

Arms Of Love

Newsletter



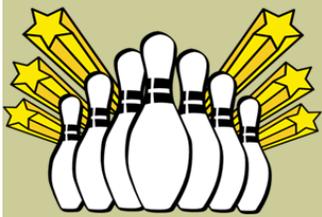
PRAY WITHOUT CEASING...
Bro. Stroud takes the Word seriously!!

THE VISION AND INTRODUCTION OF ARMS OF LOVE NEWSLETTER



YAMS, MAMS AND SAMS—FAMILY OF ARMS ENJOYING ONE ANOTHER

BOWLING



One of the great events put on by MAMS, but they fellowshiped also with YAMS and SAMS.

An enjoyable time for all.

"We Are Family"

When the ARMS program was introduced, a thought came to my mind to do a newsletter. My first thought was to do it with my focus on the MAM group only, however on second thought, I decided to see how Bro. Brooks felt about it. Looking at him as we talked, it



was as if I could see a light bulb go off in his head. Pausing a moment, he smiled and then said, "Okay, you be the Editor and do it collectively for all ARMS."

He told me how informative this newsletter could be and how much fun it would be developing it. His suggestion was for me to put together a team to help me so I did. The members of Team Arms of Love Newsletter are: Ida Leffall, Charli Lewis, Rolanda McHellen, Lula Morris, Joan Teamer and Genette Williams. We can hardly contain the excitement we feel about sharing the ARMS news with our Highland Heights family as well as churches of Christ all over.

One of our main goals is to distribute our publication by email. This should keep down the publishing and distribution costs. So with that in mind, we are asking all ARMS Coordinators to submit the email addresses of all the members in your group to us at: sivaddz@hotmail.com or you can give them personally to Charli Lewis or Genette

Williams. In addition to the email distribution, there will also be copies of the newsletter spread around the building for those who may not have email addresses. But our main goal is to get it out to you by email.

Future issues will feature interviews with our Leads, Co-Leads, oldest members (SAMS), youngest members (YUMS), etc. As you can see from this newsletter we have pictures of ARMS events throughout and we plan to continue this trend of sharing activities and information. So please see or contact Rolanda McHellen or Ida Leffall if you have pictures or other information to submit.

We want our newsletter to be fun, factual and to show how we fellowship one with another. Highland Heights is a family of members who show love, and we want that love to show through this newsletter.

I want to thank my ARMS OF LOVE News Team for all of their hard work and dedication.

Editor

Zerlene Moore-Davis



ARMS OF LOVE

We are a family that loves unconditionally.

Holding each other up when the storms of life comes

And fellowshiping with each other when life's sunlight shines.

We care not only for each other, but the needs of our



neighbor, as God commands.

Our ARMS embrace our weaknesses and our strengths. We hold each other together, as we give God the glory for all things:

Inside this issue:

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INTERVIEW WITH BROTHER TOMMY BROOKS

by
ula Morris



Over the past few months our congregation has been on fire with excitement engaging in activities relating to our new Age Related Ministries Program (ARMS). The ARMS Program's mission is to provide the churches of Christ a program that will help improve upon retaining the saved, restoring lost members and baptizing new members. Each age related ministry serves member in a particular age group.

Our very own Minister, Brother Tommy Brooks conceived, developed and implemented this highly unique, and as far as we can determine "one of a kind" program. With this in mind, our Newsletter servants thought it only fitting and proper to honor our maiden issue of ARMS OF LOVE Newsletter by featuring a talk with Brother Brooks regarding our new and innovative ARMS Program.

As most of you know Brother Brooks has been proudly proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ for over thirty years, with the last ten years here at Highland Heights. His zeal for preaching the gospel is a story in its own rights and one we all know well. How many times have we heard him begin his sermons with "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice." Very familiar, right? But how many of you are aware that along with his gospel preaching, he developed and hosted three weekly Spiritual Growth Conference Calls heard all over the nation; teach several classes to include a Ministerial Class, Personal Evangelism Class, Spiritual Growth Bible Hour, VIP Class and a Phase 1 Class.

