

Annual Meeting Agenda
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston, Texas
January 29, 2017

Call to Order

Invocation

Approval of Minutes of January 17, 2016 Annual Meeting

Approval of Minutes of December 11, 2016 Congregational Budget Meeting

Review of 2016 Annual Reports

Motion to amend wording concerning Membership in Articles II and III of the Constitution as stated in the call of the meeting.

(Note: These are changes in wording that take into account logistical problems that we have experienced over the last three years in addressing the awkward 15-month requirement (something that is difficult to keep straight in our accounting system) and the recognition of financial contributions outside of a pledge. These changes would essentially return us to a system that worked well for many years and would be less likely to cause misunderstandings. There is also an unrelated wording addition in Article II to expand our welcoming to the broad area of gender identity.)

Solicitation of members and chairs of select committees

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kenny Jones 3 Years
Ben Withers 3 Years
Jane Zachritz 3 Years

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Beverly Hanson 2 Years
Larry Kelly 2 Years
Deborah Wotring Landis 2 Years
Richard Loftin 2 Years

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

Sarah Boyd 3 Years
Pamela Cummings 3 Years

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

Jane Collins 3 Years
Lori Reeder 3 Years

2017 BOARD OFFICERS AND AUXILLIERIES

President, Barbara Crotty
Vice President, Nancy Lipp
Past President, Michael Condit

Treasurer, Linda Condit
Board Secretary, Kenny Jones

Recognition of Outgoing Board Members – Wade Greiner and Richard Loftin. Kenny Jones who filled Victor Koosh's unexpired term is nominated currently for his own three-year term.

Adjourn

2016 BOARD

Officers Michael Condit, President
 Barbara Crotty, Vice President
 Richard Loftin, Past President

2016 Trustees

Ruth Alkons-Wolinsky	Beth Hammer
Mark Andersen	Nancy Lipp
Mike Condit	Richard Loftin
Barbara Crotty	Kenny Jones
Wade Greiner	Craig Miller

Treasurer

Linda Condit

Board Secretary

Kenny Jones

Annual Report 2016
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Annual Meeting Minutes from January 17, 2016
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston, Texas

Minutes by Kenneth Jones, incoming BOT Secretary

I. Call to Order – the meeting was called to Order by 2015 Board of Trustees President, Richard Loftin

II. Invocation – The invocation was delivered by Co-Minister, Mark Edmiston-Lange

III. Approval of the Minutes from the Congregational Meeting of January 25, 2015 – Richard Loftin pointed out some highlights of 2015:

- The church is operating with no budget deficit and is enjoying a small surplus;
- Emerson celebrated the Supreme Court’s decision to legalize same sex marriage with our own Wedding-Palooza in which our ministers and staff organized the wedding ceremonies for same sex couples.
- A Community Outreach Committee was formed,
- Our church was well represented in two actions to act as a voice for love and compassion to counter the opposite message of the representatives of the Westboro Baptist Church at two locations on two separate dates;
- Emerson made a \$25,000.00 donation to Planned Parenthood.

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ann May, with a 2nd form Barbara Crotty. The motion was submitted for a vote and approved by the congregation.

IV. Approval of Minutes from the December 13, 2015 Congregational Budget Meeting. There was a motion to amend the minutes by changing the word “future” to “further” and to approve the minutes as amended by Tony Collins. The motion was submitted for a vote and approved.

V. Nominations for 2016

A. Committee on Ministry

The nominations of Phillip Baxley and Bon Hansen to 3 year terms on the Committee for Ministry were presented. They were recognized and their nominations were approved by the congregation.

B. Nominations Committee

The nominations of John Hammer, Kenny Jones, and Kris Taylor to 2 year terms on the Nominations Committee were presented. They were recognized and their nominations were approved by the congregation.

C. Outreach Committee

The nomination of Karen George, formerly elected to a one year term was now nominated to a full 3 year term on the Outreach Committee was presented. She was recognized and her nomination was approved by the congregation.

D. Board of Trustees

The nominations of Ruth Alkons-Wolinsky, Mark Anderson, and Nancy Lipp to 3 year terms on the Board of Trustees were presented. They were recognized and their nominations were approved by the congregation.

E. BOT Officers for 2016

The nominations of for the Board of Trustees Offices for 2016 were presented as follows:

- Mike Condit – President
- Barbara Crotty – Vice President
- Richard Loftin – Past President
- Linda Condit – Treasurer
- Kenny Jones – Secretary

They were recognized and their nominations were approved by the congregation.

VI. Congregational Study Action Issues (CSAIs)

The CSAI process was explained to the congregation: A Yes vote means that Emerson UU Church wants the four proposed CASIs to appear on the agenda of the 2016 General Assembly. The four proposed CSAI's are:

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

These items were presented to the congregation and approved.

VII. Outgoing BOT Members – Richard Loftin expressed his appreciation for the contributions of the three outgoing members of the Board of Trustees: Shannon Butler, Tony Collins, and Kris Taylor.

VII. Special Recognitions

A. Mary Ann Stanley - Richard Loftin expressed his appreciation of the contributions of long-time member of Emerson, Mary Ann Stanley.

B. The A/V Team - Richard Loftin expressed his appreciation of the contributions of the members of the Audio / Visual Team: Kevin Crotty, Joe Dowlen, Mark Holt, Jill Rose, Sigsby Rusk, and Leo Vandermeulen

VII. Adjournment – Newly elected Board of Trustees President for 2016, Mike Condit was presented and provided closing remarks and adjourned the 2016 Congregational Meeting

Budget Meeting Minutes from December 11, 2016
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church

The Budget Meeting was opened by Mike Condit, President of the Board of Trustees. Mike provided an overview of both the budget process and some general remarks about what the budget presented represents for the congregation. The budget represents one that is basic, but also dynamic and one that attempts to reflect what the church wants to be. Mike indicated that the budget reflects a commitment to get salaries where they need to be. He reviewed some of the problems faced in the previous year, namely a budget shortfall of nearly \$90,000.00 and the work of the Stewardship Committee to meet that shortfall. In particular, the process for securing pledges for 2017 has already begun. Mike then introduced the Finance Committee chairperson, Tony Collins.

Highlights of Tony's Comments:

- Reiterated Mike's remarks that there are few variables in the budget;
- Highlighted the most impacted item in the budget: Income;
- The predicted 2016 budget was \$565,000.00 with \$540,000.00 in place for 2017, with an estimated \$550,000.00 final figure;
- The most impactful expense are staff salaries;
- The minister and office administrator salaries were highlighted, particularly the raises the proposed budget included;
- Reviewed the cuts made when the 2016 budget crisis developed: church committee cuts made in 2016 will stay cut in 2017, the churches UUA contribution was cut in order to protect salaries;
- The budget surplus of \$6,000.00 and the uncertainty of +/- \$20,000.00 was discussed.

Tony made a Motion that the 2017 Budget be accepted/approved as presented. The motion received a 2nd from Dick Cheney.

Discussion

Gabe Gelb asked about the location of the Office Administrator's salary in the budget. Gabe also asked for the number of pledges that comprise the income predictions.

Answer provided: 178 pledges, 70 not pledged, 9 Friends, and 0 non-members

Larry Kelly inquired about the minister's salary recommendation and stated that his position was the salary should match what is requested by the minister.

Lori Reeder made a statement advocating for an increase for the Communications Director, Ale Gonzalez.

Mike Condit responded that Ale's compensation was not raised due to her short length of employment.

Ben Withers made a statement in support for fair compensation for the Minister's salary as per UUA guidelines.

Tony Collins responded that the UUA Guidelines are based on membership and that determination is subject to ongoing negotiations.

Mr. Hillstrom inquired as to whether we are giving too much needed funds via the Share the Plate program.

Mike Condit responded that the Share the Plate program was not a significant impact on expenditures and the program was overall beneficial to the church.

Carole Huelbig asked a clarifying question regarding the UUA Guidelines on minister's salary based on membership.

Bonnie Homier asked whether the housing allowance was included in the minister's salary.

Tony responded that the housing allowance was included.

Ken McLeod pointed out that the UUA Guidelines on minister's salary included 3 categories: size of congregation, community standards, and experience.

Tony Collins responded that salaries involve answers to 3 questions: What the church should pay?; What the church wants to pay?; and What the church can pay?

Will Irwin made a statement in favor of a return to the face-to-face canvass, stating it is what works to solve budgetary issues.

Mike Condit and Nancy Lipp addressed the pledging process of the last several months and that going forward.

