



Pastor: Rev. Dr. Jules Williams, Jr.	Telephone: 409.998.0339
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YOU ARE INVITED TO GOOD FRIDAY AT OPEN ARMS

GOOD FRIDAY: To many the pivotal point of the Christian faith. Look backward at Christ the Healer, the Preacher, the Teacher; look forward to Christ the Savior, the Inspiration, the All in All. There, the fulcrum is Christ on the Cross, continuing to teach us in his final earthly words how to live even as he dies. His lessons of forgiveness for the offender, salvation for the sinner, and trust and love for family and friends guide our daily lives from that ancient cross.

On **GOOD FRIDAY, April 7, at five o'clock**, Open Arms' dramatists will perform *At the Foot of the Cross: The Last Words of Jesus*, a re-enactment and reflection on the Crucifixion. Musical performances, instrumental and vocal arrangements, as well as audience participation in hymns, will enhance a return to the foot of the cross where characters whom Jesus affected during his life speak of His powerful influence.

You are invited to join with us at this special event and find that beyond His suffering, Jesus returns and brings a message of Hope for everyone then and now, the Easter Promise.

We Remember in Prayer

Prayers: we reach out to God. Let us lift in prayer these loved ones and all others who are in need physically, mentally, or spiritually.

- **Gladys Barton**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Anthony Maldonado**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Antonia Rivera**, who has major medical issues.
- **Jean Brooks**, who welcomes prayers as she struggles with mobility issues.
- **Romie Hollins**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Tammy Spangler**, who asks for prayers for positive test results.
- Our friends, **Rev. John and Han Will**, who welcome prayers.
- The family of **Evelyn Krueger**, who received her wings on March 3, 2023.
- **Brenda Mayfield**, who is dealing with pain.
- **Jim Lemm**, who had knee surgery and a favorable recovery.
- **Norman Swaney**, who had injections for back pain.
- **Kenneth Reaves**, who had a positive report from diagnostic tests.
- **David Durham**, who has health issues but rejoices in favorable test results.
- **Ron Krueger**, who had a positive report from recent tests.
- **Victims of natural disasters.**
- **Victims of violence.**

Welcome Guests

We welcome our guests who joined us in worship this past month. Micah Tanner, Myra Yingst, Brooke Adams, Dalton Pratt, Dr. Carolyn Moore, Prof. Sonja Williams, Shirley Pruitt, Rev. Dr. Mary Parish, Rev. Altonnia Straughter.



*let your
light shine*

Matt. 5:16



THROUGH THE TRAFFIC, the weeds, the heat, and the blisters, Rev. Jules and wife Kim walked on and on and on 41 miles from Huntsville to Tamina Community Center as a fund raiser for the Open Arms Forever Home Fund. Yes, on Friday, March 10, **for 21 hours**, the Williams followed the I-45 Corridor South through New Waverly, Willis, Conroe, the Hospital Zone, and Shenandoah to reach their goal in Tamina. Rev. Jules asked folks to donate \$5.00 a mile or to give a single donation to support this more than worthy cause. As of this time, **\$6,872.00** has been contributed for the Walk. Much more has been promised.

Many thanks to Jules, Kim, and their Walking Shoes.

Photo is courtesy of Dee Markert.

A GOLD MEDAL THANK YOU FOR SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS

- ❖ Thanks to **CAROL FOSS**, our card Queen who sends out good wishes to those with birthdays or illnesses in the name of Open Arms. People so appreciate what you do, Carol.
- ❖ Thanks to **HEATHER SAYS** for her design of the flyer for the Good Friday program. Heather is a Hoopster, a Designer, and a master of many trades. Thank you, Heather.
- ❖ Thanks to **CHRIS GRIMES** for his time of service at Open Arms. We wish Chris the best as he prepares to graduate from high school and go to college. Come back and see us sometime, Chris.
- ❖ Thanks to **DONORS** to the 41-mile-walk project We still welcome gifts. Jules and Kim have raised **\$6,872.00 thus far**.
- ❖ Thanks to **OPEN ARMS MUSICIANS—PRAISE TEAM AND CHOIR**—for their contributions to worship at Open Arms. Thanks to all who help with worship and special programs at our church.
- ❖ Many thanks to all who agreed to **PARTICIPATE IN THE CYBER SALE**, both as donors and as customers. Remember all proceeds go to the Open Arms Forever Home fund. We need a hub from which to serve. Let's do our best!