In addition to his other ministerial related tasks including preaching at countless Gospel Meetings and Lectureships, he

has authored three books, along with six New Testament Character Studies, all published by 21st Century Christian Publishing. He also authored a contributing chapter in the 2015 Pearls Study Series - Lads to Leaders Youth Study Book.

It is easy to see our Minister is quite busy and does not have a lot of extra time on his hand. However, when I asked if he would do this interview, he was very gracious about taking on yet another task. And so, on one Tuesday afternoon, sandwiched between teaching the Tuesday Noon Bible Class and the Personal Evangelism Class, we talked. The interview was held in Zerlene Moore Davis' Office. Zerlene is our Church Secretary and Editor of this Newsletter. We invited her to join us in the interview. Brother Brooks eagerly took a seat in between Zerlene's desk and the desk where I was sitting.

He is, as most members at Highland Heights can attest to, always very excited when it comes to talking about the ARMS Program and this day was no exception. As the interview began he sat in his chair looking first at Zerlene and then at me. It was quite obvious he was ready to talk. His infectious joy over anything ARMS related radiated out over the room and before long - as he talked, both Zerlene and I noticed we were smiling also and just as enthused.

Sis. Morris: Brother Brooks thank you for having this talk with us. Why did you want to develop this type program?

Bro. Brooks: I have been in the ministry for 32 years and have always counted myself to be a successful Minister of the Gospel. Primarily because I know that I

am able to evangelize and baptize a lot of people. I have been called throughout the nation to talk to other congregations about the success of baptisms. I am often presented the question about retention and that question I have always answered in a way that said, "You know in the case of Jesus healing ten lepers, only one remained with him which was a ten percent ratio or retention rate of those who Jesus was able to keep after he healed them and so in my mind if we baptized a hundred and we kept ten we have done pretty good." However somewhere down deep in my heart I wanted a better answer. I wanted to answer by providing a program and opportunity for congregations to have better retention rates. And so that is something I have prayed about and something I recognized was a need not only in this congregations but other congregations of the churches of Christ. The second part would be Restoration. In the case of restoration, often times congregations focus on restoring their members on a quarterly or annual basis which in my mind is a tragic mistake because those who need restoring are just as lost as those who have never been baptized. I wanted a program that put emphasis on the lost - meaning those who don't know Jesus and have never been baptized and those who need to be restored. A program that looked at them all equal, whether they be baptisms or restorations, and then a program or vehicle to improve upon the retention of those to be saved. So that was something I prayed about. That is where I am at today. I realized I had to admit that I had not done that up to this point - until now. I don't think in my ministry I have done a very good job at retention and so, I want to improve on it.



"I wanted a program that put emphasis on the lost —meaning those who don't know Jesus and have never been baptized and those who need to be restored."



This has been something in my heart's desire. This program, I think, will certainly improve on how much. My hopes are high and my expectations are high as well.

Sis. Morris: *Do you think baptizing, restoring and retention are problems throughout the churches of Christ?*

Bro. Brooks: I think they are. I think there is a problem in all three areas. Some are worse than others. I think baptism is a problem and that we could improve on baptism. I think we are scoring poorly both on restoration and retention. So yes, I think they are problems throughout the churches of Christ.

Sis. Morris: *How long did you think on this before you decided to put it into writing?*

Bro. Brooks: It has been something heavy on my heart and more so lately because of the fact that I just wanted to have better answers for people calling. The activation or implementation of such a program came to me in a whim, in a sense, based on a meeting I had with the young adults at this congregation who visited other congregations. A statement was made that we don't have anything here for them. I had a parent, Bro. Foreman, from our congregation come to me, and brought to my attention something his son said. He said that young adults are leaving Highland Heights after they graduate from school because they really don't have anything to offer.

This bothered me. I thought about it and decided to call a meeting on a Sunday morning after worship with the young adults that attended here. It was in that meeting when I realized we were not meeting their need; I saw a spirit I had not seen before from our young adults. It was in that meeting I realized when I started offering them things to do with their peers that the excitement, enthusiasm, and the desire to do things, the zeal that came from that discussion was overwhelming. The light came on for me that age relationship was important to them in their group.

