

Annual Meeting Agenda
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston, Texas
January 17, 2016

Call to Order
Invocation
Approval of Minutes of January 25, 2015 Annual Meeting
Approval of Minutes of December 13, 2015 Congregational Budget Meeting
New Business:

Solicitation of members and chairs of select committees

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Ruth Alkons-Wolinsky 3 Years
Mark Andersen 3 Years
Nancy Lipp 3 Years

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

Phillip Baxley 3 Years
Bob Hanson 3 Years

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

John Hammer 2 Years
Kenny Jones 2 Years
Kris Taylor 2 Years

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Karen George 3 Years
Formerly elected for a 1-year term;
now nominated for a full term.

2016 BOARD OFFICERS

President, Michael Condit
Vice President, Barbara Crotty
Past President, Richard Loftin
Treasurer, Linda Condit
Board Secretary, Kenny Jones

Congregational poll on proposed Congregational Study/Action Issues (CSAIs)

Voting 'Yes' means Emerson wants the CSAI to be added to the 2016 General Assembly Agenda. Up to 5 CSAIs may appear on the Agenda. The four proposed CSAIs are:

- A National Conversation on Race
- The Corruption of Our Democracy
- Climate Change and Environmental Justice
- Ending Gun Violence in America

Recognition of Outgoing Board Members

Special Recognition

Adjourn

2015 BOARD

Officers Richard Loftin, President
 Michael Condit, Vice President
 Kris Taylor, Past President

2015 Trustees

Shannon Butler
Tony Collins
Mike Condit
Barbara Crotty
Wade Greiner
Beth Hammer
Victor Koosh
Craig Miller

Treasurer

Linda Condit

Board Secretary

Mary Ann Stanley (retired in Oct.)

Annual Report 2015
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**Annual Meeting Minutes
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston, Texas
January 25, 2015**

The Annual Meeting of the congregation of Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church was called to order by Board President Kris Taylor at 12:40 pm with 61 members in attendance.

The **Invocation** was given by the Rev. Mark Edminstion-Lange

Approval of Minutes of Annual Meeting--January 23, 2014

- Motion to approve by Tony Collins, seconded by Carolyn Craig, passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes of Congregational Meeting on Constitution Bylaw Change--October 19, 2014

- Motion to approve by Richard Loftin, seconded by Jay Jackson, passed unanimously

Approval of Minutes of Congregational Budget Meeting--December 14, 2014

- Motion to approve by Ann May, seconded by Alicia Loftin, passed unanimously

President Taylor presented an overview of our accomplishments in 2014:

- Raised the bar for membership from contribution to financial commitment
- Changed our bylaws to put us on pay-as-you-go basis
- Set up an outreach fund to help us share UU principles in the wider world
- Established a reserve fund to meet unanticipated expenses
- Paid off the mortgage on Delaney Hall and celebrated its 10th anniversary.
- Adopted a budget unanimously for the first time ever
- Moved to a year-round and multi-year stewardship program
- Raised enough funds to relight the sanctuary with enough left over to move down the list of repairs
- Started teaching English to immigrants
- Rehabbed our 49th and 50th Rebuilding Houston Together homes
- Added our voices to the Unitarian Universalist Voice for Justice (UUV4J)
- Established a Little Free Library to reach out to our neighbors
- Encountered our first UU Taizé service and learned that Carmen may have danced her way through Hanukkah

She congratulated the membership because, on the way to building a better world, we've made our own world better. Detailed reports from committee and staff are included in the annual report.

President Taylor noted that as we come to electing committees we will be voting for the last time on our good faith of support for the church. After April 15, a monetary pledge of record will be necessary to qualify to vote on our church's issues.

Copies of the annual report with summaries from all of the church committees and groups was made available to the congregation.

New Business

Business before the group was the election of members of working committees in the church.

Gabe Gelb moved and Kenny Jones seconded to approve all of the committees as a group. This motion pass unanimously as did the acceptance of all the committees as listed:

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Barbara Adams	2 Years
Linda Condit	2 Years
Florrie Snively	2 Years
Eric Watson	2 Years

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Edna Kelly	3 Years
Carolyn Truesdell	3 Years
Gabe Gelb	2 Years
Ben Withers	2 Years

Karen George 1 Year

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

Bub Joyce 3 Years
Cynthia Miller 3 Years
Clara Kosloff 2 Years

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Barbara Crotty 3 Years
Beth Hammer 3 Years
Craig Miller 3 Years

2015 BOARD OFFICERS

President, Richard Loftin
Vice President, Mike Condit
Kris Taylor, Past President

Treasurer, Billye Smith

Board Secretary, Mary Ann Stanley

Recognitions

Sherle Frost and Jay Jackson, retiring from the Board and Deborah Landes, Board Secretary, were introduced and thanked for their time, talents and enthusiasm during their years of service to the Emerson Board. Incoming president Richard Loftin presented outgoing president Kris Taylor with a Pandora bracelet – perfect for her since it includes as one of the charms a queen bee.

President Loftin admitted being a bit nervous but not because we will be fighting the same old battles. He urged all members to “renew your time and talent commitments to the goals and that will help us grow and build a better world. “

Rev. Mark asked our church Business Administrator, Karen Van Horn, to come forward and receive our thanks and tributes for ten years of keeping our money straight. On behalf of the congregation he presented her with an Amazon gift certificate, and a check from the Board of Trustees.

Barbara Crotty moved and Ann May seconded that the meeting be adjourned. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted

Mary Ann Stanley, Board Secretary

**Annual Budget Meeting
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church
December 13, 2015**

The meeting was called to order by Richard Loftin, president of the Emerson Board of Trustees. A quorum was confirmed with 69 voting members of the congregation present.

President Loftin reported that the church is projected to finish FY 2015 with a surplus and presented an overview of the proposed 2016 budget, which includes proposals for increases in three areas:

- Buildings and grounds: moving back to the weekly mowing cycle that had been cut to bi-weekly as a result of previous budget cuts
- Music: funding a fourth section lead
- Staff compensation: incremental increases in salaries over a period of three years that will bring Emerson closer to alignment with UUA guidelines

He also presented a report from the Finance Committee that showed a three-year budget projection with an estimate of the amount of pledge income that would be required to fund the recommendations.

A motion to adopt the recommended budget by David May was seconded. President Loftin opened the floor for questions and comments.

Ben Withers urged the Board to include in its budget projections the addition of the position – at least part-time – to work with the RE program that was originally mentioned in the Leap of Faith proposals. He commented that creating a position combining RE and membership support duties would allow us to have staff support in both of these areas.

Ruth Alkons-Wolinsky asked about the decrease in projected tenant income, Finance Committee chair Tony Collins responded that the decrease reflects the fact that Raising the Bar and Feldenkruetz no longer rent Emerson facilities for their programs.

Shawn Collier asked about a plan to increase membership. President Loftin responded that membership growth is a primary consideration and that the Board has been working on ideas and will continue to do so in 2016. He pointed out that the congregation has welcomed several new members in the last year and we intend to continue that pattern in the future.

Robin Sickles spoke in support of staff pay raises.

With no future questions, President Loftin called for a hand vote and recommended budget was passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned.

Kris Taylor
Immediate Past President
Emerson Board of Trustees

Report to the Congregation of Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston
Becky and Mark Edmiston-Lange

Again we are reminded as we review the past year how Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church is very fortunate to have such excellent leadership, members, and staff who are able to continue to move ahead through what are challenging times for congregations across the United States. The Board of Trustees and Officers of the Congregation deserve enormous credit for their sturdy efforts and loyalty to the entire congregation. We want to particularly thank our retiring President, Richard Loftin, our retiring Past President Kris Taylor, and our new President Mike Condit, who each have repeatedly offered sterling examples of the wisdom of lay leadership of the congregation.

