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## *“You’ve Got To Pass It On”*

**T**he lovely song “Pass it On” tells us that *“It only takes a spark to get a fire going. . . That’s how it is with God’s love. You’ve got to pass it on.”*

The sparks that ignited Christianity and spread it to the world were twelve men, first disciples (students of Christ) and then apostles (sent to deliver His message). In several places in the Bible, Jesus instructs and sends out these selected men. Simon Peter, his brother Andrew, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James and Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the betrayer. They are given power to help others and the skill to preach Jesus’ message; they are encouraged to be humble and to be prepared to suffer. We are told through scripture and legend that each became a major leader in the Christian movement and helped spread the Gospel. In legend, each was martyred for the cause (with the exceptions of John and Judas).

We can read about these “sparks” and their importance—but we need to do more than learn their names and memorize the Bible verses about their acts. In our time, we need to be “sparks,” lighting fires for our Christian faith, spreading the Gospel of Love. Can we keep the fire going at Open Arms and everywhere? Can we look to those Apostles and use them as models for our Christ-like behavior. What did they do? They were strong men who performed acts of kindness; they spread Christ’s message near and far; they were modest and caring and not afraid to sacrifice. *“That’s how it is with God’s love. You’ve got to pass it on.”* We are the sparks now!

## We Remember in Prayer

**P**rayer 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:

- **Gladys Barton**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Anthony Maldonado**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Antonia Rivera**, who has major medical issues.
- **Jean Brooks**, who is restricted to a wheelchair and was in the hospital.
- **Romie Hollins**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Rev. Juvenal Cervantes**, who is home and doing rehab.
- **Tammy Spangler**, who welcomes prayers.
- Our friends, **Rev. John and Han Will**, who welcome prayers.
- **Brenda Mayfield**, dealing with pain.
- **Jim Lemm**, who is facing knee surgery.
- **Gaye Fairbanks**, who has not been well and welcomes prayers.
- **Norman Swaney**, suffering with severe back pain.
- **Everyone affected by the January 24 tornado that ripped through Pasadena and Deer Park.**

## WELCOME GUESTS

**W**e welcome our guests who joined us in worship this past month. Lisa Dove, Margaret “Magpie” Bennett, Will Kearson, Micah Tanner, Brooklyn Brothers, Nyra Yingst, Norma Oliver.

*And to all these qualities  
add love, which binds all things together in perfect unity.*

Colossians 3:14

## ***On The Way To Forever Home***

*“Where there’s a will, there’s a way!”*

**A**t least that’s what the parishioners at Open Arms UCC say as they strive to obtain the capital for a worship center--a “forever home.” And it’s certainly what Rev. Dr. Jules Williams, pastor of Open Arms, and his wife Kim are saying as they plan a fund raiser for the Open Arms’ Forever Home project. **On Friday, March 10, Jules and Kim plan a 41-mile walk from Huntsville to Tamina, just south of Conroe. Forty-one miles!** Jules is asking folks to donate \$5.00 a mile or give a single donation to support this more than worthy cause.

To digress, Open Arms is a new Open and Affirming UCC church in the Spring-Woodlands area. The church is dedicated to ministering and welcoming all “no matter who they are or where they are on life’s journey.” At present, Open Arms meets in the Tamina Community Center and may be seen virtually on Facebook, You-Tube, and Instagram. Open Arms seeks to serve needs in the historic Freedman’s town of Tamina, in local charitable groups in Harris and Montgomery Counties, and in wider causes.

Such a hard-working and dedicated church needs a location from which to do its ministry! When Jules and Kim begin their walk, the Open Arms folks will be with them, following with cars and bikes, manning rest stations, honking and cheering “every step” of the way! Can you help?

**Ways to donate:** CashApp: \$VickyRoyster; Venmo: @Vicky-Royster; <https://get.tithe-ly/search> for Open Arms UCC; check.