I personally asked them about their relationship with me as a minister - whether they felt comfortable approaching me. That discussion was such that I think I came out okay but it was evident

to me they felt more comfortable, to really open up and have good dialogue, when they were communicating with their own peers. And so, on the drive home from that meeting to my house I was just touched by what I saw in that audience. I was touched by their reaction - the possibility of having something for them such as classes with the right topics for them. These are the kinds of things they wanted to build a relationship and so when I got home I started thinking about age related relationships - what about the seniors - what about the middle age people. This probably applies with all age groups.

So thinking of the word age, I went to Titus 2 - aged women to young women, and aged men to young men. I knew there was a biblical concept here called age to age. In 1 Chronicles David divided up the kingdom by age of those who worked and there was a twenty year increment that I saw. That night was a restless night for me because it was heavy on my mind; it was like a light bulb going off in my mind - almost like a revelation. Of course I know that is not what it was, but it was like an answer to a prayer; it was hope involved and it was on that night I came up with the Age Related Ministries concept.

Sis. Morris: *When you were looking for examples of age related relationships in the Bible was the Book of Chronicles the only area you came up with?*

Bro. Brooks: I haven't really researched it. I really started it with Titus 2. Because I knew there was a need for the aged to teach the younger and those were the two places I went. Bro. Stroud has done a more in-depth study on that but it is consistent. I really didn't need any more on that because I knew it was scriptural. Once I found two, I knew I was okay biblically. There are cases I can prove in the bible that was age related relationships.

Sis. Morris: *So you felt you needed to take a new approach to baptizing, retaining and restoring new members because what was currently going on was not working?*

Bro. Brooks: I would say it is a holistic approach. I had an approach to evangelism but as I stated earlier there were three things I wanted to accomplish at this point and that was to continue to evangelize and to improve upon

them. But the two that I knew I needed to improve upon more so than evangelism, when I say evangelism I am speaking of baptism, was restoration and retention and so that would be a holistic approach to do all three - to be good at all three.

Sis. Morris: *Of the three areas you wanted to address, baptizing, retaining and restoring, which one do you think is the most problematic for Highland Heights?*

Bro. Brooks: I think retention is number one, the most problematic for our congregation. There may be others out there doing better, I am not sure. But retaining the saved, keeping the saved, saved is a big problem, it is a huge one. You know when you baptize a 100 people a year and you are not seeing a 100 members grow every year and you tell someone you baptized a 100 people a year and you are still at a 500 membership and you baptized a 100 for the last eight years than you can see that retention wasn't very good. And that is our number. We do anywhere from 80 to a 100 a year and granted many do not stay here for various reasons however, our retention should be much better. Second would be restoration. I just think the whole way the church has approached restoration has been in error, with a lack of concern for the lost. The bible teaches us in Galatians 6:1 if we know brothers are overtaken in faults we are to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness. It didn't say we are to restore them annually or have one big home coming and that is what many congregations do. They have a home coming service or they have a gathering of the sheep. Some would say once a month or once a quarter we are going to try to get our members back. At Highland Heights our views have changed over the past few years and we have tried some things such as membership calling every week. I found that to be not successful at all, it couldn't be and so this gives us another way to improve upon restoration. Retention is number one and restoration is number two and number three we can always improve upon baptism. I don't think you can ever say you are as good as you can get.



**YAMS
YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY
ENJOYING ACTIVITIES
OUTSIDE OF HHCOC
"WE ARE FAMILY"**

*The activation or implementation of such a program came to me in a whim, in a sense, based on a meeting I had with young adults at this congregation . . .
That we don't have anything here for them.*



YUMS



Sis. Morris: When you thought about doing this program did you survey the congregation to see if they were in agreement with you that something needed to be done to help with the retention problem?

Bro. Brooks: Initially I just started calling people that I knew would think through it with me. I didn't want to throw it out to the congregation as a whole because it was just a view – a vision I wanted to cast – a new concept. I felt really good about it and so first, before I talked to anyone, I wrote up my thoughts. I put down in sort of outline form what I thought the ARMS program would be and that's when I came up with Age Related Ministries and the acronym ARMS. As I wrote, the more excited I got and the more ideas came to me. And so initially I did not poll the congregation as a whole but only reached out to individuals I knew could think through it with me; to see if I were on track with something that would be beneficial for the various reasons we discussed.