Robin Sickles offered comments on the sequestration of the endowment, the UUA Guidelines for the potential for hiring and assistant minister, and the pay as you go plan.

Martin Estill congratulated the Finance Committee for a job well done.

John Homier addressed the issue of the disbursements from the endowment increase: \$160,000.00 is apportioned 50% to the Outreach Committee and 50% to a Maintenance Fund. Bylaws indicate that as much as 6% may be taken out.

Mike Condit stated that the Board voted to allocate 3% for these distributions.

Bill Hammons stated his concern about realizing the UUA Guidelines in regard to salaries.

No further discussion was proposed, a quorum of 72 members present was announced, and a vote was called.

The vote in support of approving the motion was unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned.

Minutes by Kenny Jones, BOT Member and Secretary

Report to the Congregation of Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston for the Year 2016
Minister, Becky Edmiston-Lange

I think this is perhaps a unique situation – submitting an annual report for the year in which one’s husband and Co-Minister has died. I know that in our Unitarian Universalist Association there has never been a clergy couple actively serving one of our congregations when one of the couple dies. There may have been similar situations in other denominations, but I know of none.

At the beginning of 2016, Mark and I were busily preparing to take sabbatical leave, trying to ensure that the church would run as smoothly as possible during our absence. And, of course, we were eagerly anticipating “all the places we would go”, the time for reading and reflection, and the time to just be together without the press of church duties. We were going to have a “most excellent” adventure as we explored the interface of landscape, spirituality and responsibility to the earth.

And indeed, we did – have a most excellent adventure. We had a glorious sabbatical with never-to-be-repeated, magical moments and unforgettable experiences. Although in hindsight I think I can see that Mark’s cancer had already taken hold by early April, we were blessedly unaware then and we reveled in our being together, in seeing what we saw, and in sharing revelations, reflections, and insights. I cannot begin to express how deeply grateful I am to have had that precious time which I will treasure always.

Of course, you know the rest of the story – that when we returned from sabbatical in late August, Mark was ill and shortly thereafter was diagnosed with lung cancer. Two and a half weeks later he was dead. It was so sudden, so mind-numbingly shocking – for all of us.

But – we have survived – both you, the congregation, and I. And we – you, the congregation and I - are moving forward together, navigating our way, with love to guide us. Words escape me to try to capture how well-held I have felt by the caring presence of this congregation. I am privileged to serve you. And it is simply not possible to adequately thank Mike Condit, the rest of the Board of Trustees, the Lay Pastoral Ministry Team - indeed all our committee and activity volunteers - for their leadership and ministry – both during the sabbatical and in the sad months following. As I said to start, we have been in an unprecedented situation. And yet our lay leaders and volunteers have navigated through with wisdom and grace. I do believe that we may come through this a stronger community, with a better sense of our shared ministry, and a renewed commitment to our mission of helping to build a better world.

I have to extend my greatest praise – and my deepest heartfelt appreciation – to our professional staff: Karen Van Horn, Business Administrator; Katy Carpman, Director of Religious Education; Adrian Rodriguez, Music Director; and Ale Gonzalez, Office Administrator for Communications. Every day they have stepped up, stepped out, gone the extra mile, persevered with excellence and dedication - even through their own tears - in untold and manifest ways to ensure the wellbeing of our beloved congregation during this most difficult time. I am honored, humbled and deeply blessed to serve with them.

In abiding faith and love,

Becky

2016 Annual Report – President’s Report to the Congregation

Mike Condit

Dear Fellow Members and Friends of Emerson,

The year 2016 was not an easy one for Emerson Church. We had to face some difficult and even unique situations. Early in the year we addressed financial concerns that could have had a devastating effect on our church programs. There was also a several month period when the ministers were absent taking a very well-deserved sabbatical. Most importantly, in September we experienced the very sad and sudden death of our co-minister Mark Edmiston-Lange. The period following Mark’s death has been a difficult one, not just for Becky but for the entire congregation. I will address these and other activities and issues in the church, but I want to emphasize how gratified I am by the way in which the congregation has been resilient and has performed over this entire year. The Church is more dynamic than ever, with increased and developing programs in social action, education, and music. I believe that we have a greater sense of purpose than we have had for several years. We are accepting our successes and our setbacks as a matter of course and are continuing to move ahead.

My biggest concern entering 2016 was whether we could meet the budget that we had accepted in December 2015. That budget anticipated a significant increase in pledge revenue, largely to increase staff compensation that had lagged for several years. By March it was apparent that these pledges had not materialized and that we would fall significantly short of budget. Part of the problem was that we had not had a formal stewardship campaign for a couple of years. There were also general economic and demographic factors involved. I reconstituted a Stewardship Committee in March, and I want to publicly thank Larry Huelbig for stepping up and chairing a committee that met often and worked hard to greatly increase our pledge revenue. Even that was not enough, and the Board in late spring made cuts to the original budget that allowed us to finish close to break-even for 2016. However, this should be a wakeup call for us. As a “pay as you go” church, we can no longer spend money that we don’t have. Our budgets should be conservative. New or additional expenses should be added through amended budgets that can also show either realized or reasonably expected new revenue. I am pleased that the congregation adopted such a budget for 2017 at its budget meeting on December 11, 2016.

Mark’s death was a shock and a blow to all of us, both as individuals and as a church. Adjusting to this new situation has not been easy. It has required a lot of effort by Becky, our church staff, the UUA, and the many UU ministers who have volunteered to fill in for Becky on selected Sundays (this is still happening and will cover much of 2017). In addition, I am very proud of the way in which our congregation has responded. Despite our sorrow, we have remained strong and focused on moving forward. It would have been very easy to become so despondent that we ceased to perform adequately. That did not happen because many people stepped up, continued our programs, and looked toward the future. I attribute much of this to the attitude and pride that Mark and Becky have instilled in this church. We still have work to do in this area. The Board, in conjunction with the congregation, will study staffing issues in the coming months with a focus on our goals and programs going into 2018 and beyond.

I want to briefly mention several other areas in which I think our members and staff performed very well in 2016. I was somewhat worried about the effect that having our ministers absent for several months might have. It could easily have resulted in a decline in attendance at worship, less participation in education or social action programs, and a general lethargy among the membership. It did not! Throughout the sabbatical there was good attendance on Sundays, people continued to work on church activities, and morale was very high. In the coming year I look forward to benefitting from the ideas and insights that Mark and Becky accumulated during their sabbatical concerning the relationship of religion to nature.

Emerson has been making a name for itself even outside our walls for several years now. It got even better in 2016. Through tireless efforts of people like Kenny Jones and Jane Zachritz, our church carries out social action and advocacy with a regularity and impact that far exceeds our size. Likewise, our Outreach Committee has done an excellent job in using funds from our Endowment to leverage even greater amounts from collaborators in pursuing large social concerns, most recently health care for Texans. The ESL program (English as a Second Language) continues to grow and make a name for itself in the community, and it is becoming more collaborative and successful in obtaining outside funding. Our education programs are vibrant, and through use of social media we have attracted many who would not otherwise have come to Emerson. The music program is becoming more sophisticated. The choir is performing increasingly complex

numbers. The Emerson Intergenerational Orchestra is becoming more diverse, now including string, woodwind, and brass ensembles in addition to the full orchestra.

I appreciate the opportunity and the honor to serve as President of the Board of Trustees during 2016. It was difficult at times, but never really frustrating. This was because there are many good people at Emerson, both staff and members. We do very well even with our limited numbers. 2017 will be a watershed year. We will continue to transition from a situation of having co-ministers. It will be very important to plan for our future extending over a number of years. Finances will always be central to our discussions, and we should never allow ourselves to stray too far from fiscal restraint. It will be very important for all of our members and friends to be as active and supportive as possible during 2017. This means helping out with our programs, doing what we can to ease the load on Becky, participating in worship programs that we will develop to fill certain Sundays during the year, and contributing financially to the best of our ability. Emerson has had some setbacks, but we are already moving ahead.

Best wishes to all of you for 2017!

Mike Condit
President, Board of Trustees

2016 Annual Report - Business Administrator Karen Van Horn

Facility Usage

During 2016, Tanglewood Academy led by director, Glenda Lane, increased 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 2016

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

2016 annual auction Fund a Need project, provided funding to increase outdoor lighting, safety issues and much needed grounds work.