### **Mail checks to:**

Open Arms UCC  
25914 Indian Springs Way  
Spring, TX 77373

***Please help us find the way Home.***

**DONATE TODAY!**

Ways to Donate:

CashApp: \$VickyRoyster

Venmo: @Vicky-Royster

<https://get.tithe.ly/>

search for Open Arms UCC

Check



**41 MILE**

**WALK FOR HOME**

STARTING FROM HUNTSVILLE ALL THE WAY TO OPEN ARMS UCC IN CONROE

**FRIDAY, MARCH 10**

SPONSOR US \$5 PER MILE OR SINGLE DONATION

**SUPPORT OUR FOREVER HOME**

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL  
832-368-9551

OR DROP US EMAIL TO  
[office@openarmsucc.org](mailto:office@openarmsucc.org)

[WWW.OPENARMSUCC.COM](http://WWW.OPENARMSUCC.COM)

MAIL CHECKS TO: OPEN ARMS UCC  
25914 INDIAN SPRINGS WAY, SPRING, TX 77373

## “Hats Off To All”

Everyone at Open Arms deserves recognition in January—for boldly stepping into the New Year, for resuming a routine life after a holy and festive holiday, for rejoicing in God’s presence in this community and carrying out God’s work. However, there are a few folks that need special mentioning.

- First, all the OA members who contributed to the Fellowship buffet on January 8<sup>th</sup>. So many delicious dishes crowded together made choosing one’s lunch a real chore! Also, thanks to those who brought friends and neighbors to worship with us on that day: Lisa Dove and Brenda Mayfield.
- Then the “card ladies,” Gail and Pam, deserve praise for organizing a “card crafting” day on January 29, after church. The group will be making cards to cheer recipients of Meals on Wheels and others in need of a little joy. Card Crafters have asked people to bring food, materials, and creative ideas to the session.
- And no list of appreciations would be complete without recognition to our outgoing Council persons who served Open Arms for the 2022 year. They are Bill Royster, Vicky Royster, and Chris Teese.

## A Visit To Fellowship Sunday

January 8, Fellowship Sunday, a really good day, full of spirit, love, **and** fellowship.

We had forty-two in attendance, with six visitors, food for an army, (*really* good food), music from the Praise Team and the choir, and commitment of a new member.

Sometimes people ask, “What would Jesus do?”

Probably, on Fellowship Sunday at OA, he would have prayed with Jules, healed a few aches and pains, filled his plate with food, told us to “Love one Another,” and went outside to baptize anyone who came by. Jesus believed and believes in Fellowship. Always welcome Him in.

## A Note About Christian Education

**W**ith Advent presentations and Christmas activities, Christian education, such as formal Bible Study, has not been observed during the month of December. Various forms of Christian education are planned for the first part of 2023.

**\*Julia Reinhart is Open Arms first Confirmand.** As instructor, Rev. Dr. Jules has assigned Julia units of study and various tasks as she studies the Bible, learns conventions of the church, and determines her role as a Christian—and so much more. What a pleasure to see Julia take on this study all by herself.

**\*Bible study will resume on Wednesday, February 1, via Zoom,** with a look at the responsibilities with which Jesus endowed his Apostles. Bible passages, traditions, and legend tell the reader about these men and what they did. For discussion, what can modern Christians learn from the Apostles that will help them become true “Apostles” and deliver Christ’s message?

**\*Lent begins on February 26.** Regular Bible Study members and those who want a Lenten study will be pleased to have a new leader for a while. Why not plan to join this group, at least for six weeks, and dedicate a time for a special study? Sounds like a great way to prepare oneself for Easter.

## **Opening Our Minds and Hearts To Areas Of Newness: Lit Wits, 2023**

**L**it Wits is a reading group that is open to anyone who loves to read, to learn, to think, and to share. The majority of its members are from Open Arms UCC, but church membership is not required. All are welcome to join with us.

Our mission as a book club is to read and discuss a variety of literature—some classic, some more ordinary, some from other cultures--in order to open our hearts and minds to new experiences, new cultures, and new ways of thinking so that we may grow and be more accepting. With a broader base for our lives, we can truly demonstrate Jesus’ commandment to love one another within our community and the world.