The feedback was overwhelming to me. Everyone I sent it to said, "Man how did you . . . where did this come from . . ." Everybody saw an immediate need for it. I probably sent it out to about ten people; you two interviewing me were some of the people I reached out to. I had words like wow, incredible, amazing, where did this come from. I am already on this high but to get that type feedback, I said I am on to something. So I didn't poll. It was my collection of thoughts and my written notes that I did initially in my bed at 4:00 in the morning. I took my notes on my phone just to dump my mind because it was swarming and I could not go to sleep. After I got up the next morning I put those notes in written form and I started building upon it that whole week.

This started on a Monday and the meeting was on a Sunday. I called a special Brothers Meeting that was well attended. The response I got from all the Brothers was the same type I got from the initial individuals I talked with. It was another WOW moment from those people. No one from any group could find any reason to not do this. There were concerns of some basic things but nothing to say don't do it. Everything said the leadership was to move forward

and so I put an aggressive plan in place to implement and to activate.

Sis. Morris: Although most of the replies you received were positive, still there were some concerns. Can you share with us some of those concerns?

Bro. Brooks: Basically there were some experiences that others had with programs called Care Groups. There was a time here at Highland Heights they had what you called Alpha Groups. The Alpha Groups and the Care Groups started competing and it turned out there were some bad experiences. There was some concern about it dividing up the church and how we could keep the unity. So I put that into the plan as well to make sure that I addressed that concern, which was as it should be. I thought it was a valid concern because you can create division, schisms and factions that we don't want in the church. So that was a concern of mine going into it but I thought I had it covered.

Sis. Morris: So with this program, have you determined how you will define success and failure?

Bro. Brooks: I think you can be an over achiever in a sense, that you are looking for greater results than you may get because of the mere fact that we are dealing in a spiritual realm here. What I mean by that is, I consider success saving souls. You may want great numbers but if our retention improves any, in my mind, that is a success. If we restore, that is success. How many, the greater the retention the more successful I think I will feel about it. But I think if I start retaining more than I ever have before, if it is even ten percent better, then that is ten more souls out of a hundred that we are now retaining that we were not doing so before.

Sis. Morris: Retention is the key thing – not so much that you baptize more, but that you retain more, is this true?

Bro. Brooks: These are the two areas I want to see improve, retention and restoration. They work hand in hand. I want to see improvement in these two areas then I will say it is a success. If after a year we look back and say well you know we are up ten percent on retention, I am going to say that is a success. If we are up fifty percent, I am going to say it was very

successful and if we are up eighty percent, I am going to say that is extremely successful. So I will categorize it based on those numbers.

However, if you say we only got one person, spiritually speaking, that is a success. But in terms of us looking at a program that you can go out there and say to the world that we put it all in but we only retained one percent – how attractive is that going to be to others? Whereas you go to someone with a program in place and you say our retention and restoration are up fifty percent, it is going to be attractive. So, that is my goal – that is what I am hoping to see.

Sis. Morris: Are you saying that if you don't see this, then you will determine the program a failure as a whole?

Bro. Brooks: I think I will determine if the program is a success or failure based on input from those who are involved. I think eventually we will see results here at Highland Heights and the congregation will be the ones who will say to me through some type of survey where it has been successful. It may be successful in other areas than those mentioned. Some immediate success we have seen already, is bonding relationships and building fellowships. We have already seen restoration and we are improving, in my opinion, and we are already seeing a better chance at retention starting – just starting, at this point, but we are already seeing bonding relationships, lives are changing.

Sis. Morris: In your first group, you are in the MAM group right? What was the fellowship like?

Bro. Brooks: It was bubbly – it was fun. It was a fun fellowship. It was also interesting to see in a small group of thirty; I think we had thirty people, that some of us didn't even know each other and that is why I say there was bonding immediately. That told me we are not very much of a family if we didn't know the name of someone who walks in. I had to lean over and say what is her name? That told me this is going to be beneficial, just this piece. But then it was just the camaraderie – the conversation – the like-mindedness of those of the same age. Because it was just middle age adults there, not our children.

YAMS



WOW!

The feedback was overwhelming to me. I had words like wow, incredible, amazing, where did this come from?

AMAZING!