When we began preparing this report our first thought was, “Er, what exactly did we do?” There are the obvious things: presiding at worship and memorial services and weddings. While Sunday morning worship is our constant focus, memorial services do occupy a large part of our minds and hearts. This year we said goodbye, as it seems every year, to several beloved members: Otto Glaser, Robert Hinds, Mina McDuffie, Jim Vague, and Bill L. Wilks. On a much happier note we performed several weddings. Okay make that lots of weddings. Do you remember BIG WEDDING DAY at Emerson? We were never as proud as we were when the congregation came together to support those 14 couples who tied the knot on July 14th. When we tell people about it even now they are astonished at how Emerson provided a safe and celebrative environment: everything from flowers to the wedding cake.

But, of course, much of our time is spent in meetings, both with groups and individuals in the congregation. Meetings can be like seedbeds: insert ideas, warm it up and after a time (you never know how long) – tadah! Sometimes we are bystanders, other times instigators – always cheerleaders. 5 years ago we lobbied for Emerson to be included in the UUA’s Leap of Faith program and Deborah Landis was one of the participants. While visiting the Cedar Lane UU Congregation in Bethesda, Maryland, Deborah learned about their ESL program. Then mix that experience with a little consulting encouragement from Mike Durall two years later and BAM – a very successful ESL program at Emerson.

Think of other big successes this past year such as the Spring Service Auction led by Ruth Alkons- Wolinsky. That in turn led to the success of the new audio visual system. That success will in turn lead to.... The interconnected web is not merely a theory.

Another strong emphasis this year has been our participation in the life of the larger community. We spent many hours on the HERO Campaign. We also showed up for Interfaith Rallies and Planned Parenthood events. It has been a very busy year and Emerson is gaining a reputation as a strong voice for justice in Houston.

We have said throughout our ministry at Emerson that the future of the congregation depends upon our ability to serve as a “destination church” rather than as a “community church” or even a “program church.” The key to being a “destination church” is offering something that people prize which cannot be found elsewhere. We believe our evolving life as a vigorous thoughtful congregation is that thing and thus look forward to the coming year’s opportunities and challenges.

With much faith and affection,
Becky and Mark

2015 Annual Report – President’s Report to the Congregation
Richard Loftin

Dear Fellow Members and Friends of Emerson,

I can hardly believe the 2015 church year has passed by and we are already in 2016. It seems just yesterday that Kris Taylor was wishing me well for my year as President of the Board of Trustees. I wondered what the year would bring. Would the new energy in the congregation that had marked Kris’ term in office continue? What challenges would we face? What new and exciting opportunities would arise? As for myself, would I be up to the job and would I be able to accomplish the goals I was setting for myself.

I can report to you today that we have met the challenges, seized some opportunities, and I’ve reached some of the goals I set for myself personally. As a church community, it’s been an amazing year.

First, you have achieved what a few years ago seemed unlikely: a balanced budget. This was also the single most important task I set for myself; to make sure we stayed on target to financial self-sufficiency. There’s a bit of cleanup to do as we close the books on 2015, but we’ll be in the black for the first time in recent history. Thanks to you and to the preceding Boards, Finance and Investment Committees that helped make this possible. We’ll do it again in 2016.

Second, this community had a shining moment this summer when same-sex marriage become the law of the land and we opened our doors to welcome those couples that had waited patiently, in some cases for years, to make legal the unions that already existed in their hearts. For those in attendance, it was one of the most emotionally moving days in Emerson’s history as 13 couples exchanged vows. Love wins in the end.

So much has happened this year in the life of this community. Here are a just a few of the other notable events from the year.

In accordance with the changes voted for in 2014 and as part of becoming a “pay-as-you-go” congregation, we funded the newly created Outreach Committee and Reserve Fund from the Endowment. Outreach has started strong and has some big ideas for the future, just ask Planned Parenthood whom they surprised with a \$25,000 contribution on behalf of Emerson just as many in our nation sharpened their attacks on that charitable organization.

By committing to fund ourselves as we go through pledges from the congregation, we were able to continue using the Sunday offering to fund worthy causes. We gave away a portion of our collection plate to a new worthy cause each month all the while continuing to send part of those monies to Meals on Wheels.

The annual Service Auction in the spring continued to raise money through the sale of prizes donated by Emersonians. We were particularly excited to have Andrew Bost return this year as our auctioneer. Watching Andrew auction off a glass of water for \$300 was a testament both to his skill and the generous spirit of the congregation. The Auction kick-started this year’s Fund-A-Need project, the renovation and refurbishment of the AV systems of our sanctuary, and set it on course for a resounding success.

Speaking of the AV team and the Fund-A-Need project, the members of that team are to be commended for the magnificent job they did bringing the project of updating our sanctuary’s audio and visual equipment to a successful conclusion, not to mention doing much of the fundraising needed for said project. In all, \$90,000 plus was raised for the improvements and the results speak for themselves.

Emerson’s Kilgore Lecture series welcomed Houston’s own Dr. David Eagleman to our sanctuary for a thought provoking discussion of neuroscience and humanity. This event filled the house not only with Emersonians but numerous members of the greater Houston community visited Emerson for the talk.

We said farewell to our beloved music director Bonnie Wellington, whose talents and energy were such a blessing to us all. We also said hello to an old friend, Adrian Rodriguez, as our new music director and look forward to his tenure leading our music program into a new and exciting era.

The church has made the concerted effort to move to carbon neutrality led by the Ministry for Earth team in yet another example where people with a passion for an issue can have an impact for the good.

UUNO continued its successful offering of English language classes to those in our surrounding community. It was another banner year for the UUNO group who showed yet again what a few people with passion and dedication could do to have an impact on the lives of fellow human beings. Deborah Landis and the many volunteers of UUNO will continue to be an example to us all in 2016.

In support of the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance (HERO), the Board of Trustees officially issued a statement in favor of that law and urged the congregation to support it at the polls. Many in the congregation on their own or through the actions of the UU Voice for Justice spoke out during the debate over HERO. Throughout the campaign season, our ministerial team was particularly outspoken and visible in the community urging support for the ordinance. Although HERO was voted down at the polls, we remain committed to equality in the eyes of the law for all. The arc of the universe will eventually bend toward justice.

There are far too many noteworthy events and efforts to mention them all here, so I'll pick out one more high point from the year, one that the other members of my family were participants in...the "singing away" of the Westboro Baptist Church when they staged a protest here in Houston. In the face of the counter protest by yellow shirted Emersonians, they faded away. As I mentioned earlier, love does indeed win in the end.

Thank you for your confidence in allowing me to lead the Board and our beloved community for the past year. It was a challenge in so many ways for me and I am immeasurably better for having taken it on. Thank you to my fellow Board Members for the efforts and support. Thanks to Karen Van Horn and church office staff and volunteers for making my job easy. Thank you to the incomparable Revs. Mark and Becky Edmiston-Lange. We are blessed to have the both of you at the forefront of this congregation. Finally, thanks to my wife Alisha, and my son's Connor and Evan, for putting up with the times when Dad had to be away doing "church stuff".

Best wishes and blessings for 2016 to you all,

Richard Loftin
President, Board of Trustees

**2015 Annual Report - Business Administrator
Karen Van Horn**

Facility Usage

Tanglewood Academy led by director, Glenda Lane, continues to increase their facility usage. Tanglewood Academy renewed their contract as did the Rebels Investors Group, Professionally Speaking Singles Toastmasters, and The Houston Tuesday Musical Group. Guitar Houston and UniTunes held concerts at Emerson. Numerous neighborhood homeowners' associations conducted meetings in

Westwood Hall. Several contracted piano concerts were held during 2015. Emerson also hosted a LGBTQ weddings day in July.