LET'S GET BUZZIN'

ABOUT LIT WITS IN APRIL

Lit Wits, our “community” book club, met on March 14 at Pallotta’s Italian Grill. Hostess was Kate Flagge who led the group in a discussion of *The Venice Sketchbook* by Rhys Bowen. Members enjoyed the book because of the romantic plot elements, the use of mystery, and the imaginative use of time, switching from Post World War I, to World War II, to the modern age. Perhaps we liked the book the most for its skillful use of the Venetian setting—canals, elegant buildings, aspects of weather, and art works and festivals. This novel definitely gets a “thumbs up.”

On April 11 at 6:00 p.m., Sue Krueger will entertain the club at her home, 27815 Geneva Hills Ln, in Spring Trails. Sue has chosen one of her favorite reads, *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd, published more than 20 years ago in 2002. The plot revolves around conflicting elements in the life of a fourteen-year-old girl, Lily Owens. When troubles complicate their lives, Lily and her “stand-in mother” Rosaleen escape Lily’s home and flee to Tiburon, South

Carolina, where they find asylum in a family of bee-keepers. The action keeps you reading!

This book is Sue Monk Kidd's best (in this writer's opinion). You might want to read it even if you are not a Lit Wit. Remember April 11. All are welcome.

Refugee Sponsorship and Mental Health Issues

Two Subjects Worthy of Concern

REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES are two areas being studied by Houston Association churches. One group of four HA churches met in February to begin learning about the multiple ways to participate and support a refugee family. Another group of churches met and began studying about the various Mental Health initiatives in the Association. Both groups are compiling information and planning courses of actions to deal with these two critical issues. Open Arms has been asked to become a part of one or both of these groups. If you would like to learn more about what these groups are doing, contact Pam Mayo, Vicky Royster, or Cindy Sterling, Houston Association Moderator. What a wonderful way to serve and to represent your church.

AN APACHE PRAYER

Sometimes words can soothe a troubled spirit like a soft wind, slowly running water, or a gentle song. The 23rd Psalm has that kind of calming assurance. From a Native American comes this Apache Prayer, sure to calm restlessness and anger.

*“May the sun bring you new energy by day.
May the moon softly restore you by night.
May the rain wash away your worries.
May the breeze blow new strength into your being.
May you walk gently through the world and know
its beauty all the days of your life.”*

Many Ways to Get Home; Let's *Try a Cyber Sale!*

Jules and Kim took the walk for Open Arms! They were brave and daring. What can we do to contribute to a Forever Home for this wonderful church?

Open Arms is sponsoring another project in which we can all be involved. We call it a **CYBER SALE**, in which members contribute a favorite baked item, homemade preserve, and/or dish to the sale. Each contributor sets his own price for what he/she gives.

Customers choose these donations from a list of offerings, send a text with the order, and the provider fills the order. Our list of sale items is available to everyone—church members, friends, family, or people on the street! Most people love something created in the kitchen, not in Kroger's or HEB.

THE CYBER SALE LIST IS ATTACHED TO THE BACK OF THIS NEWSLETTER WITH INSTRUCTIONS.

Orders should be placed by April 19. The order will be ready for pick up on April 23. Please pass the sale list around to others—and order items yourself, if you can. **Everything is for Open Arms Forever Home.**



The 42nd

April Mission Project

Not often does a congregation retain mission funds for use within that congregation. By common usage within the church, mission is thought to go “out from the church” to aid, assist, help, feed others. Some say “The mission of the church is missions.”

At Open Arms we often communicate that supporting mission projects which minister to others is one of our core values. We take our mission support and activities quite seriously. We have a few annual offerings usually supporting UCC denominational causes such as the recent One Great Hour of Sharing & Neighbors in Need. Church World Service and local food banks are often recipients of our giving. Since our temporary home is in the Tamina neighborhood, we have been active in helping those around us. The mission/outreach attempts to balance projects

between near and far, to vet each receiving organization, and present information to Open Arms, our friends, and through social media.

Having said all that.... we're gonna do something different! Something that some of us thought we'd never say. We are keeping our April Mission Project offerings and donate all monies to our "Forever Home" fund!

This decision was made to honor and affirm the heroic efforts made by Pastor Jules and wife Kim. After months of work and training, they accomplished their goal of walking 41 miles from their home to Tamina Community Center. It took 20 hours, five rest stops, much water, many blisters, couple headlamps, few doughnuts, and much sweat! But they were not alone. They were under the watchful eye of Ian Says who followed the entire journey (in his car.) At each rest stop they were greeted by Open Arms folks with applause, hugs, encouragement, and snacks. Several of the members joined in part of the walk and some were there at the beginning and the end.

The purpose of the walk was to create interest in and donations to Open Arms "Forever Home" fund. As a new church start, we've been ecclesiastical nomads. We've worshipped and met in restaurants, parks, homes, patios, and finally at Tamina - and we zoomed a whole bunch.