Routine/non routine maintenance included the following:

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

Administrative

Served on the Office Administrator for Communications Search Committee, along with Jill Rose and Ann May, reviewing over 70 resumes and setting up multiple interviews for the position of Office Administrator for Communications. We were all very pleased to recommend and hire Alejandra Gonzalez for the position. Worked closely with Linda Condit, Emerson's Treasurer, reviewing Emerson's monthly financial position

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, supervise the Office Administrator for Communications, Sunday Sexton and contract custodial service.

Emerson members, Jill Rose and Linda Lord, 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, Minister, Becky Edmiston-Lange and our incredible staff for their continued support.

Respectfully submitted,
 Karen Van Horn
 Business Administrator

EMERSON UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH
Income and Expense Summary Statement (UNAUDITED)
 OPERATING FUND 01, December 2016

		Current Period	Current Budget	Prior Year	Current Budget Difference	Year to Date	Annual Budget	YTD Budget Difference	Annual Budget Percentage
RECEIPTS	4000								
PLEDGE CONTRIBUTIONS	4010	\$68,102.27	\$53,250.00	\$69,199.92	\$14,852.27	\$571,773.38	\$649,000.00	-\$77,226.62	88.10%
TENANT INCOME & RENTAL	4144	4,763.13	4,950.00	5,445.96	-186.87	60,429.42	59,400.00	1,029.42	101.73%
FUNDRAISING	4159	53.37	200.00	0.00	-146.63	28,173.84	36,000.00	-7,826.16	78.26%
DESIGNATED CONTRIBUTIONS	4199	1,933.60	3,000.00	2,312.55	-1,066.40	30,716.42	36,000.00	-5,283.58	85.32%
INVESTMENT INCOME	4400	32.25	0.00	24.63	32.25	631.50	0.00	631.50	0.00%
MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	4499	204.19	175.11	931.54	29.08	6,068.29	2,100.00	3,968.29	288.97%
TOTAL INCOME		75,088.81	61,575.11	77,914.60	13,513.70	697,792.85	782,500.00	-84,707.15	89.17%
EXPENSES	5000								
MINISTRY	5100	\$9,427.84	\$19,873.02	\$17,734.95	-\$10,445.18	\$211,720.37	\$245,478.00	-\$33,757.63	86.25%
CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT	5200	751.32	2,000.14	3,664.52	-1,248.82	9,131.54	18,000.00	-8,868.46	50.73%
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION	5300	5,160.67	5,816.87	6,207.41	-656.20	63,289.04	69,802.00	-6,512.96	90.67%
MUSIC	5400	7,318.29	5,897.24	6,026.29	1,421.05	65,113.02	68,526.00	-3,412.98	95.02%
DENOMINATION	5500	415.00	3,297.87	396.00	-2,882.87	17,466.20	41,346.00	-23,879.80	42.24%
SOCIAL ACTION	5555	6,448.56	3,083.37	3,217.63	3,365.19	31,005.97	37,000.00	-5,994.03	83.80%
FACILITIES	5599	9,799.31	12,816.39	11,742.39	-3,017.08	136,439.98	151,962.00	-15,522.02	89.79%
ADMINISTRATION	5700	13,020.93	12,533.53	11,618.47	487.40	144,269.38	150,391.80	-6,122.42	95.93%
TOTAL EXPENSES		52,341.92	65,318.43	60,607.66	-12,976.51	678,435.50	782,505.80	-104,070.30	86.70%
EXCESS INCOME/EXPENSES		\$22,746.89	-\$3,743.32	\$17,306.94	\$26,490.21	\$19,357.35	-\$5.80	\$19,363.15	0.00%

2016 Annual Report - Director of Religious Education for Children and Youth

Katy Carpman

Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church supports all ages in their search for truth and meaning.

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 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 emerging opportunities, we can all share our 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 5th** for SouperBowl of Caring, as we raise funds for the Houston Food Bank!

A few highlights:

- A wide range of Emersonians took part in two rounds of Innovation Conversations, considering how we as a community can support families in raising children to face the challenges of our changing world. This has led to new partnerships, a curriculum focus on critical thinking and empathy, and a mandate to send adults to OWL (Our Whole Lives Comprehensive Sexuality Education) facilitator training.
- Children and youth sent our ministers off on their sabbatical and enjoyed receiving postcards from the journey.
- Our high school youth started the year with an August lock-in and in November sent care packages to recent graduates. In April our Youth Sunday service had a Star Wars theme. This year Youth Sunday will be **April 9th**.
- In the spring our small but mighty Coming of Age class led a joyful worship service featuring their exquisite credos. The 2016-2017 Coming of Age class is another big one, and I'm really excited with our great set of teachers and mentors. Mark your calendars for their service on **April 23rd**.
- We worked with our Ministry for Earth group and others to install our Walden Pocket Prairie outside of Schweitzer Hall - what a place of beauty and reconnection with the natural world!

It remains a joy and an honor to work with our fine staff and volunteers and to connect with Emersonians of all ages. I look forward to a sweet and meaningful 2017!

Katy Carpman
Director of Religious Education

2016 Annual Report - Emerson Performing Arts Department

Here is a list of things done by performing arts at Emerson in the last year:

Choir:

Aside from the standard and many services, the choir with help from the orchestra strings performed Saint-Saens Christmas oratorio for the church service on Sunday December 11. We also with help from the orchestra performed the Faure Requiem for the church service on Sunday May 15.

Orchestra:

The orchestra performed its yearly concert of Elgar's Nimrod from the Enigma Variations and Dvorak's New World Symphony on Friday, April 29. Per usual the orchestra has been providing string, wind and brass accompaniment to church services throughout the year. Also, the orchestra provided the orchestral accompaniment to Bill Atkerson's memorial service at the Wirt Road Fellowship.

Emerson Players:

The Players under the direction of Courtney Svatek performed Ken Ludwig's "The Game's Afoot" for this past Christmas on December 16-18. The Players also performed Neil Simon's "The Good Doctor" on May 6-8.

UniTunes:

The UniTunes troupe provided their standard repertoire of first Saturday folk singing from January through May with a summer break and resumption in October through December.

Others:

Other ensembles which paid for and performed in our sanctuary included the Tuesday Music Club and Guitar Houston.

Stephen Lipp
Performing Arts Council
Chairperson

Report of the Nominating Committee

This committee nominated the following members for the elections to be held at the January 2017 Annual Meeting;

For the Board of Trustees, 3-year terms:

Kenneth Jones, Ben Withers, and Jane Zachritz

For the Committee on Ministry, 3-year terms:

Sarah Boyd and Pamela Cummings

For the Nominations Committee, 2-year terms:

Beverly Hanson, Larry Kelly, Deborah Landis, and Richard Loftin

For the Outreach Committee, 3-year terms:

Jane Collins and Lori Reeder

For the Board of Trustees, all three-year terms

Kenneth Jones says, "I am a father of three, 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 and a member of Emerson for the past 11 years. I 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 thrice 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 Coordinating Council for Social Action and co-facilitator of the Emerson Justice Ministry. I have facilitated numerous Adult RE programs and have worked actively to introduce Emerson to the outside community via numerous engagement opportunities: conferences, film screenings, dramatic performances, direct actions, and speaker events. In addition, I am a congregational representative for the Texas UU Justice Ministry serving on its liaison board and Emerson coordinator for TXUUJM's Legislative Action initiatives. I serve as congregational representative and member of the steering committee for the UU Voice for Justice Action network. In March 2016, I was selected as the sole Texan member of the inaugural class of Justice Building Innovators of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC). In that role I am working to elevate Emerson as a leader in social justice work in our city, state, nation, and beyond. In particular, my goal is to institutionalize advocacy work as an integral part of the social justice fabric at Emerson. I was named Board Secretary in January 2016. I was later appointed by the Board of Trustees to fill a vacancy on the Board and have served in this dual capacity since then."

Ben Withers says, "I am 68, joyously married to Patti for 46 years, and still working 24 hours a week as a physician in the Occupational Medicine field. I love my work, have the amazing good fortune of loving my job, my co-workers, and being able to walk 3 blocks to work—thus I have no near term plans to retire. I joined a Unitarian Fellowship in

Pensacola, Florida, in 1982, shortly after attending for the first time and finding a faith community in which I fit. I attended an additional 5 UU churches before leaving First Church to join Emerson 8 years ago. I've had a wide variety of leadership positions in those churches and been deeply involved with working with high school and junior high youth for most of the last 20 years. I served on the Emerson Leap of Faith team for a couple of years and currently serve on the Outreach Committee. After 1.5 years of lessons as an adult beginner on the clarinet, I joined the Emerson Intergenerational Orchestra in February 2016, the single most enjoyable thing I have done as a UU."

