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Looking Through New Lenses

“I am not a church person!” “I am not into religion!” The previously mentioned statements are what I hear when someone learns that I am a pastor. Normally, I don't say that I am a pastor so that people will not start acting weird around me (YEP, IT HAPPENS).

Oftentimes, I smile when I hear the above statements because I am not a "church" person or a "religious" person. However, I am a believer in the beauty and power of being a part of a community of people seeking to help others find wholeness in a world fractured by fleshy ego-centered thoughts and behaviors. In addition, I am not a "religious" person but I understand the beauty and power of connecting with the source of all life through prayer, meditation, and contemplative reading. One of my missions as an awakened person is to reframe what it means to be a church while embracing a non-religious but eternally connected view of self, life, and others. Reframing internal patterns of thought about church has the ability to cause a shift in how an individual influences their milieu and the internal and external lives of people seeking light in a darkened society.

Remember that Christ reframed how people lived, prayed, and engaged others during his life/ministry.

Peace,
Rev. Jules Williams, Jr.

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 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.
- **Gail Royster**, who has health issues.
- **Linda Mitchell**, who is experiencing circulatory problems.
- The family of **Russell G. Davis**, who passed away on April 17, 2022.
- **All who have been affected by COVID-19.**

Welcome Guests

We welcome our guests who joined us in worship this past month. Eva Hollins, Emma Nunez and Justin Brunson, Veronica and Kaitlin (Emmie) Burns, Taylor Herrick, Kathy Harvey.

**HAPPY
MOTHER'S DAY
MAY 8**

May's Mission --- New Haven

As Mother's Day approaches, we have received a request for donations to the New Haven program. New Haven provides permanent supportive housing and services for chronically homeless single men and women diagnosed with mental, emotional, or physical disabilities, or experiencing co-occurring disorders.

Open Arms UCC will be providing twenty gift bags to be given to the moms in the New Haven program during a special Mother's Day luncheon. We are asking that your May mission offering go towards the cost of the bags and their contents.

Thank you for your support. You make such a difference in the lives of those most vulnerable through your passion for serving, giving, and sharing abundant unconditional love.

If you'd like to help deliver the bags to the New Haven facility on Monday, May 2nd, please contact Pam Mayo at 713-316-0478. New Haven would like to take pictures as we present the bags.

Pam



Houston Association of the South Central Conference Meeting Saturday, May 7, 2022

The Houston Association of the South Central Conference of the United Church of Christ will meet in person on Saturday, May 7, 2022 at Bering United Church, 1440 Harold St., Houston, TX 77006 from 8:30 AM until 12:00 PM. Breakfast and a light lunch will be served. **Open Arms UCC will be accepted into the Association so as many of our members need to attend this important meeting!** It will be a time to share and celebrate our accomplishments. The Association is also in need of filling some important board positions. Moderator, Vice Moderator, Secretary, Treasurer, etc. Please make plans to attend this important meeting and consider serving in a position in the wider church.

Those We Appreciate

Much gratitude to many Open Arms people! Here are few we say “thank you” to.

- ❖ Thanks to Kenneth and David, always, for allowing use of their beautiful home for church business. Their patio was the perfect place for our Bible Study meeting last week.
- ❖ Thanks to Chris Teese, Dr. Kendall Moore, and Elise Daulley for their individual lessons to the Bible Study group. “The Bible and Homosexuality,” “The Bible and Semitism, “Psalms and Songs” opened us to new avenues in our Bible reading.
- ❖ Thanks to the many people who contributed to the solemnity of Lent and the beauty of Easter at Open Arms: to Pastor Jules for his powerful messages and meaningful services, to Gail Royster for her hangings, banners, and decorations, to Norman Swaney for his three crosses that remind us of Jesus’ suffering and sacrifice, crosses that were used several times for worship and that will be used again in the future.
- ❖ Thanks to Rev. Ron Krueger for showing us a new way of looking at Jesus’ agony on the cross, for helping us realize that during our difficult times, Jesus is with us: Christ knows suffering and in his ever-present spirit with us, we can find great comfort. This writer cannot do justice to a paraphrase of Ron’ message so appropriate for the Sunday after Easter.

Corrections and/or Changes to Open Arms Directory

Correction on Page 2: The Open Arms Council 2022 listing for Vice President Ian Says’s email address. Change Ian’s Email address to: **ianpsays@gmail.com**

Correction on Page 5: For Cobb, Robert and Hontz, Tim
Change Robert’s Birthday to: **September 16**

Changes on Page 9: For Sanders, Jonathan and Claudia
Change Claudia’s cell number to: **832-960-1860**
and Claudia’s Email address to: **clau.sanders91@gmail.com**

Future Events in 2022

As we get prepared for our **May 14** Celebration, let's remember what's coming up in the future.

June 19th is a special day. What can we do to make it meaningful at Open Arms? Any ideas?

