**rayers have 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:

- **Lars Royster**, who, along with his family welcomes prayers.
- **Brother Moore**, as he seeks to get back up on his feet.
- **Olive Baer**, who has limited mobility.
- **Cheryl Jett**, who has back issues.
- **Bud Spooner**, who is recovering from a fall.
- **Mary Todeschni**, who is undergoing cancer treatments.
- **Marjorie Meier**, who is living in a memory care facility.
- **Paula Haley**, who is living with Parkinson's disease.
- **Norma Johnson**, who has health issues.
- **Troy Daulley**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Elizabeth Lemm**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Sudie Ferguson**, who will be receiving physical therapy.
- **Gladys Barton**, who is recovering from an infection.
- **Jim Fairbanks**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Nicole Mackenzie**, who along with her family welcomes prayers.
- **John Rehling**, who is living with heart failure.

### **MANY THANKS TO THOSE WHO HAVE HELPED SO MUCH**

- ❖ Open Arms has three young adults who can't be **thanked** enough. They are our Williams Trio: Nia, working on her Bachelor of Music at Sam Houston University; Mustapha and Jules III, who are both Certified Personal Trainers with American Council of Exercise. They have a gym in Huntsville where they train their clients. All three have performed with professional troupes in various theatrical productions. These young folks are musicians: Nia excels in vocal performance and in playing the keyboard; the brothers are percussionists who accompany her. The Williams progeny are talented, punctual, and hardworking. How very fortunate we are that they are part of our music team. Thank you again and again.

- ❖ Thanks to our video/office angels, Peter and Vicky. Peter is our technician; Vicky is secretary, treasurer, and communicator. Much gratitude to these two!
- ❖ Thanks to David and Kenneth, and Barry and Gaye for use of their homes for worship services.
- ❖ Thanks to all who have done the Children's Moment, delivered prayers, and read scripture during the worship services.
- ❖ Thanks to Rev. Bill Royster, so important in establishing Open Arms, keeping us organized, and moving forward.
- ❖ Thanks to Kenneth Reaves for being our fearless leader, always positive, always a joy to be around. We cherish you, Ken.
- ❖ Thanks to those that planned the Love Train: Sue and Bill for food, Ron for his musical contributions, and all others!
- ❖ Thanks to a certain diligent lady for typing the directory and creating the newsletter aesthetics and layout.
- ❖ And always, thanks to the faithful!

### **Open Arms May 2021 Project: Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service**

**O**pen Arms prides itself as a “mission church,” a church that aims in some way to help the needy, those in pain, those brutalized, cheated, lost. In April we contributed to the NAM Pediatric Health Center to help the Center continue its good work in child care.

For May, we selected to support Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service. LIRS is a non-profit organization founded in 1939 that welcomes and supports refugees and migrants entering the United States. It is a faith-based organization that aids the government in refugee settlement, serves unaccompanied refugee minors, and advocates for just policies relating to immigration and detention. If you would like to join Open Arms in this important and timely cause, please call the church office for more information and/or how to contribute.

### **Open Arms June 2021 Project: Montgomery County Community Assistance Center**

**I**n a conversation with a homeless mother, she said, “My idea of rich is a refrigerator full of food.” Most of us probably never think about the blessing of a frig, let alone a frig full of food. But such is the plight of some of our neighbors in Montgomery County.

Last year CAC served over 3,313 families. Of that total, 1,241 were families in need for the first time, likely another result of covid.

Fortunately, our community is blessed to have the Community Assistance Center to help fill the frig, so to speak. CAC is a comprehensive resource to neighbors in our community, providing help to meet basic needs.

A dedicated staff and giving volunteers offer a client choice food pantry, crisis intervention, community education, disaster relief, housing, and “hands up initiative.”

Another service along with the Conroe Noon Lion's Club is a free vision screening on July 19, Sept 20, and Nov. 15. Call 936-494-4411 for details.

Open Arms is excited to contribute our June mission to CAC. During the month, we will decide which of CAC's programs to designate for our offering.

Hopefully, Open Arms will help "fill the frig" for one of our neighbor's.

Gail Royster

## **PENTECOST: THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

**D**oes the Christian Church really have a birthday? Yes, and we celebrate it on Pentecost. Originally a Jewish harvest celebration, the day of Pentecost became a traditional Christian observance of the coming of the Holy Spirit, often in the form of a dove, to the disciples of Jesus after His Ascension. Acts 2:1-12 tells us: On Pentecost, the disciples assembled together in one room. A great wind blew, flames danced over the men's heads, and each man spoke a language from one of the countries of the time. Thus, all people were allowed to understand the story of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit in their own languages. Many joined the group, and the Christian movement strengthened and grew from this time on.

How is the date of Pentecost determined? The word "Pentecost" means "fifty," representing fifty days, not counting Sundays, after Easter. Using this formula today, Pentecost is held on the seventh Sunday after Easter. This year, May 23, 2021, is Pentecost.

At Pentecost, often worshipers wear **red**, emblematic of the flames, and enjoy birthday cake as they thank God for the enduring Christian Church.