In addition to excellent Sunday programming, recurring usage included monthly board meetings, board retreats, coordinating council meetings, PAC theater events, Multiple ESL Classes, solstice celebrations, spring auction, book groups, teacher training, committee meetings and numerous one-time events.

Facility Maintenance

Due to the immense success of this year's annual auction Fund a Need project, Emerson Church has a wonderful new audio visual system. What a difference an updated A/V system and LED lighting make!

Routine/non routine maintenance included the following:

- Major HVAC repairs
- Plumbing repairs
- Major roofing repairs
- Carpet cleaning
- Lawn maintenance, performed by Gold Rose

Administrative

Very pleased Linda Condit has agreed to serve as Emerson's Treasurer.

During 2015, Emerson transitioned from bulk mailing the Emersonian to mailing a few and emailing the remainder. This helps save the church both staff time and money.

Listed below are additional areas of responsibility:

- Attend monthly Board of Trustees meetings
- Attend staff meetings and retreats
- Maintain financial records and provide monthly reports to Board of Trustees, Finance and Social Action Committees
- Maintain personnel files
- Perform Background checks
- Maintain membership records according to Membership Database Procedures
- Maintain pledge information.
- Perform end of year UUA certification
- Provide assistance to staff and members

I also assist with the master calendar, respond to emails, negotiate lease renewals, schedule office equipment maintenance, program the HV/AC system, and supervise the Office Administrator for Communications, Sunday Sexton and contract custodial service.

Emerson members, Jill Rose and Linda Lord, who took over for Mary Ann Stanley, volunteer their time to provide assistance in administrative areas of the church. Their assistance is much appreciated!

Thank you to Emerson's Board of Trustees, Co-ministers, Becky and Mark Edmiston-Lange and staff for their continued support.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Van Horn
Business Administrator

2015 Annual Report - Director of Religious Education Katy Carpman

Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church continues to be a learning congregation, supporting all ages in their search for truth and meaning.

Following two years of Sacred Texts study, this year our children and youth concentrate on Unitarian Universalist identity, focusing on the ways we live our values in the world each day.

Two Sundays each month our 11:15 AM program fits the traditional age-graded Sunday School model, using Unitarian Universalist religious education curricula. A third Sunday is Chalice Hour—a children’s chapel around a specific theme, followed by a time for art or crafting response. And one Sunday each month is a Social Action day, with an onsite opportunity for learning and making a difference in our world.

Speaking of social action, our children and youth and families value service, and show up at our many events. From long-time traditions like Rebuilding Together Houston and UNICEF Carnival to our groundbreaking Wedding Day, all ages share their gifts with the world. We continue to work with the Social Action Council to coordinate and develop opportunities for all to serve. See you **February 7th** for SouperBowl of Caring!

A few highlights from the year:

- Our middle school class did a coffee hour survey in November, asking congregants to choose three theological statements important to them. Check out the Emerson blog to learn more.
- Our high school youth bonded on their annual beach trip and in December sent care packages to recent graduates. Some of our youth continue to provide leadership in the Houston cluster, with one acting as a dean at January’s youth rally at Bay Area UU. This year Youth Sunday will be **April 17th**.
- Our Coming of Age class was a big one in 2015—this year’s class is smaller and filled with thoughtful learning and joy. Mark your calendars for their credo service on **May 1st**.
- As they considered Caring, our preschool and early elementary classes made cards and candles for the ministers and me to share with congregants in their hard times.

Looking Forward: The coming months will include focused conversations--how shall we prepare children to be the change-makers the world needs today and in the coming decades? How best can we support families in their ever-complicated work?

It remains a joy and an honor to work with our fine volunteers and to connect with Emersonians of all ages. I look forward to a rich and joyful 2016!

Katy Carpman
Director of Religious Education

2015 Annual Report - Emerson Performing Arts Department

The chancel choir led by director Bonnie Rosensteel performed the Missa Gaia (Earth Mass) in May 2015. This was Ms. Rosensteel’s last official performance with the choir as she tendered her resignation from the post of Music Director at that time. A search committee of three music department members was formed to find her replacement. With direction from the ministers, five prospective candidates were interviewed with a narrowing to three candidates for the on-site auditions. This culminated with the choice of Adrian Rodriguez to fill the position. Under his direction, three new section leads were chosen: Naomi Brigell, soprano, Brady Weldon, bass and Adrian Fuertes, tenor. With alto lead Dr. Gwen Alfred this means there are now four section leads within the choir. Along with the usual Sunday anthems performed by the section leads and the choir, Adrian created his own “secular” Christmas service this last Sunday, December 13.

The Intergenerational Orchestra under the direction of Bill Tackett continues to perform in Sunday services as well. As a new offering the orchestra in the spring performed a full concert consisting of Schubert’s Unfinished Symphony, Beethoven’s Egmont Overture and the First Movement of Mozart’s Violin Concerto performed by the congregation’s own Noah Lee. The orchestra continues to practice for the coming spring concert as well as finding time for Sunday services and incidental music.

The Emerson Players performed the thriller “Angel Street” in the spring. This was a departure from their normal fare of comedies, but was led with normal attention to detail by their leader Hillary Henderson-Ritz. The fall did not produce a second play due to some administrative problems of attaining a venue and a play. However, the Players did provide three vignettes written by Jill Rose for the Christmas service.

Uni-Tunes had their normal “first Saturday” shows January through May and October through December. Guitar Houston had their “second Saturday” shows in the same time period. The Tuesday Music club also maintained its scheduled use of the Sanctuary.

Stephen Lipp
Performing Arts Council
Chairperson

Report of the Nominating Committee

This committee nominated the following for the elections to be held at the January, 2016, annual meeting:

For the Board of Trustees, 3-year terms:

Ruth Alkons-Wolinsky, Mark Andersen, Nancy Lipp

For the Committee on Ministry, 3-year terms:

Phillip Baxley, Robert Hanson

For the Nominations Committee, 2-year terms:

John Hammer, Kenneth Jones, Kris Taylor

For the Outreach Board, a 3-year term:

Karen George

Ruth Alkons Wolinsky joined Emerson in 2012. She says: As an ex-Catholic from rural eastern Pennsylvania, Emerson was the first church she felt comfortable in after "shopping around". Ruth met her husband, Matt, at Pitt during undergrad, then followed him to North Carolina. He did graduate work in geology at Duke and she in environmental engineering at UNC - Chapel Hill. They moved to Minneapolis for 4+ years, Matt as a post-doc at the Univ. of Minnesota, and Ruth working as a consultant engineer. In January 2009 they moved to Houston where Matt took a job with Shell. Their daughter, Elena, was born in 2011, and Ruth has worked at home most of the time since. Besides a few part-time jobs, she has spent the past 4.5 years as a volunteer, as an officer for her local Engineers without Borders chapter, president of her HOA, and volunteering for events at her daughter's school. At Emerson, Ruth teaches RE, is a supporting player on the AV team, and chaired the 2015 Emerson Auction.

Mark Andersen, an Emerson member for about 10 years, says, “Emerson is the first church I ever formally joined, because it feels like home to me.” He served on the Leap of Faith ad hoc committee and, after several years as an usher, served as Ushering Committee co-chair with his wife, Holly. He was on the organizing committee for the Southwest UU Conference when it was last held at Emerson. He retired recently from a career as a scientist, engineer, and technology journal editor in the oil industry and is currently working on several novels that he hopes Hollywood producers will tear themselves apart to film. Regardless of the eventual outcome, he's enjoying making stuff up for a change.

Nancy Lipp joined Emerson 10 years ago after a move from New Orleans with her husband, Stephen, six years after becoming a UU. While at Emerson she has chaired a covenant group, chaired the church's auction, and been a child and adult religious education teacher. She has also volunteered in the office and been active in the Leap of Faith project, in communication efforts, as a member of Woman's Alliance, and in the weekly Stitches group. An engineer by profession, Nancy now teaches physics at The Tenney School.

