



Pastor: Rev. Jules Williams, Jr.
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Telephone: 409.998.0339
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Am I Genuinely Welcomed At The Table

On multiple occasions, I have written and determined that the church is a powerful institution with the ability to infect and affect society with its message hand-delivered by human beings willing to carry this message to the broken, oppressed, and the invisible. One of the most critical imperatives left behind by Jesus the Christ was to make disciples. The disciple-making process is essential because it helps educate, equip, and shape believers into spiritually healthy human beings willing to serve humanity.

The word 'disciple' is known by all but misunderstood by some in the church because it requires going beyond the norm of Sunday morning religious exercises. It means that we must be intentional about reaching out beyond ourselves to help build others. Jesus commanded his disciples to reach out to unreached people to make disciples. Making disciples involves bringing people into a relationship with Christ as pupils to Teacher. As disciples of Christ, we work to duplicate the life and mission of Christ.

My questions are: **Did Jesus put a stipulation on the disciple-making process? Must a person conform to distorted scriptural interpretations to become a disciple? Can a disciple be gay, transgender, lesbian, or bisexual?** The labels, as mentioned earlier, reveal the fact that many people in the church are being asked to change before becoming a disciple. A label must not prevent a sentient being from becoming a disciple of Jesus the Christ. The Bible asked the disciples to make disciples! It is my mission to serve a spiritual community where all are welcome at the table. The table seats and serves black, brown, white, gay, straight, atheist, agnostic, handicapable, and all beings who want to live out the will of the Divine genuinely. You are welcome to be at the table and live your authentic life.

Jules William, Jr., MA/CE, LCDC

WOW! --- WHAT A PREACHER!

Meet our wonderful pastor Rev. Jules Williams, Jr. Some people go to church to sing; some to pray; all go to hear a good preacher preach a good sermon. Rev. Jules Williams, Jr., is that good, no GREAT, preacher with a powerful sermon each Sunday. Rev. Jules has a truck

load of degrees from Dallas Theological Seminary, Houston College of Biblical Studies, and Morehouse College in Atlanta. He is currently pursuing his Doctor of Ministry at Eden Theological Seminary. But it is more than education that makes this man a fine minister. He is filled with the Spirit and fills each in his audience with that Spirit. Yes, you have heard good preachers before, but none like this one! Come to Open Arms UCC on Sunday morning at 10:00 a.m. to be inspired by this loving, Godly preacher! His words and his energy and passion will speak to you.

Welcome Guests

We welcome our guests who joined us in worship this past month. Susan Ferguson, Kathy, Austin, Brenda Mayfield, and Fayteen friends of David Durham and Kenneth Reaves; Chastity Williams and her two children, Emonnie and Elijah, Rev. Williams' sister and niece and nephew; 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

Prayer 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 please include the following persons in your prayers.

- **Olive Baer**, who has with 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.
- **The family of Harris Luetge**, who died on March 13, 2021.
- **The family of Bill Burleson**, who died in April of Covid 19.
- **The family of Rev. Douglas Anders**, who died March 22, 2021.
- **Norma Johnson**, who has health issues.
- **Troy Daulley**, who welcomes prayers.

Many Thanks to Those Who Have Helped So Much

- ❖ Always at the top of the list: Thanks to Rev. Bill Royster, so instrumental in establishing Open Arms, keeping us organized, and moving forward.
- ❖ To the video angels, Vicky and Peter Royster for their great help with technology and clerical tasks and for all the other things they do.

- ❖ To David Durham, Kenneth Reaves, and Rev. Ron Krueger for their help in moving, cleaning, and setting up for the garage sales.
- ❖ To all who worked at the garage sales.
- ❖ To Kenneth and David for use of their garden for worship services.
- ❖ To Barry and Gaye for use of their tent for worship services.
- ❖ To all who have done the Children's Moment during worship.
- ❖ To Jules III, Mustapha, and Nia for their musical contributions to worship
- ❖ To all who work to make Open Arms the loving and inspirational church that it is. God, bless us all.

Every Day Is Earth Day!

By Matt Royster

We just celebrated Earth Day Sunday on April 25th, and it reminds us that every day is Earth Day! We are reminded that every day is the day we need to intentionally take great care of God's Creation, the Earth!!

Each action we take to care for the Earth really does make a difference, even if it doesn't feel like it. Trusting that we are acting as God would have us act, is very important as we each yearn to become better Christians and have a closer relationship with God!

I hope you take time to appreciate this beautiful, amazing Earth where we all have the pleasure to live! Live in gratitude, pay attention and look for ways you can take better care of the Earth! Use less energy, eat less meat, save water, buy an electric vehicle, add insulation to your home, drive less (combine trips), buy high-efficiency appliances, compost everything possible, recycle everything else, live a zero-waste lifestyle as we remember God never sends anything to the landfill!

Do what you can do and remember you are God's example to the World!

Activities of the "Care Commission"

The "Care Commission" of Open Arms reaches out to those who need or welcome special help and love. Those who have experienced great sadness, disappointment, loss, illness, etc., are the source of our attention. At the same time, we equally rejoice with those who have experienced great reward.