We are a small group, 8 to 10 members. We come together in available meeting rooms, restaurants, and/or member’s homes on the second Tuesday of the month at 6:00 PM to share our monthly reading ventures.

On January 10<sup>th</sup> Pam Mayo was hostess for a discussion of *The Personal Librarian* by Marie Benedict and Victoria Murray. Set in the milieu of cultural New York society in the early 20th century, the book presents many areas about which to talk and share. Racism, class snobbery, greed, family conflicts, hypocrisy, deception—the many aspects of life and human nature that trouble us today are present in this earlier society. A fascinating and timeless read with humor interspersed, the novel is based in history and steeped in art.

On February 7<sup>th</sup> Sarah Rinehart has taken on the task of discussing Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. This much-acclaimed Pulitzer Prize winner tells the story of Sethe, born a slave and escaped to Ohio, struggling with the horror she endured on the plantation Sweet Home. Sethe's new home is haunted by the ghost of one of her dead babies whose tombstone is engraved with a single word, **Beloved**. This novel is Morrison's most "beloved," ranking as one of the most outstanding statements decrying the cruelty of slavery in the United States.

Two very different, very powerful books. Come, join us on our reading journey.

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*Happy Birthday To You*

*Lisa Dove - February 3*

*Angie Gonzaski - February 23*

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## Happy Valentine's Day

**GREETING CARD HISTORY** goes back to the ancient Chinese. To celebrate a New Year, they exchanged greetings of goodwill. Papyrus scrolls were used by the early Egyptians to send greetings. In the British Museum the oldest known greeting card in existence is a **Valentine** card dating back to the 1400's. By the 1800's handcrafted copper plates were produced to meet the large demand.

**WHEN WE COME TO THE END OF EPIPHANY** before the Lenten season begins, this prayer speaks to the Light within us all.

*“Holy Light, shine upon the needs of our world. Reveal to us the anguish and the struggle that so many of our neighbors face every day. But also shine the Light upon the promise of new birth that this season announces. Anchor within us the gift of a Savior and the assurance that the Light always overtakes the darkness.  
Amen.”*



WORSHIP MOVES TO PURPLE  
AS  
WE OBSERVE THE LENTEN

**B**eginning the last Sunday in February, Christian churches will begin the observance of the Season of Lent. After Ash Wednesday you may notice some church grounds will have a cross draped in purple. Many churches may use purple as enhancement of their worship spaces. If clergy wear vestments or stoles, they will be purple.

**So why the color purple?**

- + Churches use purple to emphasize Christ’s sacrifice before His Resurrection.
- + The color purple signified royalty or authority in ancient times.
- + The color purple was used to mock Jesus as the king of the Jews.
- + The color purple reminds us that we dishonor Jesus with our sins.
- + Some people wear the color purple for worship and special times.

A common practice for **Lent** is where you give up something for 40 days and 40 nights. That is symbolic of Jesus’ 40 days and 40-night fast in the desert (**Matthew 4:1-11**). Some suggestions of things you might give up: social media, coffee, TV, arguing, self-hate, perfectionism, the list is endless. In recent years, some Christians have changed the idea of “giving up”; instead “taking on” something, such as daily



meditations, checking on home bound folks, sending note or card to someone who needs a lift, take a meal to a neighbor. That list also is endless.

You or you and your family may have established customs or rituals. If not, Lent is an opportune time to reflect on your faith as you travel through the Lenten season. Perhaps adding or changing as you observe this season of reflection and prayer.

**Jesus rescued the color purple from the pits of sin, anguish, and despair and transformed it into a royal and majestic color.**

*Thank you, Jesus, for doing the same for us.* – Jean Wise

## **Storage Unit Now Available For Use**

**T**hanks to the generosity of the storage facility **Amazing Spaces**, we now have a place to put our stuff! Their policy of free rental to non-profits provides three months at no charge. Following that time period, we may ask for an extension and eventually rent the space at a discounted rate.

**Liz Herrick** has volunteered to be the “keeper of the key” and to handle all things storage. If you want to store something there, contact Liz and she can make it happen.

