



Pastor: Rev. Dr. Jules Williams, Jr.
July 1, 2023

Telephone: 409.998.0339
Volume 3, Number 7

The Power of Three's

WEDNESDAY, 9 P.M., and I'm sitting at my computer making an outline of the contents for the July newsletter. Through the window, I see somewhere in the north a flash of lightning splitting the sky; then, just that fast, the electricity in my home is gone. In the darkness, something starts brutally pelting the roof; then a great wind and a crash louder than an artillery barrage, shaking the earth! I race for the hall and cover my head!

Scroll ahead to the morning, 6 A.M. In the yard, debris and broken trees everywhere. My neighbor's house across the street has half of the front sheared off; and in its stead, a great pine tree blocks all windows and the door. The crash I had heard the night before! In addition to the leafy branches, pine cones, and downed trees, cars line the streets as traffic from Cypress Wood Drive is re-routed through the neighborhood to avoid a broken signal light and pole in the middle of the busy Drive. Three days of blistering heat with no power and heavy clean-up of a trashed-out neighborhood. What could be worse?

Friday morning, I saw the church email 'thought for the day': The gist of the message was that one of the best ways to get out of a bad frame of mind (and mine was bad) is to list three things to be thankful for. The article said, "Cultivating gratitude can give us strength for the hard times. Gratitude reminds us that God is with us and that we are receiving divine gifts every day."

Here are three. I am grateful that I had a cool shelter for those hot days. A neighbor's rent house was empty and a generator ran day and night. There I rested. Second, nobody in the area was injured. Trees went through houses, but they missed the beds! Third, I am grateful for the love extended to me: friends called with concern; neighbors checked on me; my son in law and grandson picked up the yard's biggest debris; my sister and niece were there for me; my daughter—my mainstay--

worried, called, and brought me food; my son and daughter in law were attentive in the midst of storm damage themselves--

I am so fortunate to have these beautiful people in my life. Thank you, God. A song for all: “Count your many blessings, one by one. Count your many blessings—see what God has done.”

We Remember in Prayer

Prayer: 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.
- The **family of Larry Mayo**, who passed away on June 10, 2023.
- **Jean Brooks**, who welcomes prayers as she struggles with various issues.
- **Romie Hollins**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Tammy Spangler**, who plans to enter an experimental program at M. D. Anderson
- Our friends, **Rev. John and Han Will**, who welcome prayers.
- **Brenda Mayfield**, who is dealing with pain.
- **Wanda and Richard Weaver** and others in their family who have various illnesses.
- **Jim Lemm**, who had knee surgery.
- **Tracey Thomas**, who shattered her knee which required surgery, and broke her shoulder.
- **All those who experienced damage after the storm.**
- **Victims of natural disasters.**
- **Victims of violence.**

Welcome Guests

We welcome our guests who joined us in worship this past month.
Micah Tanner, Robert and Ruth Noonan, Jennifer McCartney, Eva Hollins.

Thank You To The Do-Ers And Givers They Are Blessings To Our Church

- *Thanks for the bringers of food for the Unity Breakfast and for helping with luncheon snacks for Achievement Sunday.
- *Thanks to those who coordinated and participated in special worship services on Achievement Sunday and Fathers' Day/Juneteenth Sunday.
- *Thanks to Nia Williams and the entire choir for their work and contribution to Sunday services. These musicians have no place to rehearse, but --they make a place. So, Bill, Barry, Ron, Sue, Gaye, Magpie—our special love and appreciation to you.
- *Thanks to all who are saving “change for change.” Watch for Accounting Sunday, when we bring in the silver to be counted and deposited for Forever Home.
- *And one more BIG thanks to all the attendees at Open Arms. Our attendance is growing if you’ve noticed. Mostly because everybody is getting up on Sunday morning and “getting there.” Please, keep it up! Come and feel the Spirit all around us.

HELP! HELP! HELP! WITH VACCINATION DAY

On July 18, 2023, a Christus Healthy Living Mobile Clinic will be available at Tamina Community Center, 9 a.m.-12 p.m., hosted by Open Arms UCC. The Mobile Clinic will offer free immunizations for children two months to eighteen years, especially in relation to the start of school. The first 30 children will be served. **Please see the flier sent under separate cover.**

Much help is needed with publicity. Fliers need to be posted with local businesses and included on Facebook, Instagram, and all other social media. Fliers need to be placed in Tamina mailboxes and announced at all meetings at the Community Center. Our friends in the Tamina Community need to be aware and to broadcast the visit.

Can you help!! Start now. Don’t worry about duplicate postings. Let’s get the word out. Again, see the flier here or call 713-416-0491. Thanks so much.

