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KEEP IT SIMPLE

During my years in seminary, I have had the good pleasure of being in the company of some theologically astute individuals. I listened to many of my classmates expound on the scriptures using high-sounding words in both Greek and Hebrew. One person was so proficient in Hebrew that he only read from the Bible in Hebrew during class. Others appeared to look down on people that were not fluent in Greek. Sitting amid these individuals while observing their keen intellect left me saying, Keep It Simple. My words echoed the words of one of my former professors when he said, "No one cares that you know Greek or Hebrew." People do not care if I wax eloquently in Greek and Hebrew. They only care that I care about them and will be there in their time of need.

Pastoring individuals is an honor and not about simply standing up and shouting words on Sunday morning in any language. Pastoring individuals extends beyond the shout. Beyond the shout are moments of sitting with a family that lost a loved one. Beyond the shout means sitting down and talking with a child about their inner gifts and strength to overcome obstacles standing in the way of achieving their goals. Beyond the shout is about keeping it simple. Each week I seek to keep it simple. Matthew 22:36-37 states, "Teacher, which commandment is the greatest in the Law?" Jesus declared, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." KEEP IT SIMPLE, and let us build the Open Arms community together as a family!

*Peace,
Rev. Jules Williams, Jr.*

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 appreciated all of our birthday cards and welcomes prayers.
- **Kevin**, who welcomes prayers during his illness.
- **Gladys Barton**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Anthony Maldonado**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Tammy Spangler**, who is receiving a stronger dose of chemotherapy.
- **Mack Joseph**, who welcomes prayers during his illness.
- **Diane Mayo**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Rev. Ron Krueger**, who had eye surgery.
- **Elna Swaney**, who is dealing with issues with her eyes.
- **Matt Royster**, who is recovering from surgery.
- The family of **Rev. Dr. J. Charles Hinds**, who passed away on March 3, 2022.
- **All who have been affected by COVID-19.**

Prayer for Ukraine

Loving God,

We pray for the people of Ukraine, for all those suffering or afraid, that you will be close to them and protect them.

We pray for world leaders, for compassion, strength and wisdom to guide their choices.

We pray for the world that in this moment of crisis, we may reach out in solidarity to our brothers and sisters in need.

May we walk in your ways so that peace and justice become a reality for the people of Ukraine and for all the world. Amen.

Welcome Guests

We welcome our guests who joined us in worship this past month. Eva Hollins, Matt and Sandy Royster, Kole Krueger, Cambridge Krueger, Aiden Krebs, Erica Dachinger, Chastity Williams, Emonnie Dixon, Elijah Powell, Crystal Brown, Will Kearson, Cassandra Dixon.

Thank You's to Open Arms Angels!

- ❖ Thank you to David and Kenneth for providing the Open Arms' garage sale venue, and for all their donations to the sale, and for all their hard work.
- ❖ Thank you to all the workers and donors to the garage sale.
- ❖ Thank you to Elise for her research and expertise in putting out the 2022 Open Arms Directory.
- ❖ Thank you to Rev. Jules for “giving up cheesecake” and making us renewed Christians this Lenten season, filled “with inner peace that surpasses all understanding.”
- ❖ Thanks for all who donated household goods and food to the Tamina Community Pantry in the month of March.

Open Arms First Quarter Offering and Mission Totals

It was decided at the last Council meeting that the monthly offering and mission totals should be listed in the monthly newsletter. To get us caught up, listed below are the totals for the first quarter of 2022.

January: Offering \$3,743.76 – Mission \$498.25

February: Offering \$5,487.15 – Mission \$460.00

March: Offering \$4,675.75 – Mission \$945.00

Report on Open Arms' Activities for 2022—

✓ Check Your Calendar

- “Friends and family Day” on February 27 was a celebratory time with food, hugs, good preaching, and a spirit-filled fellowship.
- The Open Arms Garage Sale was work and fun. So many members of the church participated with donations and with long work hours. We made some money (\$800.00), but the real riches came in getting to know each other, to laugh together, and to develop loving relationships.
- Folks are working on the Good Friday Readers' Theater, centered around Jesus' last words from the cross (*At the Foot of the Cross*). Be sure and save April 15 at 4:00 p.m. for this presentation at the community center. The crucifixion is a tragic time, but we must revisit it in order to understand and appreciate Easter Sunday.
- May 14 is scheduled for Celebration Day, a day of rejoicing for our many blessings. Read about this event in the article in this newsletter.
- June 19th, July 4th, and a yet to be named Saturday in August are other dates for coming events. More about these days later.

