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<b>October 1, 2021</b>	<b>Volume 1, Number 6</b>

# Words of Inspiration

*I want to share the words my sons penned on their Facebook page after we all experienced the unthinkable at church. We never know how much we influence someone, but it's good to know that I have made a mark in the lives of my three young adult children. May we all inspire someone along life's journey.*

## Why Do We Lift?

**O**n the morning of Sept 5, 2021, at 9:20 am, I heard my mother screaming from outside the venue as we were setting up for church. Our dad collapsed on a bench, and his eyes were wide and rolled back into his head, and he was foaming at the mouth. Mustapha got to him to prevent him from falling onto the concrete, and Nia called 911 as I held him in my lap. He was struggling to breathe and fighting for air. He was dying. EMTs arrived in a few minutes, and they initially couldn't get him on the stretcher due to his mass. But Mustapha and I were able to help get him on the stretcher. It's incredibly surreal to lift your father onto a stretcher as he's close to death right in front of you, especially with your mother crying beside you. I remembered years and years ago how my father carried my grandfather Jules Williams Sr. onto a stretcher after he died.

Once our dad got to the hospital and went into surgery for blood clots in his lungs, he went into ICU to begin the recovery process. The doctors told him he was fortunate to survive the ordeal. They said anyone else would've died during the initial collapse and loss of breath. Because of his cardiovascular endurance and years of strength training, he was able to hold on long enough until he got to the hospital. The average person wouldn't have been able to fight for breath as long as he did. He fought what should've been a 1-2 minutes death for close to 15 minutes. It was like one extensive high rep set of lifting. He is truly the strongest man we've ever known.

His lifestyle saved his life in the end. He brought us into this lifestyle long ago. Our strength enabled us to get his 312lb frame onto the stretcher. We lifted his upper and lower back from the heaviest parts while the paramedics reached the rest. If we wouldn't have been strong enough, I don't know how long it would've taken the paramedics to get him onto the stretcher by themselves. His lifestyle ultimately saved his life. He is the

reason why we all lift weights and help others live healthier lives. He is our motivation to train even when we are tired after a long day of helping other people reach their health goals. Since Day 1, his motto has always been "Lift For Life." In the end, he truly did lift for life.

*Pastor Jules Williams, Jr.  
Open Arms UCC*

**Great Blessings for Open Arms:  
A Pastor Restored to Health  
And New Membership in The Congregation**

**T**his has been a time of great blessings for our church. First, our beloved pastor had a life-threatening incident from which he survived. Thanks to his family, modern medicine, fervent prayers of Open Arms parishioners, and God's everlasting mercy, God truly blessed us all with Rev. Jules' recovery and return to the pulpit.

On Sunday, September 19, we experienced another significant blessing. We were privileged to welcome seven new members to our fellowship. All the way from Colorado, we have Sylvia and Barlow Bradbury; we also greet Brenda Mayfield; from Oregon, comes Jean Brooks, a long-time UCC member; Heather Marie Meinhart from Montgomery, Texas; Leru Poenisch, who drives in from Clear Lake; and Liz Herrick, a Conroe native. A big welcome to these dedicated folks who have pledged to be a part of Open Arms. On that same day, the remainder of our group re-pledged their membership to Open Arms.

So great to sing "We are the Church" with new and old voices. "All who follow Jesus, all around the world! Yes, we're the Church together." Praise God for all our blessings!

**Welcome Guests**

**W**e welcome our guests who joined us in worship this past month. Liz and Jim Lemm; Pearl and Eddrick Edwards, Rev. Jules' cousins.