MAMS



SAMS



All those things became obvious benefits immediately – just being in the room. That was my experience at first.

Sis. Morris: So then, even if after six months or so the numbers have not improved but you do know that relationships have improved, bonding has improved, the overall atmosphere of the congregation, as a whole, has improved then is that success?

Bro. Brooks: Yes that is success. Because that is keeping the saved, saved. You know we are doing things that's keeping the saved, saved. Go back to my young adults meeting. We were losing our young adults to congregations that had things they offered them. So now we can say that we offer our members, not just our youths, but all of our members some ways to fellowship; to bond; to develop relationships and I think that is going to be a huge benefit to this congregation.

Sis. Morris: Once the program has been in operation for at least a year, what will you do with the results?

Bro Brooks: My long term goal as a Minister is to be able to reach out to other congregations and I am starting to do that through workshops. I am getting more and more calls to do the evangelism piece but I just want to take this holistic plan to the Brotherhood. I want to impact the Brotherhood through workshops and presentations and I want Highland Heights to be the beacon – the light – the example. I don't want this to be misunderstood as glory for me. I want people to feel my passion for the lost through my presentations, and I want my family at Highland Heights to get recognized, in a sense, for going through programs and doing things that we thought would benefit the Church of Christ as a whole and not be a congregation on an island – only focusing on the spiritual well-being of the people here at Highland Heights.

If I had to say what the overall goal would be – the long term goal for me will be to take the ARMS Program from here and bless the lives of many other congregations.

Sis. Davis: What do you think a Newsletter for the ARMS Program will do for the congregation?

Bro. Brooks: Well first of all I think it is an exciting idea. When I first heard you mention it, I thought "WOW"! Now that is a powerful thought. I think it is not only going to be a benefit to the success of the program but

it is also going to help educate the group. I have had a lot of one on one meetings to try to get the leaders to get the concept of the ARMS Program. I don't think every member at this congregation has it yet. When I say things and I hear them repeat it, I think to myself that they don't have the same concept I have. So I think the newsletter is going to help me educate them.

It is also going to show benefits as well. I can see it exciting the members. It will also inform them about what is happening within the ARMS Program. Whereas On Sundays you just have one bulletin which limit what you can say, but the newsletter can give past, present and future information. It is going to be educational and pique the interest of those who are not involved and don't understand it. The newsletter becomes a tracking system with actual pictures, comments, interviews – the real time stuff. What I mean by real time is, you are actually getting real time conversation from me right now and you are going to have real time conversations with other members. That is going to be beneficial in the long run.

Sis. Morris: Do you find it very discouraging that the people are not picking up on this as fast as you want them to do so?

Bro Brooks: No I don't. I am not discouraged. I understand it. My work with the church helps with that. I have implemented a lot of programs in the church of Christ and am very organized, at least with things that are important to me. Everyone doesn't understand what it is to work with people. One of the things I pride myself on is that I really try to work on "people skills" and understanding people. So that is not really discouraging, it is just causing me to go more one on one and to people I think will help me educate others. I have done that. I have taken that approach with leaders. I met with all of them one on one and I have met with co-leads one on one and so if I can get the leadership with the same view it will then permeate throughout the ARMS Program.

Sis. Morris: So among your peers, none of them have seen anything like this?

Bro. Brooks: There are similarities and we go again back to the Care Groups. Some of the problems that arose from them was

divisive – power struggles from leaders and preachers that took over those zones. I think what protects us here at Highland Heights is that we have the Servanthood Leadership Program to provide an understanding as to what leadership is all about. I think that is what's going to help us with the power struggle. I don't anticipate that as being a big problem. But that did come up among preachers and elders of some congregations and it did not surprise me. But the concept was received extremely well.

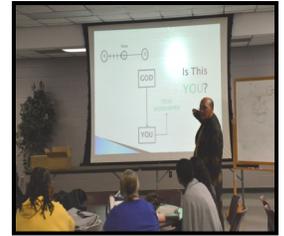
Sis. Morris: I guess what I am asking is, if you overlook the alpha and the care groups, were there none of your peers who really thought about a program such as this?