For the Committee on Ministry, both three-year terms

Phillip Baxley says, “My wife and I were members of Emerson Church in the 1980s, and our daughters attended the RE program. We rejoined the church three years ago, and participate actively in the Orchestra. I recently retired from Shell Oil, after 32 years as an engineer, business executive, and board member. Nancy and I have four children, and have lived in Houston 37 years.”

Robert (Bob) Hanson describes himself as “66, born and raised in Chicago, IL, area. 1971 graduate from Illinois Institute of Technology with BS in Mathematics. As a result of a low draw in the draft lottery, spent three years in the US Army (SC, OK, GA, NC). Attracted to Houston for IT position with Pullman Kellogg (now KBR) in 1975, then worked for Sonat Offshore Drilling (now Transocean). Retired in 2015 after 17 years with VALIC, an AIG subsidiary providing retirement services. Married Beverly Edwards, third generation Unitarian, in March 1976 at Emerson Unitarian Church. Raised two children with support from Emerson Religious Education, Jeffrey (Oakland, CA) and Barbara (Chicago, IL). Have grandchildren ages 3 and 1 in Oakland. Thank goodness for Skype!”

For the Nominating Committee, all two-year terms

John Hammer writes: I began attending Emerson around six years ago with my wife, Beth, and children, William and Molly. I have served as Religious Education Committee chair and am still active in RE and the Coming of Age program. I have served on the AV committee and participate in the performing arts including the Emerson Players and musical performances.

Kenneth Jones says: I am a father of three, struggling husband of 35 years, middle school educator, former community organizer, social, economic and political activist and all-round Legend in My Own Mind! I have been a Unitarian Universalist for the past 25 years. I have been a member of Emerson for the past 10 years. I have served as a teacher in the youth RE program for several years, participated as a mentor in the Coming of Age program, served on the Youth RE Committee and chaired it for a brief stint. I have facilitated the Our Whole Lives program for youth and twice facilitated the Building Your Own Theology adult RE offering. Currently I serve as a member of the Adult RE Committee and as a member of the Social Action Council.

Most recently I have served the congregation as its representative for the UU Voice for Justice of Greater Houston and serve that organization as a member of its Steering Committee. In addition, I am one of two congregational representatives for the Texas UU Justice Ministry serving on its advisory board. I am in the process of applying to become a member of the inaugural class of Justice Building Innovators of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), a role in which I hope to elevate Emerson UU Church as leader in social justice work in our city, state, nation, and beyond.

Kris Taylor reports that she and the Millennium came to Emerson at about the same time. Since then, she’s been busy greeting newcomers (and just about anybody who walks in the door on Sunday morning), selling and schmoozing at the bookstore, and serving on the auction, stewardship, district conference planning committees and the Committee on Ministry, which she co-chaired in 2012. She is just completing a three-year term on the Board of Trustees and served as Board president in 2014. Away from Bering Drive, she is a freelance writer, editor and public relations counselor (no alarm clock, no commute, and no dry cleaning bills!), teaches classes in public relations at the University of Houston and serves as the volunteer coordinator for the Houston Grand Opera Guild boutique. She reads voraciously, stitches avidly, gardens hopefully and lives with a very entertaining rescue dog, Max – a dorkie both by DNA and general temperament.

For the Outreach Committee, a three-year term

Karen George writes: I’ve been a member at Emerson for over 20 years – first attending because of the Religious Education program for my two daughters (now 27 and 23!) I’ve participated at various times in the RE program, the intergenerational orchestra and a few committees. I have very much enjoyed serving on Emerson’s Outreach Committee this past year and look forward to continuing this work. My primary community involvement has been through organizations focusing on women’s issues. I’m a past board member and board chair of Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, past board member and current advisory board member of The Women’s Resource and I’m currently on the Board and

President-Elect of The Women's Home. I am also very involved in many capacities at Rice University. Professionally, I'm a CPA and have worked many years for Ralph S. O'Connor & Associates.

Committee members are: Barb Adams, Sarah Boyd, Linda Condit, Carole Huelbig, Florrie Snively, Eric Watson, and Betsy Gelb, chair. Linda Condit was elected to chair the committee in 2016.

ADULT EDUCATION COMMITTEE *Annual Report for 2015*

In early 2015 the Adult Education Committee continued its coordination with the Worship Services and Youth Religion Education as part of the Living Text project. In January we had a basic introductory course in Islam and the Koran. February classes dealt with LGBTQ issues, but in a religious context rather than simply a political one. In March we had outside speakers on topics of particular importance to Emerson and the city of Houston, including an explanation of the operations of Houston Interfaith Ministries and also the particulars of the problems of international refugees in the Houston area. We finished the spring with 6 sessions on Science and Religion, focused on cosmology, biological issues, and earth sciences.

September 2015 began with a second look at Buddhism. This was followed by four Sundays examining basic philosophical aspects of religion, including a non-theistic look at divinity. This background was then applied in the month of November to a very practical approach of describing and understanding one's individual religious past. In December there were two Sundays during which the question "Who made Jesus God?" was addressed.

The remainder of the current Church year will have a very practical approach and will also focus very much on social action and justice issues. The month of January will deal with how money issues relate to spirit and life. February will examine the history of social justice in the UU tradition. The month of March will be an innovative program bringing social action and justice home in a very active way. In April we have an outside facilitator for a timely program on Israeli-Palestinian relationships, a follow-up of our program on Islam last year. We finish in May with a course looking at the subject of ethics within Unitarian Universalism.

We anticipate that Adult Education offerings in the fall will be coordinated with the subject matter that the ministers will bring back to the Worship Services from their studies during their sabbatical. This will involve ways in which the beauty and importance of nature are part of the religious experience. We also intend to concentrate on Eastern philosophical and religious traditions next year, as well as continue to highlight social action and justice topics on a regular basis.

The informal Un-Conversations continued in 2015. They will also be a part of the program in 2016, but we are looking at diverse and experiential ways of expanding that educational track, at least one of which may begin as early as the spring of 2016.

Mike Condit and David May, Co-Chairs

2015 Annual Report Audio-Visual

The purpose of the AV Committee is to support weekly services in the Sanctuary as well as other services and approved occasional meetings as requested/approved by the ministers or the Board. Traditionally services have been recorded, copied and made available to interested people, by request, for a nominal contribution.

The AV Committee started the year with limited, aged and failing audio equipment. By mid-April it was clear that after 25+ years of piecemeal updates, various components of the system were altogether broken and the system in its entirety could not handle the current demands--unforeseeable at its original installation. In April, an AV upgrade was named the Fund-A-Need recipient for the 2015 Service Auction. The Auction initially raised about \$35,000. By May, recording was impossible and we shut down the system as unworkable, borrowing gear from UniTunes in the interim to mic the services. Throughout the spring and summer, a dedicated group of church members with AV interest and skills worked with a "wish list" and interviewed five potential vendors. At the September Board meeting, we recommended Ford AV as the vendor of choice and the Board approved that bid.

Thank you to Fund-A-Need committee members: Kevin Crotty (sound and gear), Mark Edmiston-Lange (vision), Mark Holt (sound and gear), Sigsby Rusk (electronics and engineering) and Leo Vandermuelen (operations) for their expertise/dedication to the project.

The new system was installed the third week of November by which time the fund had grown to \$88,000 and we have been able to add back equipment that initially, conservatively we had left out of the bid. As of the end of December, we continue to learn our new system and are exploring additional AV improvements to the Sanctuary to optimize the system's capabilities.

Thank you to regular AV committee members for their ongoing commitment: Kevin Crotty, Joe Dowlen and Leo Vandermuelen--with occasional assistance from Ruth Alkons-Wolinsky. We remain "understaffed"—at least eight regular members would be excellent!—and we welcome anyone who may be interested to learn along with us.