## We Remember in Prayer

**P**rayers 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:

- **Brother Moore**, as he seeks to get back up on his feet.
- **Olive Baer**, who has limited mobility.
- **Cheryl Jett**, who has back issues.
- **Bud Spooner**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Marjorie Meier**, who is living in a memory care facility.
- **Paula Haley**, who is living with Parkinson's disease.
- **Sudie Ferguson**, who will be receiving physical therapy.
- **Gladys Barton**, who welcomes prayers.
- **John Rehling**, who is living with heart failure.
- **Kevin**, who welcomes prayers during his illness.
- **Carol Foss**, who fell and injured herself.
- **Anthony Maldonado**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Tammy Spangler**, who welcomes prayers.
- **Mack Joseph**, who welcomes prayers.
- The Family of **Jim Fairbanks**, remembrances can be left at William Fairbanks Obituary - Houston, TX ([dignitymemorial.com](http://dignitymemorial.com)).

## An Invitation to Slumber Falls

**S**omething to look forward to: You're invited to First Congregational Church of Houston's October 8-10 annual all-church retreat at Slumber Falls Camp in New Braunfels, Texas. First Congregation would like to open this retreat to the Houston Association and to any and all SCC churches who would like to participate. If you have ever wanted to attend a retreat at Slumber Falls, but your church couldn't meet the minimum number requirement to reserve the facility, this is your opportunity! If you have any questions about the retreat or would like to register, please contact Sue Earl at [jearli8925@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jearli8925@sbcglobal.net).

## A Special Day . . . .A Special Guest in October

**O**n **October 31, 2021**, Open Arms UCC will have the pleasure of hosting Rev. Phil Hodson, new Conference Minister, South Central Conference, United Church of Christ. Rev. Hodson will preach during the morning worship service at Pallotta's Banquet Room. His text will be Psalm 65: 1-11, and his message will be titled "Pick Three." Rev. Hodson comes to bring support to us in every way, and he will be available for a Q and A session during the time he is with us. As part of the meeting, we will celebrate with an Open Arms catered lunch prepared by Pallotta's Italian Restaurant. Please mark your calendars now for this date as we begin our partnership with Rev. Hodson in our ongoing process of church development. If you wish, call the church office for more information.

The Bible always has the right words: "Give him a grand welcome, a joyful embrace. People like [Rev. Hodson] deserve the best you can give." *Philippians 2:29*

## The Wednesday Forum: A Busy Evening

**T**he following actions and issues were noted at the September 22 meeting.

1. Rev. Royster will make one more call on the owners of the "little white church" to see if satisfactory agreements about its use can be reached.
2. Members voted to actively pursue land purchase as a location for building a church. Kim Williams will look for available locales.
3. Lay readers were appointed; choir practice is scheduled; Children's Time during worship was offered to various members.
4. Ian Says and Kenneth Reaves are studying to be "techie" volunteers to assist Peter and Vicky Royster in setting up for church.
5. Members continue to work on grants and to attend UCC denominational meetings for information about various subjects.
6. New member Barlow Bradbury will be teaching a Bible Study class for Open Arms in the near future.
7. Mission project for October will be Neighbors in Need. The church continues to supply a local food pantry and to provide meals for Food for Friends.

## A September Thanks -----

### Honoring the Good Guys! We Mention Just A Few

- ❖ Thanks to the performers at the Stone Soup Children's Time. With no rehearsal at all, they acted out the story using theatrical expression. Who could forget the uncooperative hats of the soldiers and the vigorous dancing by the villagers! Much fun with a good lesson on sharing.
- ❖ Thanks to our Sunday morning greeters, Kenneth, David, and Rev. Jules. So good to see such welcoming faces.
- ❖ Thanks to those who brought food for the Tamina food pantry. Remember the last Sunday of the month is the day we refresh the pantry shelves at the community center.
- ❖ Thanks to Ian and Heather Says for sponsoring the Open Arms booth at The Woodlands Pride festival.
- ❖ Thanks to Bill Royster for so much, including his persistent search for a place of worship.
- ❖ Thanks to all of those who drive so far to worship with the Open Arms congregation. Folks come from Huntsville, Willis, Conroe, Montgomery, Cypress, Aldine, and Clear Lake. That, my dears, is devotion!