Jane Zachritz writes, "I was born in Fort Worth but raised in Little Rock. In Little Rock, I learned about courage from my black teachers and activism from leaders who rallied against segregation. For college, I came back to Texas, where I obtained a BA in history from Trinity and an MA in demographic history from UT. My teachers widened my worldview dramatically as I studied history from the bottom up. Funding dried up, and for the past 25 years I have worked as a corporate paralegal, watching small businesses grow and thrive. I was fortunate to find Emerson after I had attended several Methodist churches. Here I immediately became involved in social action and ultimately became Chair of the Social Action Council. My proudest moment was when the church voted to have 100% of the plate donated to non-profit organizations. I have made the dearest friends at Emerson -- women and men of courage, strength, grit and grace -- and met my partner, Mark Holt, who supports me in everything that I do from Rebuilding Together Houston to Souper Bowl of Caring. When not at church or work, I like to take walks, play with Mark's grandchildren, window shop (keepin' it 100) and keep Murder by the Book in business."

For the Committee on Ministry, both three-year terms

Sarah Boyd says, "I grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma and attended the church of my grandparents and parents, First Presbyterian Church. But when questioning matters of faith and history, I was told to make up my own mind; thus the beginnings of becoming a UU. I joined Emerson in 1983, taught Kindergarten when my daughter was young, and have served on the Membership, Personnel, Nominations and Stewardship Committees. I served on the Board of Trustees from 2007 to 2012 and was President in 2011. I was a member of the Leap of Faith team, attended the Dwight Brown Leadership Experience, and was involved in the formation of Covenant Groups at Emerson. I have also been active with the Auction Committee for several years. I am married to Charles Boyd, and we are parents of 5 and grandparents of 8, so we enjoy taking trips to visit them throughout the year. Although officially retired, I enjoy working part-time as a postpartum doula providing support and education to new families. It is an honor to be nominated for the Committee on Ministry during this time of change and challenge."

Pamela Cummings has been a member of our church since 2012. She joined after moving here upon her retirement from a faculty position at the University of Delaware to be near her son, Paul. Her pastor of a liberal-thinking Christian Church in Wilmington, Delaware recommended the Unitarian Universalist Church to her. Pam is a member of the Lay Pastoral Ministry and the Emerson Women's Book Club and attends Adult Ed classes. She is active in Yoga, Great Decisions, a Meditation Class, and the United Nations Association, where she served on the Board. She also takes courses at the West University Community Center and Rice.

For the Nominations Committee, all two-year terms

Beverly Hanson writes, "I am a third generation Unitarian Universalist who joined Emerson fifty-two years ago. My main activity at Emerson has been singing in the choir. My son and daughter (Jeffrey and Barbara) were both baptized at Emerson. I taught middle school Art in Houston Independent School District for eighteen years. Now that I have retired from teaching Art I am studying art and painting."

Larry Kelly has been a member of Emerson since 1985. Larry served on the Board of Trustees from 2011 until 2014. His activities in the church have also included several years as chairman of Building and Grounds. He is married to Edna, and they have two grown children in Colorado and California. He is the proud grandfather of a granddaughter born in July. His business is in real estate investments, and he has been in commercial real estate business for over 40 years.

Deborah Wotring Landis joined Emerson Church in 2007 and has been active ever since. For several years she served

as a middle school Sunday teacher, as a member of the Religious Education Committee, and as a Coming of Age teacher. Both of her daughters were in the RE program at Emerson and are now in college. For two years, Deborah served as secretary of the Board of Trustees. She is now the chair of the Membership Committee. Deborah was a member of the Leap of Faith committee. It was then that she got the idea to start the ESL program at Emerson. The program has continued to grow over the last two and a half years under her leadership as the ESL Program Coordinator. Deborah is an attorney who practices law part-time.

Richard Loftin has been a member of Emerson since 2008 after he and his family moved from Tulsa, where they were members of All Souls Unitarian Church. At Emerson he was active in RE as a teacher from 2008 to 2015. He has been on the Stewardship Committee for several years and was the Co-Chair in 2011. He served on the Board of Trustees from 2013 to 2016 and was President in 2015 and Past President in 2016 (the bonus year!) Richard attended LSU and Rice and received his BS and MS degrees in Geology from LSU. He currently works for Apache Corporation as the Geological Advisor/ South Louisiana Team Lead. He is married to Alisha Denton Loftin and has two children -- Connor (14) and Evan (11).

For the Outreach Committee, both three-year terms

Jane Collins says that she and Tony joined First UU Church in 1983 when Rev. Bob Schaibly officiated at their wedding ceremony. In 1985, they moved to Paris, France and were founding members of the UU Fellowship of Paris. Jane began working as a lower elementary teacher at School of the Woods Montessori in 1988 when her daughter was beginning first grade. The family became members of Emerson in about 2007. Jane worked with UU youth for several years. She is currently active in the Social Action Council and represents Emerson on the board of Houston Peace and Justice Center. In 2015, she was one of the Emerson delegates that went to the General Assembly in Portland, Oregon. For the past year, she has been one of two Emerson representatives for TXUU Justice Ministry. She is a member of UU Voice for Justice and often puts on the gold shirt that says "Standing on the Side of Love" to respond to injustice with other UUs.

Lori Reeder writes, "In 2000 I moved to Houston and started to explore various spiritual communities. I didn't reach out to anyone or make connections for years because I was uncertain whether my Atheist views would be welcome. I started attending the Adult Education programs at Emerson and would often slip into the worship services afterward. Since joining Emerson, I have been a member of several groups. I first joined a Covenant group and when the facilitator had to leave, I took over the facilitator responsibilities. I also joined the Communication Committee, helping Emerson build and transition to a new website as well as growing the Meetup membership to over 2000 members. For the last three years, I have been a member of the Emerson Choir although I had been told my whole life I was tone deaf. I was on the bus two years ago when Kenny Jones was promoting social justice in Austin and have often contributed my time to the social justice events that Emerson hosts. As an ally, I have joined the LGTBQ+Allies group at Emerson, and my membership in this group has provided a network to help me sponsor the first GSA (Gay-Straight-Alliance) club at the high school where I work at as a mathematics teacher. Emerson has provided me many opportunities to learn, grow, and feel the warmth of a loving community, which I am proud to be a part of.

Nominations Committee members are Barb Adams, Shannon Butler, Linda Condit (chair), John Hammer, Florrie Snively, Eric Watson, and Kris Taylor. Kris Taylor was elected to chair the committee in 2017.

Adult Education Committee *Annual Report for 2016* **Co-Chairs: Mike Condit and David May**

In the first half of 2016 the Adult Education Committee continued the format of having a different subject for each month, therefore providing four Sundays to explore each topic. In January we addressed a novel subject of how money, spirit, and life interact. February was devoted to a review of UU Social Justice history. March took social justice a step farther in asking the question of how we can be environmentally aware in everyday life. In April our guest speaker Dana

Ashwari presented a compelling program that relates UU principles to the Palestine-Israel situation. Finally, in May we utilized a UU curriculum that asked questions about how Unitarian Universalists view ethics.

There were two special Adult Education offerings during the summer. Lori and Maggie Reeder, respectively, presented practical workshops on electronic social media and on photography.

The Adult Ed format was changed slightly beginning in September. One Sunday per month was to be devoted to a social action or justice topic. The remaining Sundays would deal with a single subject or individual topics. In September there were two presentations on Creation Myths. October sessions were led by the Lay Pastoral Ministry team on the subject of “What to say when you don’t know what to say.” November and December dealt with Unitarian Universalism and its relationship to theology. Topics were a comparison of UU to Christianity, transcendentalism, humanism, and feminist and LGBTQ issues.

The remainder of the 2016-17 church year will follow this format, with the exception of a second offering dealing with science and religion, which may last more than one month and will be planned by a task force.

The standing Adult Ed Committee is in need of additional members for planning and oversight. The intention is to use more task forces in coming years to plan and facilitate courses.

Mike Condit and David May will be stepping down as chairs of the committee. Kenny Jones, a current member of the committee, will take over those duties in January.