Jill Rose

AV committee member and AV Fund-A-Need coordinator

2015 Annual Report – Buildings and Grounds Committee

Chair: Tony Collins

The building function is a committee of one, primarily serving as support for Karen as she coordinates necessary repairs. We made the first use of the Reserve fund, replacing the roof on the east end of the sanctuary. This is a relatively small area, but quite complex and it has now come through several heavy rains with no leaks

Grounds are a different matter. Ann May and Carol Huelbig are very active, and organized two activity days which have made a huge difference. Their next project is badly needed pruning of our magnificent live oak trees.

Tony Collins

2015 Annual Report – Caring Committee

Co-Chairs: Mary Ann Rusk and Judy Williams

This committee is made up of many dedicated individuals whose main purpose is to provide refreshments for family and friends in Westwood Hall after a Memorial Service.

This past year we offered receptions after memorial services for the families of Otto Glaser, Bill Wilks, and Mina McDuffie.

Our committee was asked to step outside of our usual purpose and help to celebrate weddings for the gay and lesbian community in July. We were very happy to do this and had help from the entire congregation in this endeavor – it was a church community effort which resulted in a wonderful, huge success for all of us.

As co-chairs, we want to thank all the committee members who are always so willing to help to provide a serene and cordial space for friends and family to visit together.

We welcome new members and suggestions from our church community.

Mary Ann and Judy, Co-Chairs

2015 Annual Report – Circle Dinners

Chair: Mary Ann Rusk

Circle Dinner groups have enjoyed good food and fellowship during 2015 and will look forward to continuing to do so in 2016.

I want to thank the hosts and hostesses for contributing their homes and to those who host in Westwood Hall at the May dinners. The dinners provide a great way to meet fellow Emersonians and friends of the Emerson community. Also, to be thanked are the guests that attend these dinners. Without your participation, the dinners could not function as a way to provide a causal evening of conversation and food with each other.

Newcomers are always welcome to join; please contact me if you would like to become a part of these informal gatherings.

Mary Ann Rusk, Chairperson

2015 Annual Report - Communications Committee

Chair: Greg Hunt

At the end of 2014, Shawn Collier, church member and principle of marketing firm Origin, Inc., conducted an insightful audit of our website which highlighted significant opportunities for us to improve our web marketing. Early in 2015, the committee agreed to make the church website a priority for the team. The team spent much of the year planning improvements to the site. However, it became apparent that the site required more than would be quickly doable with a volunteer based committee working in isolation. We were not alone - this has been a common issue across the association. The UUA has begun to address this by investing in development of a common website theme, operation guidelines, demo content, and a support network to help UU congregations combine knowledge and resources in tackling this goal. In late 2015, the communications team established a test site with the new UUA theme and have begun exploring how we can use the results of the UUA's initiative to improve our web presence more quickly.

Content Management and Infrastructure

In attempting to populate the UUA theme, it became clear that Emerson would need to upgrade its IT infrastructure. The following are some steps taken in that direction:

- Licensing of graphic design software
- Licensing of graphic/web design online training resources
- Research into cloud-based repositories where committees can make available photos and other content for use on social media and the website. At the end of 2015 the technology team was being engaged to help with some of the challenges.

Engaging the Church Leadership and Congregation

The demands of a social-media based communications program continue to require that we involve increasing numbers of people in the communications program in various ways. The following were a few initiatives taken:

- In August the communications team hosted a workshop to help interested members understand what social media is, how it works, and how to participate.
- The committee provided programming content to the Church Leadership Council focused on helping council members understand how to provide quality content for Emerson's communications platforms.
- Meetings were held with the Membership committee leadership to bring awareness of the number and diversity of new visitor "entry points" being addressed by our communications campaigns (beyond Sunday services) and the need for a structured greeting/welcoming program at those entry points.

Special Campaigns – Emerson Wedding

The communications team provided support to the LGBT Day of Weddings. Communications included:

- Outsmart magazine ads for April, May and June
- Media Advisory and Media kit
- All-day media relations contact
- Follow-up stories for UU World and Out Smart
- Significant splash that day on Facebook thanks to couples, their friends, families and Katy.
- Significant cross-posting and subsequent involvement from other groups on Meetup, thanks to Lori

Ongoing Communications Campaigns

While the communication's team worked to move forward on the items listed above, maintenance and expansion of our ongoing communications campaigns continued to be a top priority. And, due to the remarkable dedication of our editor/publishers we continued to expand our communications footprint. The following highlight where we stand with key communications programs as of 12/31/2015:

164 the newcomer Yellow Cards received this year and their associated answers to the question: "How did you find us?"

No Response	76	46.30%
Friend/Family	30	18.30%
Website	24	14.60%
Google/Internet	21	12.80%
Other	4	2.40%
Meet Up	3	1.80%
UU Network	3	1.80%
Facebook	1	0.60%
Returner	1	0.60%
Signage	1	0.60%

Facebook

- Number who have liked our Facebook Page: 661
- Number who see a EUUC post each week: apx. 600-3000
- Average Daily Posts: 1-3
- Reviews: 36 reviews averaging 4.8 out of 5 stars.

Twitter

- Number of people that Follow Emerson on twitter: 562
- Number of Emerson tweets in 2015: 167
- Number of Impressions in 2015: 24,300
- Number of retweets in 2015: 34
- **Meetup**
- Number of Members: 1,068
- 1 year change in membership: 938 (722%)
- Number of meetup events advertised in 2015: 635
- Typical number of event invites sent/week: ~ 6,400

Wayside Pulpit / This Week's Sermon Sign

- Number of sign postings: 104
- Est. Impressions per day: 7,600 (2012 Houston Regional Traffic Count Study)

National Public Radio Announcements

- In the fall, we contracted for an NPR campaign to run in Q1 2016

The Emerson UU Communication's Team

Name	Focus Area (as applicable)
Barbara Crotty	Board Liaison
Mary Alaniz	Admin for Communications: Calendar, Video Monitors, Website Maintenance, Staff Liaison
Greg Hunt	Communications Chair, New Website
Shawn Collier	Marketing Counsel, New Website
Kris Taylor	Public Relations Counsel/Press Releases
Larry Kelly	Public Sign Counsel
Katy Carpman	Facebook Publisher, Photo/Content Review, Staff Liaison
Lori Reeder	Meetup Organizer, New Website
Ann May	New Website
Pat Grealy	Twitter Publisher, Website Maintenance
David May	Church Sign - Wayside Pulpit, Public Radio Announcements
Joseph Dowlen	Church Sign – Sermon
Rev. Mark Edmiston-Lange	Minister, Staff Liaison

2015 Annual Report - Finance Committee Chair: Tony Collins

The Finance Committee consists of Dick Cheney, John Homier, and Eric Watson, who bowed out this year. Mark Edmiston-Lange and the Treasurer, Linda Condit, who has replaced Billye Smith, serve ex-officio, as well as Mike Condit as vice-President. We are always on the lookout for new members: the only important qualification is an interest in the business of running the church.

We reviewed the finances monthly and generated the first draft of the budget in October. We hope that this version, with a 3 year plan, was useful. Thanks to everybody for making the committee's task less stressful by pledging, and by honoring your pledges.

Tony Collins

2015 Annual Report Greeter Committee Doug Mohn

Beginning in December of 2015, I took over from Deborah Landis as Greeter Coordinator and leaving the usher coordinator role in Donald Smith's capable hands. Deborah and I have continued recruitment during the year for additional greeter volunteers. I expect recruitment to be an ongoing need. Our aim is to always have a greeter in the building by 9:45 and to have at least two greeters at 10:45 before the main service at 11. With more greeters, we can ensure everyone who visits can receive the information they are seeking easily.

We continue to meet with the Membership Committee on a monthly basis to coordinate follow-up activities for visitors.