As we've grown, our needs have changed: we lack storage space, weekly we transport equipment and supplies for worship, we have no space for choirs, Christian education and nursery, meetings, fellowship, and community events. Our parking area is full.

Our vision is to find land, a facility, or a space in the southern part of Montgomery County/Conroe area. We don't want a tabernacle or cathedral, just a place we can gather as a community of faith and provide mission and ministry to those in need.

NOW... MILE 42 IS UP TO US!





Happy Birthday to You

Jean Brooks – April 9

Cheryl Jett – April 18

Peter Royster – April 20

Carol McAninch – April 25

Holy Week 2023

Maundy Thursday Service – April 6 at 5:00 p.m.

**Good Friday Play – *At the Foot of the Cross: The Last Words of Jesus*†
April 7 at 5:00 p.m.**

Easter Sunday Breakfast – April 9 at 8:30 a.m.

Easter Sunday Worship Service – April 9 at 10:30 a.m.

Open Arms UCC Cares for the Earth!



At Least a Small Part of It!

Earth Day Workday at Tamina!

Saturday, April 22, at 10 a.m.

Bring gardening tools, heavy gloves, tools for clearing trash.



April is National Garden Month

OPEN ARMS FINANCIAL INFORMATION
MARCH, 2023

Offerings - \$4,788.22
Missions - \$660.00
Forever Home Fund - \$3,760.54
CASA Grant - \$3,750.00 (for 1st QTR)

**April is
International
Guitar Month!**

North American names for
April's full moon
which will be on Thursday, April 6, 2023:
Pink Moon, Grass Moon, Egg Moon.

**A few sayings, phrases, and expressions we use every day that
come from the centuries old Bible .**

...I have escaped by the ***skin of my teeth.*** Job 19:20

...and were at their ***wits' end.*** Psalms 107:27

...the ***signs of the time.*** Matthew 16:3

God's Creation OR Earth Day?



Yes! Both And!

SINCE THE FIRST EARTH DAY IN 1970, incredible environmental goals have been achieved, thanks largely to efforts by people of faith. **The global faith community is a critical voice in overcoming obstacles and integrating environmental issues into political, social and economic agendas.**

The following info is gleaned from: EARTHDAY.ORG

In 2022, we saw climate-induced events that jeopardized our food system. We witnessed record-breaking extreme heat numerous times throughout the country, an unprecedented cold winter in Texas, a historical drought in California, an unseasonal flood in Kentucky, and far too many wildfires to be normal in the western states. Such events are only to name a few of the catastrophes that climate change exacerbates — each with a threat to our food system in the United States.

Climate change creates instability for food production, but the current industrialized food system contributes to climate change as well, creating a cyclical threat to food security, especially for low-income households. The food system includes all stages that food goes through from farm to table to waste bin and all the steps in between.

There are over 100 billion pounds of food waste each year in the U.S., yet more than 38 million people in our country experience hunger.

The current common practice of industrial farming in the U.S. not only hurts the land but the people working the land and farming communities. As Christians and consumers, we must advocate for a food system that is good for the planet and for people. Our food system should reflect our Biblical call to care for our neighbors and the rest of God's creation.

God's creation has food deserts, food swamps, food insecurity, food apartheid?

Food Insecurity: Antithetical to the Gospel by Rev. Dr. Yvette Blair-Lavallais. She is a food justice strategist, social justice advocate, public theologian, and pastor. Her new book is entitled **Scrimpin' and Scrapin': The Hardships and Hustle of Women and Food Insecurity in Texas**. In this book and in her ministry, she raises the questions— what is the church response to food insecurity and, if Jesus feeds the multitudes, why are there people hungry in the first place? The truth is, safe access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food is still not equally available to all, even though there is more than enough food for all. Blair-Lavallais believes the disciples of Jesus are called to address this injustice, which she sees as antithetical to the Gospel. Perhaps now is the time for a new miracle where the disciples of Jesus are being called to identify and dismantle the barriers of “food apartheid” which privilege some and marginalize others. Food apartheid is a term to recognize the root causes of inequity in the food system on the basis of race,

class, and geography...that underscores that this is the result of decades of discriminatory planning and policy decisions.

In a time of climate crisis, disasters of Biblical scale are impacting our communities and the places we love. Today, just like in the Bible, floods and famines show us a deep truth about human life: that our lives are intimately dependent on the land. In our sacred scriptures, we read the stories of creatures made from the soil, whose lives are sustained—physically and spiritually—by the fruits of the land. In these stories, we see how, in the midst of disaster, the land can be fertile ground to sustain ourselves and to take prophetic action for justice.