2016 Annual Report Audio-Visual

The AV Committee

- provides audio, and, increasingly, video support to church services and programs including additional programs sponsored by the church;
- records all services and makes copies available to people who would like to have those recordings. People who request personal copies of services are asked to contribute \$5 per CD to offset consumable and equipment replacement costs;
- makes mp3 files of the sermons for posting on the church website;
- makes copies *pro bono* as requested by the minister(s) to support the Lay Pastoral Ministry Team or others who are unable to attend services.

Thanks to Fund-A-Need for AV in 2015, our updated sound system has made a huge difference in our audio and visual production in 2016. The system, installed in November 2015, has more potential than the committee has mastered yet, but we continue to learn how to optimize it for our needs.

We received donations for CDs in the amount of \$453 and claimed no expenses as we had sufficient supplies for our needs this year.

We were sorry to lose Joe Dowlen who retired from the committee in October. He has long been a dedicated part of the team and we thank him for his years of service. We were happy to welcome three new members to the committee in October—Chuck Cornish, Trisha Hinojosa, and Linda Lord. **We will cheerfully welcome others who may have an interest in joining us; we are a committee with no meetings and on-the-job training while providing a valued service to the congregation.** Stop by the sound stand any Sunday morning for more information.

Thank you to continuing AV members—Kevin Crotty, Jill Rose and Leo Vandermeulen, and, as always, special thanks to Sigsby Rusk who is our go-to guru for all things electronic and mechanical!

Current committee members: Chuck Cornish, Kevin Crotty, Trisha Hinojosa, Linda Lord, Jill Rose, Sigsby Rusk, Leo Vandermeulen.

2016 Annual Report – Buildings and Grounds Committee

Chair: Tony Collins

The building function has been a committee of one, primarily serving as support for Karen as she coordinates necessary repairs. We welcome Ruth Alkons-Wolinsky to double the size of our team. Our main concern remains the Sanctuary roof, with two leaks this year. We plan to put the Reserve Fund to good use! Grounds are a different matter. Ann May and Carol Huelbig are very active, and organized two activity days which have made a huge difference. The patio around the Live Oak tree is greatly to their credit.

Tony Collins

2016 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 and support for family and friends in Westwood Hall or at an appointed location/home after a Memorial Service.

This past year we offered receptions after memorial services for the families of Charles Davis, Don Weaver, Mark Edmiston-Lange, and John Aucock.

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

2016 Annual Report – Circle Dinners

Chair: Mary Ann Rusk

The tradition has been to celebrate Circle Dinners in Westwood Hall in May of each year. And so it will be happening again in Westwood Hall on May 21, 2016.

If you have not been a host during this church year (September, 2015 thru May, 2016) and would like to host a table, please let me know, mafrusk@comcast.net.

At the May Circle Dinner, we share appetizers, wine, and other beverages as a group. Individual tables provide the rest of the meal in small groups. A host will contact you to bring part of the meal.

This event is always a chance to visit with everyone who participates in the large Circle Dinner group. Mark and Becky usually join us but not this year and they will be missed.

If you are new to the church or have never participated in Circle Dinners and would like to do so, please contact me and I will give your name to a host table.

Thank you,
Mary Ann Rusk
Circle Chairperson

2016 Annual Report - Communications Committee

Chair: Greg Hunt

New Church Website

- In 2016, the communication team's primary project was establishing a new website. Goals for this project were to:
 1. migrate to WordPress which is the industry standard for marketing websites with sufficient capabilities to enable more ambitious outreach in the future
 2. work in partnership with the recently formed UUA WordPress theme community to achieve the benefits of shared development and support ecosystem
 3. Refocus the website on attracting and engaging people who do not already know Emerson (seekers) and on encouraging them to return. This would be reflected in such features as more provocative messaging (e.g. featuring minister's sermon titles up front), more forceful reporting, first person voice, more photos, an attractive and easy to navigate interface, more calls to action, and different approaches for people at different levels of engagement.
- In February, after a detailed investigation of service providers, we established a website hosting agreement with SiteGround.
- In May, thanks to countless hours of effort by Ann May and Lori Reader the site went live. Most of the time since has been focused on building out content and working through various technical issues.

The below Google Analytics Data is from: Dec 9, 2016 – Dec 31, 2016

Vertical Response

Across all industries, the 2016 average open rate is 25%. For the religion category, the average open rate is 26.32% and the click rate is 3.19%. Given that Emerson's website is brand new with much effort being focused on technical issues, the numbers below suggest a lot of potential.

www.emersonhouston.org 2016 Average

- Sent: 718
- Opened: 29.21%
- Clicked Links: 4.96%
- Bounced: .14%
- Unsubscribed: .14%

General

- Sessions: 947
- Users: 646
- Pageviews: 2,819
- Pages/Session: 2.98
- Avg. Session Duration: 00:02:35
- Bounce Rate: 47.31%
- New Sessions: 59.24%

Sessions by Demographic & Other Factors

Sessions by City

Houston	547
Austin	46
Cypress	17
Pearland	16
New York	12
Sugar Land	11
Tomball	11
Irvine	9
Katy	9
Los Angeles	8

Age

18-24	27.50%
25-34	33.50%
35-44	15.50%
45-54	12.50%
55-64	5.50%
65+	5.50%

Gender

Female	45.85%
Male	54.15%

Visitors

New Visitor	561
Returning	386

Session Duration

0-10 seconds	495
11-30 seconds	61
31-60 seconds	70
61-180 seconds	131
181-600	124
601-1800 seconds	54
1801+ seconds	12

Acquisition

Means of Access No

Organic Search	552
Direct	283
Referral	79
Social	33

Websites

Childrenatrisk.org	18
Uua.org	18
Houstonmatters.org	13
Twitter.com	12
uuhouston.org	8
m.facebook.com	7
facebook.com	6
verticalreponse.com	6

Social Media

Twitter	17
Facebook	14
Pinterest	1
Yelp	1
Pinterest	1
Yelp	1

Social Media Campaigns

Facebook

Katy Carpman and Lori Reader continued to maintain a steady and engaging stream of content on Facebook with continued growth in followership.

- Number of people following: 720 (+54/+8%)
- Number who have liked our Facebook Page: 754 (up 14%)
- Est. number who see an EUUC post each week: 500-2000

- Average Daily Posts: 1-3
- Reviews:

Twitter

Pat Grealy has continued to maintain a steady stream of content on twitter with some growth in followership and a significant increase in number of retweets (our messages being forwarded by others).

- Number Following Emerson on twitter: 639 (+77+ 14%)
- Number Emerson is Following: 421 (-24/ -5%)
- Number of Emerson Tweets: 158 (-9/-5%)
- Number of Impressions: 34,800 (+10,500/+43%)
- Number of Retweets: 52 (+28/+117%)

Meetup

Membership in the Emerson-sponsored meetup group “Spiritual Conversations and Exploration” doubled to over 2000 members in 2016, making it one of the largest meetup groups in Houston. Lori Reader has achieved success out to other groups and publication to cross-post events.

- Number of Members at end of 2016: 2,158 (up 102%)
- 1 year change in membership: 1,090 (up 102%)
- Number of events advertised in 2016: 777 (up 22%)
- Estimated number of event invites sent/week: ~ 16,100 (up 152%)

Wayside Pulpit / This Week’s Sermon Sign

The church signs are changed out and tweeted every week. David May and Joe Dowlen updated the Wayside pulpit and the church service sign respectively. In the fall, David Roessler and Creig Romero agreed to take over the church sign work previously performed by Joe.

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

The team recognized that our sign technology is not the state of the art. We began the process of looking into electronic signage but that remains a work in progress.

Focused - One-time Campaigns

Money and Faith - David May used some existing NPR credits to run radio advertisements for Emerson’s “Money and Faith” January Adult Ed campaign

Kilgore Lecture Campaign – Alejandra Gonzalez ordered large banners for this event. David May ran six KUHF radio advertisements for the event while Alejandra and Lori Reader sent PR materials to a large number of media outlets.

Adult Religious Education Programs Related to Emerson Communications

In June, the EUUC Communication’s team facilitated two adult RE sessions focused on helping EUUC members use the Emerson’s outreach tools to help us reach more people.

- Toolbox – Social Media with Lori Reader
- Toolbox – Taking Better Photos with Maggie Reader

Lori Reader also created a video on how to navigate the new website.

How Members Found Us – Yellow Cards

Yellow Cards

Newcomers	158
Internet	47
Friend/Family	36
Website	21
Other	12
UU Network	6
Meet	5
Returner	5
Sign	5
Facebook	2
KUHF	2

Communications Staff Transition

During the year we lost our Communication's admin, Mary Alaniz, who was replaced by Alejandra Gonzalez, whose experience, skills, and attitude were just what was needed at the time to assure a smooth transition. Ale is already proving to be a great fit for our program.