I would like to thank everyone for their efforts and for Deborah Landis helping me obtain new volunteers before turning over the reins.

2015 Annual Report of the Investment Committee
Co-Chairs: John Homier and Jill Rose

As described in previous years' reports, the assets of the Endowment Fund have been allocated in two parts:

1. Cash and equivalents for short term liquidity needs and for transfer to Outreach and Reserve Fund, and
2. Long Term Investment.

The balances and changes in these allocations during the year 2015 are as follows:

Allocation	31 December 2015	31 December 2014	Change
Long Term Investment	\$724,198.27	\$945,412.02	(\$221,213.75)
Cash and Equivalents	\$129,235.29	\$185,273.25	(\$56,037.96)
Total Endowment	\$853,433.56	\$1,130,685.27	(\$277,251.71)

During the year there were bequests of \$20,000 into the Endowment.

Withdrawals of \$76,062.47 were made during the year to Outreach and Reserve Fund in accordance with the 2014 amendment to Emerson's constitution. The decrease in total market value of the remaining funds in the Endowment account was \$221,189.24.

The Long Term Investment allocation is held primarily in equities managed by The Mitchell Group on our behalf since December 2004. The initial investment in that allocation was \$700,000. In the intervening eleven years, we have withdrawn \$1,235,000 and now have a balance of \$724,198. The committee regularly reviews long term investment strategy and, despite recent short term volatility, continues to consider The Mitchell Group an appropriate investment manager given its long term record of outperformance.

The relative performance of the Endowment vis a vis market indices for 2015 is as follows:

	12/31/14	12/31/2015	Change
Emerson Endowment	\$1,1130,685	853,434	-18.3%*
DJIA	17,823	17,425	-2.2%
S&P500	2,059	2,044	-0.7%
NASDAQ	4,736	5,007	+5.7%

*adjusted for bequests and withdrawal to Outreach and Reserve Funds

As stipulated by Emerson's constitution, the Investment Committee determined in December that the amount available for withdrawal from the Endowment in 2016 for Outreach and Reserve Fund is \$73,217.95.

During 2015, the committee compiled a short history of the Endowment, which is attached as part of this report.

Current members of the Investment Committee are: Henry Groppe, John Homier, Will Irwin, Bub Joyce, Jill Rose, and Zena Taylor.

5 January 2015

John Homier and Jill Rose, Co-chairs

A Brief History of the Emerson Endowment Fund September 13, 2015

Summary

The Emerson Endowment (the “Endowment”) was initiated in 1974. Throughout its life, it has been funded with contributions of approximately \$717,272. It has had earnings of approximately \$3,569,307 and has had net withdrawals of approximately \$3,155,894. As of December 31, 2014, it had a balance of \$1,130,685.

History

The Endowment was established in 1974 and was seeded with a contribution from Henry and Alma Kemp of \$160,172 in gold mining stock. In the early days of the Endowment, Henry Kemp was its principal investment advisor. Shortly after its initiation, Frank Schulman asked Jeff Montgomery and Andy Delaney to join with him and Henry Kemp in overseeing the investments of the Endowment. Henry Groppe joined that group in the late 1970’s. Together, they managed the Endowment informally until the late 1980s. During that time, its existence was largely unknown to the congregation. With Frank Schulman’s retirement, management of the Endowment transitioned to a more formal structure and additional members were added to a formal Investment Committee. Andy and Henry served as principal investment advisors for the Endowment and served as co-chairs of the Investment Committee. They researched and made investment recommendations to the Committee which discussed and voted on each recommendation. During this time, the Endowment portfolio was held principally in equities of energy and financial services companies because those were the areas of Henry’s and Andy’s expertise. This approach continued until December 2004.

In that year, the Investment Committee decided to engage The Mitchell Group as its investment advisor for its long term investments. The Mitchell Group is a fund’s manager that specializes in the energy industry and manages approximately \$825 million in funds for high net worth individuals, endowments, pension funds, and charities. Henry Groppe has had a long standing relationship with The Mitchell Group. The average size of the accounts that it manages is approximately \$18 million and its minimum account size is typically \$5 million. Because of Henry’s relationship, The Mitchell Group has waived the minimum account size and has managed Emerson’s investments without charging a management. The Committee has been assured that this arrangement will not change going forward.

With the exception of the period from March to August 2011, when the Committee elected to withdraw from all equity investments and consolidate all of the Endowment funds in cash and equivalents, The Mitchell Group has remained the Endowment’s long term investment advisor to the present. The decision to be invested in cash and equivalents for a portion of 2011 was driven by market uncertainty as well as ambiguity surrounding Emerson’s financial plans, including the mechanism for funding ongoing operations, as well as the final payment of \$725,354 for the mortgage undertaken for the construction of its new education and administrative wing.

In addition to Henry Kemp, Henry Groppe*, Jeff Montgomery, Frank Schulman and Andy Delany, membership in the Investment Committee has included: Bram McClelland, Otto Glaser, Curtis McKallip, Will Irwin*, Dick Mullineaux, Bub Joyce*, Brian Emerson, Zena Taylor*, Jill Rose*, and John Homier*. (Current members are indicated by an asterisk).

Structure of Endowment Accounts

Endowment funds are allocated in two accounts:

- An account for Cash and Equivalents (Charles Schwab) which is used to manage short term liquidity needs and
- An account for Long Term Investments (Bank of Oklahoma) used to invest for long term capital appreciation.

Contributions and Withdrawals

From the records available (principally Dick Mullineaux’s notes for the time prior to 2005 and Karen Van Horn’s records after), the following is a summary of contributions and withdrawals for the Endowment from its inception:

	Contributions	Net Withdrawals
From Inception through Jan 31, 2005	\$612,105	\$1,805,572
From Jan 31, 2005 through Dec 31, 2014	\$105,167	\$1,350,171
Totals	\$717,272	\$3,155,894

The distribution of funds withdrawn from the Endowment has been as follows:

	Operations net of repayment	Building Downpay-ment and Final Mortgage payments	Capital Expend-itures and Equipment	Repairs and Mainten- ance	Outreac h	Minister Retirement and Transition	Total
From Inception through Jan 31, 2005	\$565,142	\$825,000	\$0	\$0	\$40,000	\$375,581	\$1,805,723
From Jan 31, 2005 through Dec 31, 2014	\$314,579	\$785,676	\$50,529	\$159,312	\$40,075	\$0	\$1,350,171
Total	\$879,721	\$1,610,676	\$50,529	\$159,312	\$80,075	\$375,581	\$3,155,894
Percentage	27.9%	51.1%	1.6%	5.0%	2.5%	11.9%	100.0%

Earnings of the Endowment

Over its forty year life, Endowment contributions of approximately \$717,272 have generated earnings of approximately \$3,569,307 (the sum of current balance plus net withdrawals minus contributions). As of December 31, 2014, the balances in the Endowment totaled \$1,130,685 (\$945,412 in the Long Term Investment Account and \$185,273 in the Cash and Equivalents Account).

According to Dick Mullineaux's analysis in his notes, from inception through December 31, 2006 the Endowment had:

Total Contributions -- \$724,072

Total Withdrawals -- \$2,011,031

Balance as of December 31, 2006 -- \$1,297,341

Total Investment Gain -- \$2,584,300

Internal Rate of Return from inception through December 31, 2006 – 12.4%

Note that these numbers do not tie exactly to the numbers extracted from his more detailed spreadsheet, but they are fairly close. They also include some overlap with the time for which The Mitchell Group has been investment advisor for the Long Term Investment Account (from December 2004 through December 2006).

The initial investment with The Mitchell Group in December 2004 was \$700,000 in the Long Term Investment Account. In the intervening ten years to December 31, 2014, Emerson withdrew \$1,159,000 from that account and had a remaining balance of \$945,412. The overall rate of return earned by Emerson over that ten year period was 14.9% per year.