One of our care programs is ***"The Love Train."*** As a group, members travel in tandem to visit those who will be the recipients of our attention. With balloons and flowers, the OA group sings, delivers gifts and good wishes, and prays with, and for, those they visit. **Our next "Love Train" will be moving out on Saturday, May 15, 2021.**

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 at (832)368-9551 to make the request.

The Importance of Mission Work at Open Arms

Jesus tells us, "When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed" (Luke 14: 13-14). Thus, He compels us to serve others, but He also says to serve discreetly and in secret (Matthew 6:3-4).

Open Arms seeks to follow Jesus by performing mission work in many areas of need. Most of these projects are relegated to our web page, but the present Open Arms mission project could benefit by others knowing of its work. That project is the NAM Pediatric Health Center. The Center has been serving the community for 25 years and offers first-rate medical care to children of all ages. The Center provides a full range of services, including preventative care and acute care. Recently recognized by Superior HealthPlan as a Foster Care Center of Excellence, the Pediatric Center needs help to continue its good work. If you would like to join Open Arms in this worth-while endeavor, contact the church office for more information and/or how to contribute.

Open Arms United Church of Christ: We Open Our Arms to You!

We are Open Arms United Church of Christ, a church that is open and welcoming to all. Open Arms is a Christian body that focuses on Mission, Inclusiveness, and Social Justice. Our name reflects the extravagant and enthusiastic welcome that is accorded all persons "no matter who they are, or where they are on life's journey."

Please watch as this developing church grows in the North Harris County, South Montgomery County area. Please believe, "you are always welcome here." We truly practice Christ's admonition to "love our neighbors." That means love for all of you!

Open Arms United Church of Christ: OUR ROOTS

Open Arms is a member of the United Church of Christ, a denomination that is a blend of several Christian churches, all devoted to following the teachings of Jesus Christ. The German Evangelical Lutheran Church from the 19th century later became the Evangelical and Reformed church in 1934. In 1957 the E&R denomination merged with the Congregational Christian Churches and chose the name of the United Church of Christ. Thus, Open Arms has a rich heritage to claim as its own.

"How do I Know? The Bible Tells me So."

At present, Bible Study at Open Arms is offered every other week in an hour- to an hour and a half- session. The session is virtual, but if our plans are realized, we will soon have a Bible Study class in-person as well. Our Bible Study has been labeled "Hour of Awesomeness" because the lessons we learn from this great book are truly awesome. For example, we studied the book of JAMES and noted the ways James' advice "hits the nail on the head" for us. "Faith

and Works,” “avoiding the cruel tongue,” “submitting to God”—yes, James knew the nature of humanity and told us how to live.

For Lent, we studied the events of Holy Week, recognizing once more the New Covenant brought to us by Jesus Christ, and grieving over his betrayal, cruelty, and the Crucifixion.

On April 27, May 4, and May 18, at 5:00 p.m., Bible Study will focus on certain of Jesus’ appearances to this world after Crucifixion and on their messages for Christians today. You do not want to miss these readings and discussions. Our Lord still speaks to us in our time through the pages of the Bible.

Venue for Readers: The Lit Wits!

“Lit Wits” is a literary group that gathers once a month, the second Tuesday, at 6:00 p.m. attendance is flexible; some select to host those who want to meet face to face, while others prefer to be present via zoom. Members share responsibility for the selection of readings and presentations. So, the group has had a rich variety of pieces to read and discuss, ranging from Pulitzer Prize novels to autobiographies, historical fiction, reflections on current issues and unique characters, etc., most of contemporary publication. A sharing of reflections and opinions about their readings, some serious, some great fun, unite this group!

In April, Holly Baker led the discussion of *HAMNET* by Maggie O’Farrell. The fictional account of William Shakespeare, his wife, his children, and especially his son who died, initiated a discussion of the conditions of Renaissance England, the grief journey a family takes in the midst of loss, and the creation of the great play *HAMLET*.

On May 11, Kathy Howerton at her home will host *BOOK OF LOST FRIENDS*, Lisa Wingate’s new story. A zoom link will be available for those who cannot be physically present.

Being a participate in Lit Wits is not limited to Open Arms members; all who love reading and find discussion about books stimulating and entertaining are welcome to become part of this group.

Happy Birthday Wishes

- Elna Swaney - May 22
- Vivien Mayo - May 23
- Matt Royster - May 28
- Bud Spooner - May 30

Corrections to Open Arms Directory

Please note the following corrections to our Open Arms Directory:

- **Smith, Margaret** - Margaret's correct cell number is: 713-416-0491.
- **Glover, Justin** – Justin's correct last name is Gonzaski, and the correct address for Justin is 14777 Wunderlich, #109, Houston, TX 77069.
- **Gonzaski, Donna** -Donna's correct email address is: TiredOfTechStuff@gmail.com.

THE LAST WORD: We are not called to be like other Christians. We are called to be like Christ

and to obey his Commandments. *Open Arms UCC*