Looking forward to 2017

With the exception of our physical sign which will be a priority in 2017, Emerson's communication's program now runs on a state of the art technical platform. Therefore, we will now be in a place in 2017 to focus more on items such as the following:

- improving our interaction with seekers by tweaking visual and navigation designs for optimal user experience
- tweaking the site to improve search engine optimization
- taking better advantage of new capabilities such as our A/V system for improving content quality
- working more directly with church members and teams to increase the quantity and quality of messaging and content
- improving the other side of the technical platform (the part that we, not seekers interact with) where it affects our execution (e.g. how we collect, vet, share, and publish photos).
- Working more directly with congregation event hosts to assure that the communications function and the welcoming function are well aligned.
- Developing more custom-focused campaigns
- Improving in our ability to measure results

2016 Annual Report - Finance Committee

Chair: Tony Collins

The Finance Committee consists of Dick Cheney, John Homier, and Tony Collins. Our Treasurer, Linda Condit, serves ex-officio, as well as Barbara Crotty 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 identified the shortfall that led to the emergency campaign for increased pledges, as well as the revised budget, which than balanced income and expenditure for the year. We then generated the first draft of the 2017 budget in October. Thanks to everybody for making the committee's task less stressful by pledging, and by honoring your pledges.

Tony Collins

2016 Annual Report - Fund-A-Need Auction Project

“Extending Our Welcome!”

Renewing the Safety, Sustainability, and Beauty of our Church and Grounds

Each year during the annual auction, Emerson includes an option to fund small capital improvements and special initiatives outside of the annual operations budget that neither require nor can wait for a large, multi-year capital fund drive. The 2016 Fund-A-Need contributions of \$23,300 addressed the safety, sustainability and beauty of our church and grounds, to maintain an attractive and welcoming campus. Exterior work included leveling uprooted sidewalks and patio, adding lights to Delaney Hall, completing long-overdue tree trimming, and replacing overgrown shrubs. The final stage of the project includes installing the bike racks and updating the church sign.

Choosing to update the landscape by creating a pocket prairie exemplifies Emerson's protection of the “web of life” by using native plants found in the historic prairies of this area. The creation of Walden Prairie on the south side of Delaney Hall is a visible example of our recognition of the prairie as essential habitat. The prairie was planted in September and October with help from Fall Campus Cleanup Day volunteers and RE classes.



Submitted by Ann May

2016 Annual Report Greeter Committee

Doug Mohn

The primary purpose of the greeters is to ensure every visitor to Emerson feels welcomed on arrival and receives information to any questions they may have about our church. We gently encourage all visitors to complete a yellow card so that we can provide them with follow-up information and newsletters. We use a scheduling system to provide a primary greeter each Sunday beginning at 9:45 to 11:00 a.m. at the front door as well as a secondary greeter for the rush period between 10:40 and 11:00 a.m. as well. After the service, all greeters and membership committee members try to connect with the first time and repeat visitors to answer any new questions they may have. Since greeters are often involved in other obligations at Emerson as well, there is a natural turnover in the mix, so new greeters and suggestions for potential new greeters are always encouraged.

2016 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 2016 are as follows:

Allocation	31 December 2016	31 December 2015	Change
Long Term	\$854,118.00	\$724,198.27	
Cash and Equivalent	\$156,031.47*	\$129,235.29	
Total Endowmen	\$1,010,149.47*	\$853,433.56	18.4%

*before any withdrawals for Outreach and Reserve funds for 2017 taken in 2016.

During the year there were no bequests into the Endowment.

For 2016, withdrawals of \$73,214.96 were made for the Outreach and Reserve funds in accordance with the 2014 amendment to Emerson's constitution. The increase in total market value of the remaining funds in the Endowment account was \$232,882.77.

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 twelve years, we have withdrawn \$1,224,599 and now have a balance of \$854,118.00 in the Long Term Investment allocation. 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 2016 is as follows:

	12/31/2016	12/31/2015	Change
Emerson Endowment	\$1,010,149	853,434	29.5%*
DJIA	19,763	17,425	13.4%
S&P500	2,239	2,044	9.5%
NASDAQ	5,383	5,007	7.5%

*adjusted for withdrawal for Outreach and Reserve Funds for 2016

As stipulated by Emerson's constitution, the Investment Committee determined in December that the maximum amount available for withdrawal from the Endowment in 2017 for Outreach and Reserve Fund is \$65,841.52.

New members Betsy Gelb, Bill Hammons, and Billye Smith joined the committee during 2016; Will Irwin resigned. Current committee members are now: Betsy Gelb, Henry Grope, Bill Hammons, John Homier, Bub Joyce, Jill Rose, Billye Smith, and Zena Taylor.

Additional background on the Emerson Endowment Fund is available in the committee's history of the fund compiled in 2015 and attached to the 2015 annual report of the Investment Committee.

1 January 2017 (rev 16 January 2017)

John Homier and Jill Rose, Co-chairs

2016 Annual Report Lay Pastoral Ministry Team

Coordinator: Kay Bergen

The mission of the Lay Pastoral Ministry team is to help create a 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.

Seven new team members were commissioned in January.

The congregation was surveyed to see what concerns people might have that the team could address. The top two issues mentioned were support for caregivers and grief support. A Caring for the Caregivers Group was begun in May at the Church. This once a month group is facilitated by team members.

LPMT helped fill needs of support that arose during the ministers' sabbatical this summer.

In October the team presented a four-part series for Adult Education entitled, "What to Say When There is Nothing to Say". The goal was to help participants feel more comfortable in the role of caring friend during difficult times.

Beginning with Mark's illness and later, after his death, support groups were offered to church members.

The end of December marks the exit of several long term members: Sally Phillips, Edna Kelly, Ken McLeod and Kay Bergen (coordinator).

New Coordinators are Marci Collier and Ian Sachs.

Kay Bergen

2016 Annual Report – Membership Committee

Chair: Deborah Wotring Landis

The continuing members of the committee for 2016 were Deborah Wotring Landis, Doug Mohn, Betsy Gelb and Barbara Crotty. Jill Rose provided vital assistance to the committee by updating us each week on the people who were first time visitors. The committee continued to contact the people visiting the church and offering to meet with them for coffee and lunch to discuss the church and get to know each visitor. Twenty-two new members joined the church this year while fifty-eight members resigned.

We are excited to announce that five new committee members have been recruited for 2017. The new members are Lisa Rockett, Mike Hilgart, Sharon Hilgart, Marty Estill, and Marilyn Rambow.

Report prepared by committee chairman Deborah Wotring Landis

2016 Outreach Committee Annual Report to the Church

In 2014, Emerson's Constitution was amended to establish an Outreach Committee as an elected Congregational Committee with authority to use Board-determined moneys from the Endowment Fund to implement Unitarian Universalist principles in the world outside our church. The Committee selected the organizations and causes, in addition to Meals on Wheels, to receive Share the Plate money in 2016 from applications submitted by members of the congregation. Those selected represent charitable purposes within the church and in the wider community. A total of \$30,716.42 was collected and distributed. In keeping with the constitutional mission, the Committee focused on identifying purposes and organizations to receive the allocated Endowment Fund moneys. After research and study, \$25,000 was committed from the Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church outreach fund towards Texas Impact's proposal to train and mobilize Texas congregations to advocate for quality, affordable health insurance for all Texans. Our leadership enabled Texas Impact to solicit significant financial contributions, including from Episcopal Health Foundation, as they designed and implemented Above Politics: Health Care for All Texans. About 100 Texas congregations participated in Health Justice Sabbath November 18 - 20.

<http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?m=1011183686188&ca=0e9ae987-2a6a-4d08-90ab-44fa1f5dfe75>

An additional \$25,000 was set aside for 2017 for continuing efforts by Texas Impact to promote health justice in Texas. Upcoming events include the following:

<http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?m=1011183686188&ca=927506a7-2bb0-4f86-a714-00b8040730e4>

<http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?m=1011183686188&ca=73124036-0871-4a19-8ae5-f5344d42e0f0>

Committee members: Edna Kelly, Chair; Karen George, Gabe Gelb, Ben Withers and Carolyn Truesdell.

Mission Statement - Emerson Church Outreach Committee, August 2016

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/uugovernance/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.