Gail Royster

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## **Re-Visiting Mothers' Day**

**A**s with most churches, Open Arms observed and honored mothers on May 9. The setting was perfect for remembering mothers—the flower garden of David Durham and Kenneth Reaves. Nia Williams touched the group with her talent on the keyboard and her beautiful voice. Ron Krueger played "How Great Thou Art" on the saxophone. To remind us of those special ladies, the congregation sang "Faith of our Mothers" using alternate words to that old hymn "Faith of our Fathers." Rev. Jules told all who had living mothers to cherish them, and to always remember those that have passed on. He honored his own mother, now gone, and his wife, mother of their children.

Three women, members of Open Arms, spoke on the theme of motherhood. One told of her mother who went to college in her 70's and who wrote poems, essays, and prayers in her later years. Another listed lessons she learned from her mother. A third woman recounted perhaps the greatest "truism" about motherhood: a mother's love never goes away. Even after her children are grown, a mother has concerns about her child. Even as God retains his love for each of us always.

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## **The Love Train Departs from The Station Again!**

**O**n May 15, 2021, the Love Train left Fairbanks Station and made three (far flung) stops--at Gladys' home in Spring, Cheryl's place in Conroe, and Carol's residence in Montgomery. The Love Train is one way the Care Commission of Open Arms reaches out to those who welcome extravagant joy and love. See some pictures of the Love Train below.

With balloons and flowers, the OA group sings, delivers gifts and good wishes, and prays with, and for, those they see. One grateful person who was on the itinerary, wrote, "God Bless each and every one for bringing a ray of sunshine to those you visit."

If you, a family member, or friend would like a visit from the Love Train as an expression of love and care, call the church office to make the request.

## How Can Jesus Be Resurrected in Me? Theme for Open Arms Bible Study

**T**hinking about the appearances of the Risen Lord fills us with an unparalleled awe. At the tomb, on the road to Emmaus, in a secluded room, by the Sea of Tiberius, on the journey to Damascus —often as a stranger, then revealed as Jesus Christ. Those appearances have been the subjects of our Open Arms Bible study sessions. But hopefully, we have gone beyond these literal accounts in the New Testament and have found in these appearances lessons to use in re-resurrecting Jesus in us today and in our daily lives. Finding Christ in others, struggling with doubt, changing to live the "Christ-way"—are just some of the things we discussed in relation to these appearances.

In continuing our efforts to learn to model our lives after Christ, we will next spend one or two sessions on Biblical passages where Jesus commissions the disciples to continue his work. Jesus will speak to us through them; their commission becomes ours.

At present, Bible Study at Open Arms is offered every other week on Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. for an hour to an hour and a half. The session is virtual and is available to anyone who wishes to study the Great Book. Call the church office for information and/or links to our zoom sessions.

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## The Wednesday Forum: Finding A House of Worship

**E**very Wednesday evening at 7:00 p.m., Open Arms members meet via zoom to discuss matters of the church. While Rev. Bill Royster has an agenda, members are free to deviate and bring up new issues if they wish. As our pastor, Rev. Jules Williams discusses situations he has observed in the everyday world and comments on matters related to Open Arms. Member participation in worship, music, missions, Bible study, and a range of church concerns merit discussion on Wednesday eve.

Open Arms' most profound problem is the need for a permanent meeting place from which we can minister and carry out Christ's work. Members have been kind enough to let us use their gardens, and the Pallotta banquet room is lovely; but we need our own "house of worship."

How can you help? Pray. Pray that God's will be done, and if it be so, that God leads us to a worship locale. Each of us needs to look for an available building or space that would be suitable quarters. If you find something, or if you want further details, call David Durham at 713-542-9068 or Bill Royster at 281-386-6411. Let's all work together to find something appropriate. Maybe that's the message God has for us: we must be a unified fellowship, a people of faith, involved in a concerted effort to fulfill our greatest need.

**"We gain strength, and courage, and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face. . .we must do that which we think we cannot." Eleanor Roosevelt**

## **Hey, Readers!**

### **Join Lit Wits for Great Books, And Even Greater Discussion**

If you like to read, the Lit Wits group is for you. What's it like? Each month the members take turns leading a talk on a book of interest which all have read. For example, last month, on May 11, Kathy Howerton held an in-depth discussion of Lisa Wingate's *The Book of Lost Friends*, centered on the 19<sup>th</sup> century search of black people for their relatives, separated from them because of slavery, war, or greed. As a parallel story, the book also used a contemporary search of sorts as 21<sup>st</sup> century school children researched black families in their own town. The Lit Wits group was especially touched by the strong women who demonstrated hard work, love, and compassion throughout their difficult lives.

The Lit Wits' book for June 8 is *The Home for Unwanted Girls*, a heart-wrenching story of a mother-daughter bond that could not be broken. Brenda Ruegge will conduct the discussion of this book by Joanna Goodman. Session begins at 6:00 p.m.

All are welcome to join these lively and inspired readers! For more information about Lit Wits, call Sue Krueger (281-684-6998) or the Open Arms church office (832-368-9551).

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## [Happy Birthday Wishes](#)

- David Durham – June 2
- Gail Royster – June 4

- Gaye Fairbanks – June 8
- Maddison Sanders – June 15
- Ron Krueger – June 30

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### **Addition to Open Arms Directory**

Please note the following telephone number addition to the Open Arms Directory:

**Spoooner, Bud and Pat** – Add their home phone number: 281-350-4135.

If you have any additions or deletions for the telephone directory, please send them to Elise Daulley at [daulley.elise@att.net](mailto:daulley.elise@att.net).

### **The Love Train – May 15, 2021 – Getting Ready to Leave the Station**