Open Arms UCC Answers Food Pleas: July Mission Projects

Interfaith of The Woodlands

INTERFAITH OF THE WOODLANDS, a nonprofit social service agency providing numerous programs and services to meet the needs of our neighbors in South Montgomery County, is making a heartfelt appeal for help with providing essential services to those in need. They are urgently appealing for volunteers and donations to support their food pantry. **They would appreciate monetary donations because they can purchase the items needed at a lower price than we can.**

“Your support of Interfaith of The Woodlands directly impacts the lives of families, children and Senior neighbors facing these pressing challenges,” said Missy Herndon, President and CEO. “Your generosity ensures that Interfaith of The Woodlands continues to meet the growing needs of our community while providing life-changing programs and vital resources to help keep our neighbors self-sufficient,” said Herndon.

The summer break poses unique challenges for families, as children who rely on school meals may go without proper nutrition. For vulnerable households already facing financial hardships, providing three meals a day can be an overwhelming burden. Interfaith of The Woodlands’ Food Pantry plays a crucial role in preventing food insecurity. Food Pantry needs have increased by 25% since this time last year and the need is expected to continue to grow. Additionally, supply chain issues are a major challenge, making it increasingly more difficult to stock the Food Pantry through grocers and local food resources. Also, volunteer needs continue to grow, and two specific programs are in the greatest need of support: The Hand Me Up Shop and drivers to assist transportation-dependent Senior neighbors to essential appointments.

Another Plea for Food from Montgomery County Food Bank

MONTGOMERY COUNTY FOOD BANK is also in need of food. Open Arms UCC has been very involved and generous with our giving to the Montgomery County Food Bank in our three years. Since our beginnings, mission sharing has been one of our core values. **Montgomery County**

Food Bank would appreciate monetary donations because they can purchase the items needed at a lower price than we can.

Not only have we supported Montgomery County Food Bank, Houston Food Bank, and Tamina Community Center's bread pantry, but also several other helping agencies in our near community. And our food outreach has gone as far as Ukraine.

Since the current need for life-sustaining food is so great, we likely will have opportunities to share and serve with those in need. "Because we saw you when you were hungry."

**"Hello, God. It's Your Servant at Open Arms UCC,
Looking To Spend a Little Time with You!"**

AND HOW CAN WE "SPEND A LITTLE TIME WITH GOD" in a calm and private setting? Thankfully, we can seek out God through our own special message on the Open Arms email/Facebook page each day. We now have a meditation, prayer, and scripture offered regularly for our individual worship. **Vicky Royster and Dr. Carol McAninch are providing us with this material.** In these readings, you will find something sustaining and thought provoking and holy. For inspiration, turn to these thoughts each day!

Sunday Morning Spiritual Development

On Sunday, May 25, Open Arms started a new course for spiritual development. As a guide, the class is using *15 Ways of Doing Prayer* by Kristen Johnson Ingram, but buying the book is not necessary. Through the practices in this book, the group will explore ways in which members can become still so that they can hear God speaking with them and so that they can make space for the Spirit to pray for them in all times.

Come join this class at 9:00 A.M. on Sunday and give it a try! You will be blessed

¢ A Forever Home Fund-Raiser ¢

THE NEWEST/LATEST FUND-RAISER for our Forever Home, is a project called “Change for Change.” So simple and so helpful. Take a jar or jug or can, put it by your door or dresser in a very visible spot. Each evening when you empty your pockets or your purse, put your change in the chosen receptacle. In a couple of months (or sooner if you wish) we will have an “Accounting Sunday,” a day for you to bring your change and turn it in.

The “change” can come in as loose change, or rolled coins, or a check from a counting machine total. On Accounting Sunday, present your change in whatever form you wish to Kim Williams, Pam Mayo, or Margaret Smith. We will roll the coins, if necessary, and come up with a **total count** (no comparison of how much **each** brought) of what we raised this session. That total will be our way of evaluating the program and keeping up with the results. After “rolling in the silver,” we will put the loot in Vicky’s sweet little hands and have her add it to the Forever Home Fund. Bet-cha we’ll be surprised as what we’ve been able to do.

P.S. I have heard that two families have already brought in change. You don’t have to wait for “Accounting Sunday” if your donation is weighing on your mind! Give it to Kim!



The Houston Association Plans a Multi Church VBS

The Houston Association of the South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ is in the planning stages of hosting a multi church Vacation Bible School for the churches of the Houston Association on **Thursday, August 3 - Saturday, August 5, 2023**.

We are looking to attract families with kids ages 4-12, although youth ages 13+ and adults are encouraged to volunteer. We will be using the **“On the Case” curriculum from Grow**. This curriculum offers a variety of activities for children to begin to explore matters of faith, including engaging worship music, age-appropriate skits, creative crafts, high-energy games, small group discussions, and even themed snacks!