Coordinating Council for Social Action Annual Report

Leadership: Kenny Jones, Ann May and Jane Zachritz

Council: Jane Collins, Tony Collins (member at large), Zachary Engle, Beth Hammer, Kenny Jones, Ann May, Robin McElfresh, Dan Rigney and Jane Zachritz

Highlights: This year the Social Action council was re-imagined as the Coordinating Council for Social Action (CCSA). There are 3 "arms" to the council: (1) Fight for Justice, (2) Care for the Earth and (3) Helping People. While these areas do overlap, the Fight for Justice Arm has been led by Kenny Jones, the Care for the Earth Arm has been led by Ann May under Ministry for Earth and the Helping People Arm has been led by Jane Zachritz.

Following are the highlights of the Helping People Arm: Collected food for the Houston Food Bank during Souper Bowl of Caring (in conjunction with RE), rehabilitated two houses under Rebuilding Together Houston (Spring and Fall), made peanut butter at a Peanut Butter Factory that supplies peanut butter for the Houston Food Bank, made butterfly hugs for Freedom Place (a hug is given to each girl who graduates from the program), participated in the Houston Pride Parade with the 8 area UU churches, collected underwear for Undies for Everyone and socks during Socktober, and hosted a butterfly booth at the craft fair to raise funds for Freedom Place.

2016 Report – Activities of Fight for Justice, Project Refugee, and Emerson Justice Advocates - Coordinating Council for Social Action

January 2, 2016 – Social Action Council became the Coordinating Council for Social Action divided into 3 arms of activity/concern: Fight for Justice – Focus on Issue Advocacy; Ministry for Earth – Focus on Environmental Issues; and Helping People – focus on service to the community.

January 10, 2016 – Justice Building Luncheons were created combining the desire for fellowship around lunch and taking action on a social justice issue. The focus for this lunch was gathering support for UUSC (Unitarian Universalist Service Committee). This event raised over \$400.00 to support the human rights work of UUSC.

February 2016 – Emerson becomes the only congregation in Texas participating in the national and inaugural Justice Building Innovator Program of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee.

February 12 – 13, 2016 – Hosted the State of Black Lives Convening which brought over 100 people from congregations around the city to discuss racial injustice, white privilege, and intersectionality with sexism and gender identity with nationally known speakers, panel discussions, and numerous breakout sessions.

April 3, 2016 – Justice Building Luncheon – Introduce Project Refugee to the Emerson community whose purpose is to raise awareness of immigrant and refugee justice issues and to promote the selection of Emerson as a Plant-it-Forward share distribution site which was initiated by Project Refugee.

April 9, 2016 – Film Screening – *Two Who Dared* – the inspiring story of Unitarian minister Waistill Sharp and his spouse, Martha Sharp, and their heroic efforts to rescue victims of the Nazi regime in Europe. This was initially screened at The Fellowship on Wirt Road during the UU Music Festival.

April 10, 2016 – Encore screening of *Two Who Dared* at Emerson

April 16, 2016 – Film Screening of *Sanctuary: A Documentary*, the moving story of one congregation’s entrance into the sanctuary movement.

May 14, 2016 – Love is Unstoppable – an interfaith event in answer to Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ)'s call for a national weekend of faith response to the torrent of xenophobia and racism currently on display across the nation. The event included speakers, sign making, and a brief street action/demonstration. Event was proposed by Fight for Justice and adopted as a UUV4J action event.

June 2, 2016 – A MoveOn.org sponsored screening of the Michael Moore film *Where to Invade Next*, a poignant and inspiring film highlighting several topical issues and solutions implemented around the world that were conceived initially in the USA. Over 85 people attended this event, the vast majority of which was their first exposure to Emerson.

June 18, 2016 – An encore screening of *Where to Invade Next*.

July 9, 2016 – A screening of the documentary film, *Racing Extinction*, calling attention to the alarming disappearance of animal species across the planet.

June 26, 2016 – Project Refugee sponsored Adult RE offering to promote Plant-it-Forward, a program to support refugee farmers producing locally grown, organic produce.

July – August, 2016 – Project Refugee sponsored Adult RE offerings focused on Immigration Justice on an every other week basis. The book, *Undocumented: How Immigration Became Illegal* by Aviva Chomsky. Attendance averaged 15 participants over the course of the 7 week series.

August 2, 2016 – Fight for Justice welcomed SURJ – HTX’s (Showing Up for Racial Justice – Houston, TX) Action Group into the Emerson community. Meeting every other Tuesday evening and holding one pot luck education series the first Saturdays of the month. These meetings bring in an average of 15 people on weeknights and 30 people on Saturdays to the Emerson community.

August 6, 2016 – Fight for Justice sponsored the *Millennial Economic Opportunity and Workforce Summit* which brought over 50 people to discuss career options, healthcare and a variety of other topics of interest to this age group, The event included speakers, panels, and workshop sessions.

August 31, 2016 – Project Refugee participated in a national and state wide street theater action known as “Diapers in Detention” to call attention to the holding of families and children in Immigration Detention Centers around the county, with some of the largest such centers in Texas. The action involved sign making, collecting diapers, and a visit to the Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) Headquarters in north Houston to present a mock shower to ICE officials. While the shower items donated were not accepted, the contingent from Emerson did meet with an ICE spokesperson and voiced both concerns and objections to the detention of families and children.

September 3, 2016 – Justice Building Luncheon – As a follow up to the “Diapers in Detention” Action, Emerson members gathered over lunch to decorate and send congratulatory “Baby Shower” cards to a variety of policy makers including the President, congressional representatives, the Directors of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Department of Homeland Security, and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency.

September 25, 2016 – Project Refugee sponsored an Adult RE offering featuring a representative from Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston – Refugee Services who gave a presentation on the rigorous vetting refugees must face in acquiring refugee status, the wide variety of services IMGH – RS provides, and how Emerson UU Church can support their efforts by sponsoring a refugee family.

October 14, 2016 – Project Refugee sponsored a screening of the film, *On the Side of the Road*. The film tells the story of the Nakba from the point of view those that participated on both sides of the conflict. This was part of a 3 city, statewide tour presented by the film’s director, Lia Tarachansky. The event’s attendees included several Palestinian immigrants and well as former Jewish settlers. Following the film, Ms. Tarachansky led a lively discussion. This event set the stage for the

formation of a Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East chapter at Emerson and the creation of Houston Chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace.

October 22, 2016 – Fight for Justice participated and offered the opportunity to participate in the Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry’s (TXUUJM) General Assembly – Legislative Action training held at First UU Church of Austin, TX. The training focused on conducting relational office visits in preparation for the TXUUJM Legislative Action Day on February 15, 2017.

November 6, 2016 – Fight for Justice sponsored a national call to participate in the livestream telecast of the Moral Revival – A Call for a Revolution of Moral Values. This was a live event from New York City featuring Rev. Dr. James Barber II, Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes, Rev. Dr. Traci Blackmon, and Sister Simone Campbell. Emerson was the only congregation in Texas to host this event.

November 19 – 20, 2016 – Fight for Justice sponsored events in connection with Texas Impact’s call for a statewide Healthcare Sabbath to call attention to the lack of access to health care millions of Texas face. On Saturday, 11/19, the Sabbath weekend began with a screening, in collaboration with Health Care for All Texas, of the documentary *Fix It: Healthcare at the Tipping Point*. There was a lively and engaged discussion among the participants.

On Sunday, 11/20, Fight for Justice offered an Adult RE program discussing healthcare access and deliver as a spiritual/moral issue and ways in which Emerson members and as a congregation might affect a positive outcome of this crisis.

To conclude the Healthcare Sabbath, the day’s worship service was devoted to the issue of health care coverage in Texas. Becky was clearly at her best as she delivered a powerful and moving sermon!

Emerson was the only Unitarian Universalist congregation in Texas to participate in this important moral initiative.

December 18, 2016 – Legislative Day of Action Kick Off - The Get on the Bus Campaign is Official! Emerson members are invited and encouraged to travel to Austin on Wednesday, February 17 to meet with their elected representatives to begin building relationships, to impart UU values as it pertains to public policy, and express viewpoints on issues of concern.

Fight for Justice changed its name to Emerson Justice Advocates with the long term goal to transform our congregation's social justice ministry by expanding our capacity for on-going advocacy in support of the congregation's social justice priorities.

2016 Annual Report, Ministry for Earth Highlights **Ann May**

Ministry for Earth met throughout the year to share information and encouragement for building a sustainable lifestyle. Individually, each of us cannot “save the earth”, but still we can do something.