Currently, the unit is a bizarre collection of children’s furniture, crosses, manger, kitchen items (for our eventual forever place), supplies like cups, etc., a bubble machine, signs, banners, crutches, and many other things you couldn’t possibly imagine. One beloved box has probably 50 coffee mugs given to us from the estate of Pat and Bud Spooner.

It is filling up fast! So, if you have things that belong to Open Arms, and you need space, connect with Liz.

We are blessed to have this gift as we continue to do mission and ministry.

# Black History Month

In 1867, Sojourner Truth, human rights crusader: "Life is a hard battle anyway. If we laugh and sing a little as we fight the good fight of freedom, it makes it all go easier. I will not allow my life's light to be determined by the darkness around me."

## *Hospitality Hints*

**A**s we grow and meet new people, and stream live worship, we need to constantly be mindful of our awesome hospitality and welcome. Some comments that touch on that:

- **Here we go again – nametags!** “Yes, I know everybody and everybody knows me. I’ve been here from the beginning.” Unless you are Brad Pitt, Elon Musk, or Taylor Swift, everybody may not know you or your name... and if a person is a visitor or new person, they likely don’t know who the heck you are. Or maybe they’ve forgotten. Wear your nametag and make sure that visitor has one too. Experts say that the most important word in one’s language is their name. Make them feel really important!
- Andy Stanley, former pastor of North Point Community Church in Atlanta used to say, “The sermon begins in the **parking lot.**” Since Open Arms has little parking, we have to try harder. Once a visitor gets into the entrance, we have to try harder to make up for the lack of parking arrangements.
- Now this is a subtle hint: If you are seated beside a person who cannot or does not stand during the service as appropriate, you can **remain seated** with that person. It likely makes them feel more comfortable and doesn’t stand out. If they decline your effort, then standing is acceptable.
- A good model from the SBC makes this observation: Many churches are good at “Welcome”, but forget the “**Goodbye, Glad you came, and please come again.**” Our Baptist friends should know!

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## *Open Arms Annual Meeting January 22, 2023*

### *A Summary*

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**O**pen Arms annual meeting was held after church on January 22. The meeting covered the year's budget and spending and reports from various persons on their 2022 activities. Rev. Dr. Jules gave an oral report on his pastoral activities and predicted a bright future for Open Arms. Kenneth Reaves, Council President, listed things he had overseen and assisted with during the year. Mission work, Lit wits, Bible Study, the newsletter, the directory, the choir and Praise Team were all mentioned in reports or were acknowledged as part of the year's accomplishments.

The following members were elected to become part of the Council for 2023:

**Carol Foss, Liz Herrick, and Leru Poenisch.**

The most outstanding aspect of New Business was a discussion on achieving a Forever Home by purchasing land or by land and building acquisition. Dr. Williams and Kim plan a 41-mile walk to raise money for the Forever Home Fund on Friday, March 10. All members are asked to become involved in this project in some way.

### Near and Far

**A**t the recent Congregational Meeting, the mission folks helped us recall all the mission activities of 2022. And there were many!

Upon reflecting on the list later, an interesting point stood out. Our mission aid went from Uvalde to Ukraine. What was the common denominator of these ministries? One answer could be that the need was in response to violence – one senseless gun violence, the other senseless war. Sadly, those two places do not stand alone in our thinking about violence. Our country and the globe are blemished with many places where pointless killings and injuries happen.

It is dreadful to say that any good news comes from any of these awful situations. But there is hope – in the form of people, churches, organizations, and even governments that are willing to render aid and comfort and relief and help. That includes **us** - Open Arms UCC. We'll never know how many people were warmed by our CWS blankets, or aided grieving parents, or repaired flooded homes, or fed folks here and there in far places. But we did it anyway – just as Jesus would want us to do.

**REV. DR. JULES WILLIAMS AND WIFE KIM PREPARE FOR A 41-MILE WALK TO RAISE MONEY FOR OPEN ARMS UCC FOREVER HOME FUND**