Documentation Copies of Dick's notes, Karen's records, and my work papers will be filed in the minute book for the Investment Committee.

Acknowledgement

Many thanks to the current members of the Emerson Investment Committee (Henry Groppe, Bub Joyce, Will Irwin, Jill Rose, and Zena Taylor), Karen Van Horn, and the Reverend Mark Edmiston-Lange for their corporate knowledge and input in compiling this brief history. We are also indebted to Dick Mullineaux for his legacy of conscientiously maintained notes over three decades.

John Homier

Co-chair, Emerson Investment Committee

2015 Annual Report Lay Pastoral Ministry Team
Coordinator: Kay Bergen

The mission of the Lay Pastoral Ministry team is to help create a true feeling of Beloved Community at Emerson Church. This is done by providing a compassionate, listening presence for members and fostering a congregational environment in which people feel truly valued and supported.

2015 has been a very active year for the team. Two church services this year included participation by LPMT members to allow more visibility and awareness of the team for the congregation. While the Ministers were away this summer, team members were on call to help with any outreach needs that might occur in the absence of Mark and Becky.

October was training month and there are now seven new lay ministers. Members are: Sally Phillips, Judy Taylor, Ken McLeod, Edna Kelly, Sarah Rossmiller, Ian Sachs, Nancy Baxley, Shannon Butler, Pam Cummings, Mim Freiter, Marci Collier, Becky Edmiston-Lange and Kay Bergen. With the addition of additional member, there has been much discussion on widening the areas of team participation.

2015 Annual Report – Membership Committee
Chair: Deborah Wotring Landis

Membership at Emerson Unitarian Universalist church continued to steadily increase with **31 new members in 2015.**

The membership committee consists of the following members:

Chairwoman Deborah Wotring Landis, Members Betsy Gelb, Barbara Crotty and Doug Mohn. We lost our long time committee members Maryann and Sigsby Rusk this year. Both Maryann and Sigsby were wonderful members of the committee and we were sorry to see them resign. Jill Rose continues to diligently input data concerning visitors and new members each week into the church's data base and to share that information with the committee. She is an indispensable to the success of the committee. Eric Watson also serves the committee by making visitor packets and new member packets as needed. Becky also does a wonderful job once a month meeting with potential new members in the library to discuss with them what it means to join Emerson and to encourage them to join.

The membership committee continued on with its plans from last year to contact visitors by e-mail to offer to take each visitor for coffee or lunch. The purpose of these invitations was for the committee members to get to know the visitors better, make them feel welcome and to answer questions the visitors have about the church. New members to the committee are welcome. Please contact Deborah Landis at 713-504-0819 if you are interested. Deborah Wotring Landis will soon be joining the professional group of membership professionals that she learned about at the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in June.

The following are the statistics compiled by Jill Rose concerning visitors and membership for 2015.

Total Members - 387

New Members - 31

Death of members - 5

Members who moved or resigned - 6

member removed due to loss of interest - 1

Newcomers who registered for the first time - 153

non Members with children who attend Sunday school but who do not make contributions - 47

Mission Statement - Emerson Church Outreach Committee
2015 Annual Report

Through use of Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church Outreach Funds we put Unitarian Universalist principles into action in our community and the world by supporting organizations and causes that promote the equal worth and dignity of every person and the interdependent web of all existence.

Outreach Committee Guidelines

In determining the projects, programs, organizations and causes funded by the Outreach Fund, the Committee will consider:

1. Consistency with one or more of the seven Unitarian Universalist principles (<http://www.uua.org/uuagovernance/bylaws/articles/6906.shtml>);
2. Emerson congregational priorities;
3. UUA Congregational Study/Action Issues for the year (<http://www.uua.org/statement/current>);
4. Ways to maximize Emerson's contributions through leveraging dollars from other sources to the extent practical;
5. How to use Outreach Fund moneys to provide significant amounts for a single project or purpose, thereby engaging the congregation in a singular worthy cause; and
6. Ways to promote the visibility of Emerson UU Church and the Unitarian Universalist Association.

Share the Plate (Sunday Offerings)

Share the Plate contributions will be used for smaller donations to more organizations according to the principles and priorities established for such contributions.

Social Action Council 2015 Annual Report Milestones for 2015

Social Justice

UUV4J Trip to Capitol; UUV4J Actions Supporting Prop 1; Black Lives Matter Rally in Waller; Tribute Concert to Social Justice Activist Pete Seeger; Sponsoring the Play, "Mercy Killers"

Caring for the Earth

Renewable Energy Campaign; Expansion of Recycling Program to the Neighborhood; Series of Sustainable Dinners; Book Study – This Changes Everything (Naomi Kline); Endangered Species Service; Volunteer Day at Plant it Forward; Climate Action Vigil

Social Equity

Spring and Fall House Builds for Rebuilding Together Houston; Fund-Raiser for Undies for Everyone; Socktober Fund-Raiser for Meals on Wheels; Holiday Mart (beneficiary to be determined by youth); Expansion of UUNO to 3 Levels (average of 23 students for each Saturday)

Special Collections moved out from under SAC and is now being handled by the Outreach Committee.

Organized and held retreat on Saturday, January 2nd to discuss the name, vision statement and organizational structure of SAC. The preliminary results of our retreat follow:

On January 2, 2016, the Social Action Council held a retreat to re-envision the function and organizational structure of the council. In attendance: Jane Collins, Tony Collins, Mike Condit (representing BOT), Zach Engle, Beth Hammer, Kenny Jones, Ann May, Dave May (representing Adult RE), Robin McElfresh and Jane Zachritz (Convener).

Following are the items that we discussed and came to a consensus on:

What's in a Name: Change the name from the "Social Action Council" to the "Coordinating Council for Social Action" (the "Council"). We felt that a coordinating council more accurately describes the function of our group.

What Do We Hope to Accomplish: Simplify our vision statement to “The vision of the Coordinating Council for Social Action is that everyone is committed to service, within and beyond the congregation. We view social action, worship and religious education as interdependent, inseparable and equally important functions of a strong Unitarian Universalist church.”

Chair vs. Facilitator Structure: Stewardship will consist of Co-Facilitators organized by the following areas of interest + 1 voting Board of Trustees liaison + 1 floating member (Tony Collins). Each Area of Interest will have 2-3 Co-Facilitators organized in the fashion of Maiden-Mother-Crone. Each Facilitator under the Areas of Interest will act as a Quarterly Facilitator/Convener on a rotating basis.

Areas of Interest: After discussion, we decided that what we do falls into 3 major, but simple, areas. We strive to (1) Fight for Justice (address systemic and institutionalized discrimination through education, advocacy and witness); (2) Care for the Earth (under Ministry for Earth); and (3) Help People (address the “here and now” needs of our local community).

Fight for Justice

Facilitators – Jane Collins, Kenny Jones and TBD

Coordinate Emerson’s interface with UUA Initiatives including UUV4J, TXUUM, UUSC, UUCSJ and other groups that work to correct systemic and institutionalized discrimination (such as Black Lives Matter)

Care for the Earth

Facilitators – Ann May, Robin McElfresh and Dan Rigney

Coordinate environmental stewardship educational activities and volunteer projects through Ministry for Earth including Renewables Campaign, Neighborhood Recycling, Ethical Eating, and Work Days at Community Gardens.

Help People

Facilitators – Zach Engle, Beth Hammer and Jane Zachritz

Coordinate education and outreach opportunities surrounding equity issues (including but not limited to fair trade, pay equity, living wage, human trafficking, and housing, food and education disparity) both through Emerson’s existing programs (Groppe Scholarships and UUNO) and projects in coordination with or to benefit non-profit organizations (ie. SEARCH, Rebuilding Together Houston, and Freedom Place).

Getting Down to the Nitty Gritty: The following areas are still in development and will be finalized at our first meeting.