### BIBLE STUDY: AN EVENING WITH THE PARABLES

**A** while back, a popular line, if one was in a conflicting or disturbing situation, was the question "What would Jesus do?" The meaning: what would Jesus do to handle the situation; his action would be the best--the most appropriate.

There's one way to discover what Jesus would do in all manner of circumstances--study the parables. Jesus used these symbolic stories to tell his audience, and us, how to handle the problem, how to live.

At Open Arms we have been studying these parables to discover more about how to function in a world fraught with issues. We have looked at parables regarding man and money: sharing wealth, using it in shrewd ways, giving it with

humility. We have looked at parables about man and loss and have seen God's great love for each of us if we become lost.

We look forward to more lessons in the parables. Won't you join us on October 5th and 19th from 5:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. on Zoom and study with us. Let's learn more about what Jesus would do.

<p><b>SEPTEMBER MISSION FOR OPEN ARMS:</b> <b>HELP FOR THOSE IN NEED</b></p>
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**T**he September mission for Open Arms is help for the island of Haiti. A UCC Haiti Appeal seeks to raise \$100,000 for Immediate relief and longer-term recovery for thousands of Haitians reeling from the one-two punch of the deadly destructive 7.2 earthquake, August 14, in western Haiti, followed by tropical storm Grace. Haiti is a land torn by problems of many types. We pray that our donations, plus contributions from our sister churches, will help achieve the UCC's goal.

Open Arms delivers help in the local community also. The congregation gathers goods the last Sunday of each month and transports the groceries on Sunday afternoon to a local community center food pantry that collects and distributes food for needy citizens. Open Arms also prepares dinners once a month for disabled, senior citizens, or others in need. If you can be a part of either of these programs or if you know someone who would benefit from our services, call the Open Arms church office.

**Our mission project for October will be Neighbors in Need.** NIN is a special offering of the UCC supporting ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States.

**Strong Women, Lots of Wind, And A Wild Assault!  
Sounds Like an Exciting Book Club!**

**T**hey call themselves the Lit Wits. They read and talk about the books they have read. They invite you to join them, bringing your ideas and insights with you. They meet every Tuesday of the month at 6:00 P.M. via Zoom and/or at members' homes.

On Tuesday, September 14, the group discussed **The Four Winds** by Kristin Hannah, about a woman, Elsinore, who struggles to protect and care for her children in unfriendly environments: the Dust Bowl of the Depression years and the deprived existence of the California migrant worker in the same time period. Those who love American history and enjoy reading about courage in the face of challenge will cherish this book.

On October 11, Donna Gonzaski will lead the discussion of **Love is a Wild Assault** by Elithe Hamilton Kirkland. This book chronicles the life of another brave woman, Harriett Page Potter Ames in early Texas. Based on Harriett's actual memoirs and other historical documents, the book brings to life the adventure, romances, hardship, and survival that she experienced during the violent and tumultuous era of Texas' birth.

I, for one, can hardly wait to read about Harriett's exploits. Please get a copy and read with me.

**Happy Birthday**

**Elise Daulley – October 15**

**Vicky Royster – October 16**

**Heather Says – October 22**

**Barry Fairbanks – October 23**

**Sue Mallott – October 23**

**Rev. Bill Royster – October 31**

## LATEST NEWS!

Open Arms United Church of Christ has been designated an OPEN AND AFFIRMING CHURCH by the Open and Affirming Coalition of the United Church of Christ. This designation means that **all** who want or need a place of worship or nurturing, no matter their sexual orientation or gender identity, are welcome at Open Arms.

The Open and Affirming Membership Covenant of Open Arms reads as follows:

We will walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known to us forever. . . We vow to cherish the endless and inclusive love of Jesus Christ and model that love on our walk together, holding hands in community and fellowship with persons of all sexual orientations or gender identities, knowing we are all children of the same family and the same God.

Constitution by-laws, Part B Amendments

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### A CLOSING THOUGHT

“Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can,  
As long as ever you can.”

John Wesley