Bro. Brooks: To this point I have not talked to anyone who did it on the age related concept. I think some of them have a Youth Ministry and that is technically age related. We have one here but we never thought of it like that. Also we have a senior group, the Silver Guys and Dolls, that can be considered age related. But this is bigger than that. It is not just for fun relationships or activities, it is an evangelistic, soul-saving program.

This is the first time we have ever put our leaders in Ministries with soul saving responsibilities. It has always been either the Ministers or Elders. We have never given this type responsibility to all Ministries. Only one Ministry has responsibility similar to this but of course, not to this degree and that is the Keeper Ministry. There may be some others out there but I have not heard of them – not some that addresses all three areas, retention restoration and baptizing.

The Newsletter Committee would like to thank Bro. Brooks for his interview and vision of the ARMS program. We as a family here at Highland Heights would like you to know how much we appreciate your dedication and love to give us spiritual guidance and a reason to rejoice always.

Zerlene Moore–Davis, Editor



Personal Evangelism Class every Tuesday @ 7pm at HHCOC

I consider success saving souls. You may want great numbers, but if our retention improves any, in my mind that is a success.



From seeker to saved soul.

I want people to feel my passion for the lost through my presentations, and I want my family at Highland Heights to get recognized, in a sense, for going through programs and doing things that we thought would benefit the Church of Christ as a whole and not be a congregation on an island—only focusing on the spiritual well-being of the people here at Highland Heights.



It takes a village...
YAMS teaching a YUM to skate

**MAMs
MID-ADULT MINISTRY**



**S
A
M
S**



**SENIOR
ADULT
MINISTRY**



1

GroupMe is a free app that can be downloaded from your app store to your phone. This app allows us to keep in constant contact with members of our ARMS Group. It seems to be the communication of choice for ARMS.





Sis. Dianne Lewis and Sis. Mary McDaniel
Taking in the sights @ The Livestock Show
Go SAMs!!



#groupme 3

With GroupMe we are able to have organized discussions outside of our meeting time as well as check on each other. We are also able to use it as a social network, as we are able to arrange meetings and fellowship outings.



THE ARMS GROUPS ENJOY ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE AND INSIDE OF HHCOC



#groupme 2

GroupMe also comes in handy on days that we have events scheduled as the calendar will show all scheduled activities and gives us the flexibility of indicating if we will be available or not. It is a tool that makes it convenient to communicate with each other.

love growth togetherness
FELLOWSHIP...
in Jesus' name WE gather!
joy service peace



SUNDAY NIGHT LIVE



#groupme 4

GroupMe has an app for every major platform: iPhone, Android, and Blackberry. Even if someone with an old-school flip phone can use the service. So, if you don't have the app, we encourage you to get it.



Let me out of here!



ARMS LEADERS



AKM
Bro. Michael Foreman
 ARM Keeper Ministry



YUMS
Bro. Adam Smith
 This ministry will serve all members
 ages 18 and under



YAMS
Bro. Andrew Hooley
 This ministry will serve all members
 ages 19 to 39



MAMS
Bro. Robert Brown
 This ministry will serve all members
 ages 40 to 60



SAMS
Bro. Floyd Smith
 This ministry will serve all members
 ages 60 and above

Laughing MATTERS

HIGHWAY SIGNS

FOR THOSE WHO SPEED ON THE HIGHWAY:

- 55 MPH—GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU
- 75 MPH—NEARER MY GOD TO THEE
- 85 MPH— THIS WORLD IS NOT MY HOME
- 95 MPH—LORD, I'M COMING HOME
- 100 MPH—PRECIOUS MEMORIES

VISIT WEBSITE www.highlandheightscoc.net

ARMS UPCOMING EVENTS



YUMS
 Sunday, May 28th (HHCOC)
 TIME: TBA



YAMS
 Saturday, May 27th
 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm



MAMS
 Saturday, June 10th
 Time and Place: TBA



SAMS
 Saturday, June 24th
 Time : TBA—Cost \$3



Zerlene Moore-Davis

Charlesia (Charli) Lewis

ula Morris

Joan Teamer

Genette Williams

Rolanda McHellon

Ida Leffall

Bringing you ARMS of love, information,
 upcoming events and much, much more.
 May each of you be blessed.

The ARMS of Love News Team