A Time of Celebration: Make Plans Now

May 14 will be a really big day for Open Arms. This day will be a time to acknowledge successes and achievements, to honor graduates, to show off talents, and to look ahead to summer vacations—a pre-summer blast off. It will also be a time to meet and mingle with our neighbors in Tamina and the surrounding areas.

Plans are for music—maybe live, for sure recorded. A local weight-lifter has promised to show his strength (we'll need to learn more about that), we hope to have a hula hooping lesson or so, a bake sale, a plant sale, face painting, and food, food, food!

Do you have a talent, or would you set up a booth for selling and/or entertaining? Or do you have a trick dog or pony that can perform for our audience? Everything is fun! We all must join the celebration thanking God, our Creator, for “all things bright and beautiful!” What can you contribute to the day?

Meeting with Coach Egan: Evaluating our Situation

On March 8, the Casa Grant Committee met with our coach, Rev. Don Egan, from the New Jersey Synod. The committee is composed of Rev. Jules Williams, Rev. Bill Royster, Margaret Smith, and chairperson Ian Says. This group will meet with Rev. Don the first Wednesday of every month at 4:00 p.m.

Rev. Egan will help Open Arms to fulfill its smart goals specified in the Casa Grant application. The goals deal with securing a space for worship and for facilities to provide ministry to others, and with obtaining equipment for both worship and ministry.

At this first meeting, Rev. Egan asked the committee to evaluate the status of Open Arms and to comment on the nature of our fellowship in preparation for our work together on our goals. Committee responses suggested two areas of concern: a generational gap that needs to be “closed” and an emphasis on consistency in vision.

These meetings are stipulated for receipt of the Casa Grant money. The grant of \$15,000 will be presented in increments as we work with our coach and attack our smart goals. The process encourages us to move forward as a viable church in Montgomery and Harris counties.

Open Arms Bible Study:

A Look at the Whole and a Look at the Parts

In our current Bible study unit at Open Arms, the class is looking at the whole-- and at representative parts-- that help give an overview of the entire Bible.

Initially, the group has studied the development of the Holy Bible from earliest times. A field trip to the Dunham Bible Museum on the Houston Baptist University campus clarified the historical steps involved in the progress and in the assimilation of the biblical text through the oral tradition, early writing, collecting, and printing of the Bible. the distribution of the Bible in the native tongues of the world’s people over the years is well represented at the museum also.

A visit to a Houston northwest synagogue acquainted the class with Jewish practices explained by Rabbi Jonathan Siger. Although many parts of the day’s

experiences were fascinating, a look at the synagogue's historical Torah – the first five books of the Bible—seemed especially interesting to the group.

While our study centers on sections that help us become more knowledgeable and devoted to the whole Bible, we plan to return to specific areas of study after our survey.

Open Arms Bible Study is not led by one specific person, but rather by several members who will be discussing what the Bible contains in reference to our faith, to the past, and to our lives today. We often meet in members' homes and other locales. Examples of topics are "The Role of Prophecy in the Old Testament," led by Rev. Bill Royster in Bill and Gail's home and "Psalms, Songs and the Beautiful World" led by Elise Daulley on David and Kenneth's patio in Conroe. At present, five such topics -- some very contemporary, some controversial -- have been scheduled.

All are welcome to join for all sessions or for selected sessions of our study. Contact Margaret Smith at 713-416-0491 for more information.

Lit Wits: For March and April

On March 8, the Lit Wits book club met at Wunsche Brothers Café and Saloon for their monthly meeting. Kate Flagge led the discussion of *The Bishop's Wife*, a character study/mystery involving the wife of a Mormon church official, the Mormon church and its customs, and the strange disappearance of a woman in the community. We met in a secluded back room, and over dinner, we commented on the plot, the characters and the customs of the Mormon order as presented in the book.

Looking forward to April 12, we will again meet at Wunsche Brothers, this time to examine *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. Brenda Ruegge will be the leader of the evening. One source describes the book: "Between life and death, there is a library, and within that library, the shelves go on forever. Every book provides a chance to try another life you could have lived. . . to see how things would be if you had made other choices. . . would you have done anything different, if you had the chance to undo your regrets?" Sounds like a great topic for discussion, doesn't it?

Lit Wits has come to love Wunsche's as a meeting spot. Sue Krueger says, "With the private room, Wunsche Brothers is perfect. And we learned Tuesday's special (our regular meeting day) is chicken and dumplings for 12 bucks. Talk about delicious comfort food! Amazing! So, let's return to Wunsche's on April 12 at 6:00 pm!" All are invited.