We would love your help putting together this event. We are looking at a variety of tasks, such as:

- Volunteering on the planning committee, or naming a liaison from your church
- Promoting registration at your campus
- Providing volunteers to lead worship and/or station activities
- Providing snacks and drinks for the children
- Helping to decorate the space

Please let Jay Drummond, Minister of Congregational Life at St. Peter United (mocl@stpeterunited.com), know whether you are interested in filling one of these roles.

Lit Wits — Crimes in Australia and Biloxi — What Evil Humans Do

On June 20 (one week later than scheduled), Lit Wits met at 6:00 p.m. to discuss *Homecoming*, Kate Morton's latest suspense novel about a 1958 crime that in 2018 had not been satisfactorily solved. The trail to the solution of this crime is winding and mind-bending, culminating in a shocking conclusion. Vicky Royster led us through all the questions and fed us salad and pizza to keep us calm!

John Grisham, one of the most prolific and successful American writers of this time, is the author of the July book, *The Boys from Biloxi*. Set on the Gulf shores, the story involves two sons of immigrant families who grow up together, but ultimately find themselves on opposite sides of the law, one as District Attorney, one as crime kingpin in Biloxi. Their conflict pushes the plot along to a powerful conclusion. *Boys from Biloxi* was well-received and stayed on the Best Seller list for several months this year. Meet with us on July 11, 6 p.m. to discuss Grisham's latest!

LOOKING FORWARD TO GAME NIGHT!

Mark your calendars this very minute—Game Night at the Mayo's on Friday, July 14, at 6:30 p.m. Bring your game cards and board games and snacks to share. RSVP by phone, 713-416-0478, or by email, psmayo@sbcglobal.net

Thanks to Greg and Pam for hosting this party. Attend and learn to play (as well as to pray) with your Open Arms family.



Happy Birthday to You

Nia Williams – July 1
Jackson Sanders – July 7
Colton Sanders – July 7
Kendall Moore – July 22
Brenda Mayfield – July 26

Monthly observances in July include: Grilling Month, Family Reunion Month, Black Family Month, Picnic Month, Ice Cream Month, Hot Dog Month, Anti-Boredom Month, Purposeful Parenting Month, World Watercolor Month, and Make a Difference for Children.

July 4 – Independence Day

July 11 – Lit Wits at 6 p.m.

July 14 – Game Night at the Mayo's at 6:30 p.m.

July 18 – Vaccination Day at Tamina Community Center – 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

HELLO, JULY



**North American names for
July's full month,
which will be on Monday, July 3, 2023:
Buck Moon, Thunder Moon, Hay Moon.**

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

from Proverbs 16:18 - Pride goes before a fall

from Matthew 5:41 – Go the extra mile

from Psalm 34:18 – Broken heart

“Did you remember to say Thank You?”

His name was The Rev. Ed Melhoff. He served the South Central Conference UCC as Conference Minister for many years back in the day. Ed was known for his sayings, be they funny, true, smart, etc. Some of those sayings can't be written here, but one of importance was:

“Did you remember to say Thank You?”

Ed explained that the church is very good at asking for things (often \$\$), but all too often forget to say, “THANK YOU!”

If the mission team has neglected to say Thank You for all the generosity from our Open Arms community, we're here to say it **THANK *so much* YOU!** now:

We are known for our unselfish willingness to share with others. So, for our absentmindedness in the past, present, and future, thank you.

SPEAKING OF THANK YOU, Open Arms has recently received two correspondences of thanks.

* Church World Service acknowledged our donation for blankets. We were reminded that each blanket we give, carries the message: "You're not alone. Someone cares."

* The American Red Cross notes that our giving truly makes an impact in the lives of those suffering and heartbroken.

SPEAKING OF GIVING, Open Arms has been exceptionally generous to the ministry of the Star of Hope. That agency is one of the largest and most responsive to varying needs of many in the Houston and surrounding areas. Pam Mayo organized and delivered lovely Mother's Day gift bags for one of the shelters. A carload of hygiene products given by our supporters (us) were delivered to their distribution center. A total of \$775 was sent to be used for purchase of additional hygiene items.

"If there's life, there is 'Hope'." Stephen Hawking

kind words are like honey
sweet to the soul
and healthy for the body.

Proverbs 16:24

The Ten Commandments of Gardening

Thou shall be patient till it's thyme to garden.

Thou shall be outstanding in thy field.

Thou shall lovingly care for the Earth.

Thou shall weed thy garden diligently.

Thou shall take time to smell the flowers.

Thou shall keep a fresh from the garden attitude.

Thou shall give freely of the bounty of thy harvest.

Thou shall not covet thy neighbor's soil.

Thou shall listen to your Garden Angels.

Thou shall bloom where you are planted and grow strong under God's tender care.

Taken from: <http://www.gardendigest.com>

Open Arms Photo Gallery



Gail Royster Delivering Hygiene Donations to the Star of Hope Mission.