Renewable Congregations Campaign

Emerson launched the [Renewable Congregations Campaign](#) to urge people of all faiths to reduce their carbon footprints by shifting to 100% renewable energy. Donations for Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) qualify Emerson as a Renewable Congregation until we can switch our contract to renewable energy in 2017. Emersonians who are making a climate difference signed our “green book” to list some actions they have taken in their own households.

Emerson at City-Wide Environmental Events

Ministry for Earth hosted a table at the **Citizens’ Environmental Coalition Summit** on March 24 and an Emerson booth for **Earth Day Houston** on April 16 in Sam Houston Park, featuring the Climate Ribbon Project. We publicized not only the Renewable Congregations, but also Emerson and practical ideas for sustainable living. At the **Creation Care Fest** on

August 13, at Christ the King Evangelical Lutheran Church, we again promoted Renewable Congregations and Emerson's environmental activities. Coordination with Other Organizations

In conjunction with the UUA's Commit2Respond campaign, we started working with other local organizations, such as the local 350.org group and advocates at other congregations (UU and other denominations). Dan, our "missionary" for renewable energy, also established good contacts with the Climate Action Team at First UU, the Houston Peace and Justice Center and Pax Christi (a Catholic Peace and Justice group).

"Green Faith" Vegan Lunch

Emerson hosted the first Green Faith lunch on June 18 for faith-based green groups in Houston to get to know each other better and begin to form a more cohesive community of concern around issues related to climate change and sustainability. About 45 people attended, representing several congregations as well as seekers who saw the notice on Meetup. Subsequently, we attended a similar event in September, hosted by First UU, featuring an inspiring video from Katherine Hayhoe, director of the Climate Science Center at Texas Tech. Dan Rigney organized the event.

Toxic Tour

In June, about 12 Emersonians took a van tour featuring a trip to Manchester and Smithville, the Ship Channel communities which are so heavily impacted by industrial proximity and pollution. Juan Parras, Founder and Director of T.E.J.A.S. Houston (Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services), guided us through historic communities lacking city services and pollution protections. Jane Collins coordinated the event.

Back-to-School Swap

Our first Emerson Swap on August 7th featured Back-To-School items for students of all ages, parents and teachers. Organized by Robin McElfresh and Beth Hammer.

Vegan Lunches

A Mediterranean menu in the spring and Tex-Mex menu in the fall provided opportunities to enjoy great food that is easier on the planet, organized by Ann Hidalgo, Robin McElfresh, Beth Hammer and many other talented cooks. In April, about 36 people attended; Presentation by founder of Rowdy Girl Sanctuary in Angleton; proceeds of \$374 for the sanctuary. In Nov., about 40 people came and we netted \$203 for the Katy Prairie Conservancy.

Support for Plant It Forward Farms

Plant It Forward Farms offers economically disadvantaged refugees an opportunity to become self-sufficient through growing, harvesting and selling produce from a sustainable urban farm within the city of Houston. Introduction to Plant It Forward Farm Share Program, Sunday, June 26 including an overview of the program, how it works, why it works, and how you can participate. Plant It Forward Farms now brings farm fresh produce to Emerson every Sunday for all who have pre-purchased a share of the farm. Buying shares provides a living wage for the local refugee farmers and enables them to know how much to plant. In addition, there were volunteer opportunities for our congregation on workdays at the farms.

Walden Prairie

As a result of the Fund-A-Need Auction Project, we created a Pocket Prairie as part of Emerson's landscape, restoring a small patch of ground to its historic prairie habitat, providing food and protection for urban wildlife, as well as preserving endangered prairie plants. In return, the plants improve the soil and conserve water. Led by Carole Huelbig and Kathleen Dixon, we set out native plants and grasses on Sept 24th and our RE classes scattered wildflower seeds on Oct. 16. The prairie was designed in partnership with the Prairie Builders Program of the Katy Prairie Conservancy; Emerson is the first church to be designated a Prairie Builder.

Recycling

In 2016 Emerson switched to Republic Services for pickup of single-stream recycled materials from our campus. We continue to collect clothing for recycling in the green bin at the back of our parking lot. We discourage use of single-use party goods at Emerson.

Seasonal Change Celebrations

Spring, Summer, and Fall services are informal and outside, preceded by a potluck supper; attendance is usually 20-25. The Winter Solstice Celebration, held in the Sanctuary, is a family-friendly evening of music, readings, and candlelight. In 2016, about 65 people attended and stayed afterwards for refreshments and a little impromptu dancing.

Ministry for Earth Meetings Throughout the Year

Speakers from 350.org and Plant with Purpose, an organization which engages in reforestation throughout the developing world to transform the lives of the rural poor. In July we joined the "Fighting for Justice" branch of Social Action Council for a screening of the documentary film, *Racing Extinction*, calling attention to the alarming disappearance of animal species across the planet.

2016 Annual Report – Emerson’s E.S.L. Program

By Deborah Landis

Emerson’s ESL Program Coordinator

The Program Grew by Leaps and Bounds

With the dedication and devotion of the many volunteers who staff and run Emerson’s E.S.L. program, it grew by leaps and bounds last fall semester. The program grew from three class levels on Saturday afternoons last semester to six class levels on Saturdays this semester. For the first time, classes which build on each other were taught on Tuesday and Thursday nights from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Both the Saturday afternoon classes and the Tuesday and Thursday night classes were well attended breaking all previous semester attendance records. Adding together attendance for both the afternoon and evening classes, the average attendance each week was over 100 students.

We Have Twelve Amazing Volunteer Teachers Each Week

We had twelve amazing volunteer teachers who donated their time and expertise to working in the classrooms with our students each week. Some of our teachers are members of the church and the teachers who are not members learned about our program from the internet and from friends. The following is a list of our six Saturday teachers: Norbert Welk, Clara Kosloff, Geraldine Shawa, Lisa Rockett, Michelle Corron, and Vanessa Sanchez. Our six Tuesday and Thursday night teachers were as follows: Fran Elin, Tina Obut, Elisabeth Lindheim, Christine Snitkin, Burt Johnson and Chris Stafford. Some of our regular class room assistants included Ian Sachs, John Menier, Dennis Kirby, Dan Rigney, and Jaya Jacobson just to name a few.

Four Childcare Volunteers Were Added This Semester to Enhance Our Childcare

For the first time, we had four adult volunteers who began working with the paid child care workers. Our volunteers were Anna Louise Brunner, Carole Huelbig, Megan Bladen-Blinkoff and Veronica Davis. Thanks to these women for working with the children last fall semester. Their time and efforts have meant a lot to the parents who need someone to care for their children so they can attend our ESL classes.

Assistant Coordinator Volunteers Do All the Behind the Scenes Work

Finally, the volunteers who worked behind the scenes each week are invaluable to our program. Our Assistant Coordinators this semester included Leticia Anderson, Veronica Davis, Carol Trout, George Eggleston, Jon Whitten-Lege, Betty Lynn Riggin, David May and Ann May. These volunteers set up for each class, move furniture, make copies, tally attendance on spreadsheets, greet students at the front door, and do many other things large and small that make our program a success!

We are pleased to announce that we received the grant funding that we applied for 2017.

2016 Annual Report – Stewardship Committee

Chair: Larry Huelbig

In Spring 2016, Board president Michael Condit, foreseeing an operating budget deficit of at least \$70,000, reinstated the Stewardship Committee. The committee is comprised of Michael Condit, Janet Meininger, Robin Sickles, David May, Nancy Lipp, Tony Collins, Richard Loftin and Larry Huelbig (chair).

The budget deficit appeared to result from a variety of factors: the absence of a formal pledge drive for 2016; fewer pledge units; the church's changing demographics; and persons listed as members not pledging.

To remedy the potentially perilous financial shortfall, the Stewardship Committee pursued three strategies. Targeted letters were sent to church members based upon prior pledge histories. The October Fellowship Dinner was more overt regarding pledging. And, members, who had pledged meaningful amounts in the past, but not pledged for 2017, were contacted personally.

As a result, Emerson received pledges for 2016 totaling about \$600,000. This income, coupled with selected budget cuts, allowed the church to avoid having to make truly painful cuts in staff and programs.

Pledges to date for 2017 are neither a reason for celebration or to panic. By adhering to a conservative and disciplined budget, Emerson should be able to continue to provide its members with most of the programs and services they have come to expect."

Larry Huelbig, committee chair