Meetings:

The Council will have face-to-face meetings four (4) times per calendar year: January, April, July and October. Rotating conveners will be selected to serve for a quarter of the year and all members should serve in this capacity before there is a repeat. There may be an E-Meeting if needed or desired by a call of an Interest Area Facilitator. Task force meetings may be held at any time by the Interest Area Facilitators. A quorum means that items may be discussed and action may be taken on those items presented. A quorum will be established by the simple majority of those comprising the group. Members may be present by proxy and by any electronic means available. If no Quorum is established the meeting may proceed for discussion only, but no decisions may be made.

Decision-Making Process:

1. All Council will, to the greatest extent possible and with the voting exception process noted, be arrived at by the consensus method.
2. Voting members are the 9 Area of Interest Facilitators, the BOT Liaison and the Floating Member.
3. At any time after all members present have had an opportunity to present ideas and voice concerns, any voting member present may call for a vote to terminate consensus building and proceed to a majority vote on the measure under discussion. If the vote fails or a tie results, discussion towards consensus proceeds until consensus is reached or a subsequent vote to suspend is taken and is successful.
4. If a vote to suspend consensus efforts is successful, the Quarter Convener will call the vote on the measure under consideration, including the framing of the measure for which the vote is called. Possible votes are (1) to table the vote with questions to the measure's proponent(s) for reconsideration at future meeting at a time certain; (2) the measure is approved; or (3) the measure is not approved.

Quarter Convener Duties:

1. Prepare an agenda for the next Quarter Meeting.
2. Convene and chair the quarter meeting.
3. Be responsible for all council communications for the quarter including notices in the Emersonian, E-Blast, and Order of Service and on the Social Action page.
4. Prepare and deliver a report to the council at the end of the quarter, with an honest critique of what did and did not work.
5. Facilitate the selection of the successor Quarter Convener and assist with that transition.
6. All of the above duties may be delegated by the Quarter Convener as she/he sees fit.

Areas of Interest Facilitator Duties:

1. Form a Task Force as needed to tend to the responsibilities of the area of interest for both the current and subsequent quarters.
2. Complete a plan for the year, calendar check for conflicts and set timelines for all campaigns, actions, activities, and events for the current and subsequent quarters for the Area of Interest to be presented to the Quarter Convener.
3. Prepare all communications for the Area of Interest and deliver it in a timely manner to the Quarter Convener.
4. All of the above duties may be delegated by the Area of Interest Facilitators as they see fit.

Methods of Communication:

All Council deliberations, debates, discussions, suggestions, revisions, etc., shall be recorded on a collaborative on-line platform. Suggested avenues at meeting: Google Drive, Blog, Private Facebook page. Method to be selected at next meeting. All members will receive training so they can effectively use the chosen medium for collaboration, calendaring and recording decisions made by the Council.

Still to be Addressed: Authorization of Council expenditures.

Following is the beautiful logo that Zach Engle is working on as a graphic representation of what we do:



Ministry for Earth, 2015 Annual Report Ann May

Emerson's Renewable Energy Initiative. Ministry for Earth and the Board of Trustees committed to a plan to move Emerson to carbon neutrality. The Board voted to switch to renewable energy as soon as our current contract expires. In the meantime, the Board will accept Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) donated on behalf of Emerson for the energy used in 2014 and the first half of 2015. The Board agreed to purchase or accept donated RECs for the energy used in 2016 and carbon offsets for the modest remainder of our carbon footprint. Thus we can call ourselves a **Renewable Congregation**. We have contacted all UU congregations in Houston and are expanding the program to progressive congregations in other denominations on behalf of our Renewable Congregations Campaign. We encourage every household to use the same strategy to begin moving to a sustainable energy system.

Climate Action

- Held a **Climate Action Vigil at Emerson** on Thursday, December 3, in conjunction with Texas Interfaith Power and Light, in support the COP21 climate negotiations in Paris, which will bring together heads of state and other stakeholders in an attempt to finalize a binding international agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to support the fossil fuel transitions of developing nations. We networked with other Texas congregations.
- Robin McElfresh, Dan Rigney, Kenny Jones, & Elaine Jones represented Emerson at the **Global Climate March** on Nov. 29 in Austin (one of 3 marches in Texas) to support renewable energy to mark the beginning of the COP21 negotiations in Paris.
- Participated in **Climate Justice Month**, organized by **Commit2Respond**, the new climate justice initiative led by UU groups across our faith movement. Dan Rigney took the initiative to connect to the Climate Action Teams sponsored by the UU-UNO organization, to communicate with other UU congregations on their activities.

Educational Programs

- A group met for 9 weeks to read and discuss the book by Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, a look at the connection between the climate crisis and a capitalist economy based on fossil fuels.
- A group met to read and discuss David Korten's latest book, *Change the Story, Change the Future: A Living Economy for a Living Earth*.
- Movies (the Hearts and Minds Film Series) included *Save the Arctic!* To learn from Greenpeace activists around the country to learn how we will ensure that the Arctic is protected for our future. *Black Ice*, a Greenpeace USA film that documents the story of the Arctic 30 – climate activists challenging drilling in the arctic were imprisoned in Russia and charged with piracy. The *No to Drilling in the Arctic!* Screening included letter writing.
- Rev. Mark Edmiston-Lange represented Emerson at the Green Building Education Seminar: Sustainable Directions in Houston on August 26. As part of a panel discussion composed of representatives from the federal government, city government, a corporate design firm, a local church (Emerson), and a local sports venue, to explain how governments, faith-based organizations, and businesses are picking up the pace with eco-friendly behavior.
- At the Plant-It-Forward-Farms presentation on Nov. 8, we learned what's happening at the farms this fall and how to buy a share of their local, organic produce.

Expansion of Recycling Program

Ongoing recycling is part of the LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) that we received in 2004).

- Beginning Earth Day, April 17, Emerson opened a free weekly drop-off recycling service for congregants, parents of Tanglewood Academy students and the neighborhood; operated by Recycle4U. Free electronic recycling in April and November.
- We switched to single stream recycling in our buildings, because sorted materials are more valuable.
- Clothing Recycling bin at the NW corner of our parking lot. IM Green sorts and sends to the highest use possible. Emerson receives \$30 per month.
- Halloween Costume Swap provided a way for anyone to recycle costumes.

Sustainable Dinner Series

Practicing a diet that is healthier for ourselves and the planet, we held four sessions learning how to prepare vegetarian/vegan foods. We tested brownies, had a veggie “burger” cook-off; learned to cook quinoa and tofu recipes in a potluck format open to all.

Endangered Species Service & Pet Adoption Event

- **Corridor Rescue Adoption and Pet Food Drive**, March 22, to benefit the dogs rescued from the "Corridor of Cruelty" (the I-59 and Little York area) the youth took the lead in collecting pet food for the dogs while they are being rehabilitated and fostered until they are adopted.
- **Endangered Species Day Service for Creatures Great and Small**. We held a brief gathering in remembrance of lost and endangered species, on the Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi, to acknowledge how the loss of a single species affects the interdependent web.

Equinox and Solstice Services

- Vernal Equinox – Friday, March 20 Potluck supper and service.
- Summer Solstice – Sunday, June 21 Potluck supper and service.
- Autumnal Equinox – Wednesday, September 23 Potluck and service.
- Winter Solstice – Sunday, December 21 Service and reception.

Community Events

- On Saturday, April 11 volunteers from Emerson helped set up booths and assisted various environmental groups and vendors at **Houston’s Earth Day** event in Discovery Green.
- Volunteers from Emerson weeded beds and cleaned the habitat gardens at the **Plant It Forward Farms Workday**, in preparation for the **Farm Tour** on Nov. 15.

Share the Plate Recipients

- UU Ministry for Earth (March recipient)
- Plant It Forward Farms (November Recipient)