Mission Work at Open Arms

And we sent a full truck load!!

Open Arms February Mission Project was collecting clothes and accessories for Mountain View Prison. The clothing items are to be used in the “boutique” for women in the STRIVE program (Strength Through Restoration Independence Vision and Empowerment). This program is designed and offered to women who are nearing their release and going out into society – sometimes it has been a long time.

The program presents training, education, and planning for their futures. But, as you can imagine, clothing and accessories are not something these women have.

So... enter the “boutique,” a place for inmates to select clothes that will give them confidence and appearance to make it out there! And at no cost.

Thanks to local volunteers Open Arms sent a truck load of items to Mountain View!

Please read the following note recently received from Melodye Nelson, STRIVE Program Supervisor, TDCJ Reentry and Integration Division.

“I just wanted to send a word of thanks to you and the entire congregation for selecting STRIVE as one of your ministries. We work diligently to transform these women’s lives. Our program allows us to provide them with a second chance at life, and an opportunity to be product citizen.

“Thank you” seems so small considering the huge impact your kindness makes in so many lives. Please let everyone know that we are so appreciative for your donations.”

- Melodye Nelson, Program Supervisor

Ms. Nelson closed her note with: “Each of will be a blessing to the other.” - Romans 1:12

March Mission: International Rescue Committee

We all ponder: what can we, one small group, do to help the suffering in Ukraine. Perhaps the International Rescue Committee (IRC) is the answer. Founded in 1933, the IRC is often awarded top marks for its efficient use of contributions and the effectiveness of its work. Our joining the IRC allows us to aid in supplying vital supplies for displaced children and families. Those of us who have watched the tragic movement of refugees from besieged Ukraine can be comforted with knowledge that Open Arms has reached out to these struggling, displaced persons.

One Great Hour of Sharing - April Mission Project

*The theme for 2022 is Love Remains,
based on 1 Corinthians 13.*

LOVE REMAINS!

Consider the words of The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, Associate General Minister, UCC. “In the theme scripture, the Apostle Paul helped newly converted Christians at Corinth embrace the virtue of love. Love is an active decision to think of others before self; to work on behalf of others; and to care for others with acts of kindness and advocacy. Paul taught that community is less about “me” and more about “us.”

“Us”—the community—is defined broadly without limitations and boundaries. Community crosses boundaries and borders, creating realities which transcend perceived differences in ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, religion, spirituality, cultural diversity, and social location can be acknowledged and celebrated. It is not limited to one’s household or home church or immediate neighborhood.”

“Paul taught that Jesus formed a new kind of community from a group of diverse persons—a community whose fabric of communal life is woven with threads of justice, love and service.”

“I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with my whole heart.”

Jesus says,
“Blessed are the poor.”

* In 2020, disasters in the U.S. hit a record with 22 “billion dollar” disasters.

- support disaster preparedness.

* At least 2 billion people worldwide use contaminated water sources;

- how many faucets do you have in your home??

* 1 in 6 children live in poverty worldwide.

- support hunger programs near and far.

* More than 80 million people worldwide have been forcibly displaced.

- support resettlement programs.

* Human trafficking affects more than 40 million people worldwide--75% of whom are women and girls.

- honor of the women and girls in your life.

* Air pollution kills an estimated 7 million people each year.

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

Love Remains.

Every time you read SUPPORT the OGHS is there!

Love Remains.

When you contribute to OGHS offering you are there too!

Love Remains.

* More than 600 million children worldwide lack minimum proficiency in math and reading

- support educational programs

* More than 2 billion people worldwide lack access to basic sanitation

- How many bathrooms are in your home??

* In 2020, more than 400 natural disasters occurred worldwide.

- support survivors still trying to rebuild.

* Homes built by OGHS Partners in Haiti after Hurricane Michael survived the 2021 earthquake because they were structurally sound.

- support quality construction.

* By 2025, half of the world’s population will be living in water stressed areas.

- support water related development

Love Remains.

Happy Birthday Wishes

Jean Brooks - April 9

Cheryl Jett - April 18

Peter Royster - April 20

New Open Arms Directory

You will be receiving your new church directory soon (if you haven't already) in digital form. We have tried to check all information twice over, but errors do happen and omissions can occur. Please check your copy; and if there is a problem in your entry, notify Elise Daulley or Margaret Smith so changes can be made.





Open Arms February Mission Project: And we sent a full truck load!!



A field trip to the Dunham Bible Museum on the Houston Baptist University Campus



Donations for the Open Arms Garage Sale