Also, we have **July 4th** coming up in a couple of months: What do we want to do to commemorate our country's 246th birthday?

A yet to be named Saturday in **August** is a time for **back-to-school** preparations. Many ideas have been floating around for **a fall party/time of service** to others.

We need to gather these ideas up and start making plans now.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY WISHES

SARAH RINEHART – MAY 2

JIM LEMM – MAY 13

TIM HONTZ – MAY 20

CAROLYN MOORE – MAY 20

ELNA SWANEY – MAY 22

VIVIEN ELISE MAYO – MAY 23

MATT ROYSTER – MAY 28

Open Arms April Offering and Mission Totals

Missions (OGHS) - \$625.00

Offerings - \$4,665.60

Books that Show the Importance of People in our Lives: Lit Wits Choices for April and May

On April 12, Lit Wits met at Wunsche Bros. Café and Saloon to discuss **THE MIDNIGHT LIBRARY** in an exchange of ideas led by Brenda Ruegge. Brenda took us through the various choices and people that character Nora Seed faced as she viewed a variety of paths her life could have taken. The book was fantasy as each of the scenarios Nora experienced could have occurred, given her background and talents. The outcome: Nora returns to her real life, comforted by the realization that she can find positive meaning in what she thought was a useless existence. A great book, a great read, recommended for everybody.

On May 10, again at Wunsche Bros., Donna Gonzaski will lead the group in a review of **PEOPLE WE MEET ON VACATION**, a light, fun love story. A review of the book states, “Two best friends Ten summer trips. One last chance to fall in love.” Sounds like delightful summer reading and a book to look forward to.

We meet at 6:00 P.M., order Wunsche Bros. specialties, and eat our way through the discussion. Come and join us if you like to read and talk about what you read.

Let's Look at The Bible

From front to finish, this great book deepens our understanding of history, of the importance of faith, and of the power of God. Our overview of the Bible at Open Arms has uncovered attitudes prevalent in various cultures and peoples and revealed many other facets of this document presented to us by the guidance of a powerful Hand. Our own Bible Study group has brought us new ideas and insights. Chris Teese centered his lesson on the Bible and Homosexuality, Dr. Kendall Moore taught us about the Bible and Anti-Semitism, and Elise Daulley has presented fantastic details that she gleaned from a study of the Psalms and some of the songs derived from them. And that's just the beginning. We plan to look at the role of women in the Bible, the use of prophecy in the Bible, and so much more. As we continue to delve into the Bible, we find our faith deepening. Pray we never lose our right to read, to translate, to interpret, and to love this wonderful pillar of our faith.

Vision Meeting in April

The Vision group met after church on April 21 to share ideas from each of the church's committees. Two subjects were the main focus of the meeting: (1) grants, grant opportunities, and grant follow-ups; (2) budgeting for mission giving.

In terms of grants, the \$15,000 CASA grant requires follow-up with a coach who is to help guide the church in working on its Smart Goals. Our goals are to obtain a meeting place of our own with appropriate furnishings and equipment for us to function as a caring, out-reach mission church. Rev. Don Egan is our coach, challenging us to think about where we are going and to plan the ways we can work on our goals.

The issue of budgeting a monthly or annual amount for missions resulted in debate. Some felt limiting mission spending was not appropriate for our church group; others felt such action was practical for a church trying to afford a place to put down roots so it could continue to invest in mission work for a long, long time. Participants are struggling to find a compromise between the two ideas. This impasse calls for prayer from all of us.

Easter Sunday, April 17, 2022 at Open Arms



Both the invitation and flyer for Open Arms' May 14 celebration was sent to the South Central Conference and was included in their April 28, 2022 eNews Weekly Update.

A Time of Celebration at Open Arms UCC

You are invited to a special day of celebration for Open Arms, a new UCC church in the Woodlands/Tamina area. This occasion will acknowledge our blessings, successes, and other achievements as we shake off Covid-19 and survey our short time as a body of Christ in Harris and Montgomery Counties just north of Houston. We rejoice in two years as an open church that welcomes all— “no matter who they are or where they are on life’s journey.”

To mark this blessed time, we plan a fun-filled festival for everyone: music, door prizes, a display of body building and weight-lifting skills, hula-hooping lessons, a plant sale, a bake sale, face painting—who knows what else—and food, food, food! This event is a pre-summer blast-off that will offer us a time to meet and mingle with our neighbors in Tamina and the surrounding area.

The date is May 14th from noon until 5:00 pm at the Tamina Community Center, 18955 Main Street, just off I-45 North, at the Tamina Road exit. All are invited to the party; come and see a new part of Houston you may have never visited before.

Call 832-368-9551 for more information.





LET'S KICK OFF

SUMMER!

Music, Face Painting, Hula Hooping
Plant Sale, Bake Sale, Food, and more!!

May 14th, Tamina
Community Center

The festivities
begin at 12pm!



ALL ARE WELCOME!!