In the oldest creation story in our sacred scriptures, God bends down into the freshly created soil, picks up a handful, and breathes the breath of life into it. From this soil—this Adamah—God creates the first human—Adam. God then takes Adam and places them in the Garden “to farm it and to take care of it.” (Genesis 2:15, CEB) This verse, which is often translated as “to till and to keep,” means far more than that. It means, as Ellen Davis has written, to “work and serve it, to preserve and observe” the land. From this story, we learn that we are made from the soil, we are inextricably bound to it, and we are obliged to love and care for it. It is good to remind ourselves of this story repeatedly because it tells us of our first and most foundational role here on planet Earth: to farm and take care of God’s planet. This is a role not only for those who grow food, but for any one of us who eats food. We all benefit from life-giving food and food systems, and we suffer when those systems desecrate the land.

Three Biblical passages point to this human-land-food relationship:

- + the hope of planting a vine after the devastation of a flood (Genesis 9)
- + the vision needed in a time of climactic upheaval to care for an entire nation (Genesis 41)
- + the way a simple meal can reveal to us resurrection hope in the midst of death (Luke 24)

It is easy to become overwhelmed or suspicious or tired of news and discussions about climate change, the environment, re-cycling. As Christians, we should be committed to hearing and seeing these issues as: This is God’s Creation! God gave us the rainbow as a sign of commitment to the earth: as Christians and churches it is vital that we commit to responding to our care and love for the Earth.

After all, ... This is God’s Creation.

Open Arms Photo Gallery Photos courtesy of Ian Says



Rest Stop No. 2 Love's - Willis, TX



Rest Stop No. 3 Chevron - Conroe, TX



The Sun is setting in the West.



Nighttime has come and walking onwards toward Tamina.

Open Arms Cyber Sale

An easy way to stock the larder with homemade goods from the Open Arms kitchens. Sales not limited to OA members—open to everyone!

HERE’S HOW YOU DO IT: Shop from the list below. Make your selections. **Send a text to (713-416-0491)** with your selection(s) and your name by April 19. (One exception: Gluten Free Muffins should be ordered by April 18.) Pick up your order on April 23 at church or have it delivered. All proceeds go to the OPEN ARMS FOREVER HOME FUND.

<u>Bake Items</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
8 oz. Tasty Roasted Pecans (made by Kim Williams)	\$5.00 Each	No Limit
Exquisite Italian Cream Cake (baked by Margaret Smith)	\$30.00 Each	2 Orders Available
2 dz. Crispy Sugar Cookies (baked by Norman Swaney)	\$10.00 Each	3 Orders Available
Fire Crackers (prepared by Gaye Fairbanks) 30 crackers per package	\$5.00 Each	4 Orders Available
Sweet and Hot Pickles (spiced up by Gaye Fairbanks)	\$5.00 Each	6 Jars Available
Yummy Peach Cobbler (baked by David Durham)	\$15.00 Each	5 Orders Available
Pineapple-Cherry Cake (baked by David Durham)	\$15.00 Each	5 Orders Available
Fresh Apple Cake (baked by Sue Krueger)	\$20.00	1 Order Available
1 qt. Louisiana Chicken and Sausage Gumbo (stirred up by Ian and Heather Says)	\$10.00 Each	No Limit
Intoxicating Rum Cake (baked by Liz Lemm)	\$30.00	1 Order Available
1 qt. of Spicy Dill Pickles (preserved by Liz Lemm)	\$8.00 Each	3 Orders Available
1 dz. Chocolate Chip Cookies (baked by Carol Foss family)	\$5.00 Each	3 Orders Available
1 dz. Oatmeal Raisin Cookies (baked by Kenneth Reaves)	\$10.00 Each	2 Orders Available
1 dz. Gluten Free Blueberry Muffins (baked by Rev. Carol McAninch) Must be ordered by April 18	\$8.00 Each	
1 dz. Gluten Free Walnut Muffins (baked by Rev. Carol McAninch) Must be ordered by April 18	\$8.00 Each	
Loaf of Flavor-Full Banana Nut Bread (baked by Rev. Bill Royster)	\$10.00 Each	3 Orders Available
Mississippi Mud Cake (baked with “chocolate” by Breezy Mayfield)	\$20.00	1 Order Available
“Light as a Feather” Hummingbird Cake (baked by Gail Royster)	\$20.00 Each	2 Orders Available
Delish Pistachio Loaf (baked by Dr. Carolyn Moore)	\$10.00 Each	No Limit
Lemony Lemon Cake (baked by Leru Poenisch)	\$10.00 Each	2 Orders Available