

Annual Meeting Agenda
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston, Texas
January 27, 2013

Call to Order

Invocation

Approval of Minutes of January 22, 2012 Annual Meeting

Approval of Minutes of December 9, 2012, Congregational Budget Meeting

Receipt of Reports

New Business

- Vote on Board of Trustees' recommendation to pay mortgage in full at maturity in 2014 from endowment
- Vote on cancellation of "10% solution" for funding community service (to be replaced on a trial basis by a "share the plate" program)
- Solicitation of members and chairs of select committees

Elections

1. Nominations Committee
 - David May 2 Years
 - Jennifer Norten 2 Years
 - Jill Rose 2 Years
 - Mary Ann Stanley 2 Years
2. Committee on Ministry
 - Susan Green 2 Years
 - Tom Jorgensen 2 Years
 - Clara Kosloff 2 Years
3. Board of Trustees:
 - Tony Collins 3 Years
 - Richard Loftin 3 Years
 - Kris Taylor 3 Years
 - Shannon Thurmond 3 Years
4. President, Sherle Frost Watson
5. Vice President, Kris Taylor
6. Treasurer, Billye Smith
7. Board Secretary, Deborah Landis

Adjourn

2012 Officers Larry Huelbig, President
 Sherle Frost Watson, Vice President
 Sarah Boyd, Past President

Trustees Barb Adams
 Wilson Arabie
 Larry Kelly
 J. Aaron Knight
 Beth Hill
 Rachel Shada
 Jay Jackson

Treasurer Billye Smith

Board Secretary Mary Pedersen

Annual Report Year End 2012
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Minutes
Annual Congregational Meeting
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church
Sunday, January 22, 2012

The regular Annual Meeting of the congregation of Emerson Unitarian Universalist church was called to order at 12:15 pm by President Sarah Boyd. Mark Edmiston-Lange gave an invocation. The minutes of the December 11 2011 budget meeting, included in the packet, were **approved unanimously**. Due to an oversight the minutes of the previous year's Annual Meeting were not included; nevertheless they were also **approved unanimously** after being read aloud by the Board Secretary. Sarah asked for a motion to approve the packet of annual reports. Will Irwin so **moved**, Mary Ann Rusk **seconded**, and the motion **passed unanimously**. Treasurer Billye Smith distributed the final financial report for 2011. She noted that this year's report is being presented both in the traditional format and a "Sources and Uses" format that will be refined in the future. Billye said this format should be easier to understand and urged members to forward their comments to her.

New Business

Long Range Plan: At Sarah's request Past President Janet Meininger **moved** that the congregation approve the Long Range Plan, copies of which were distributed earlier this month with the letter calling the meeting. Board member Sherle Frost Watson **seconded**. Since some members did not have the proposal with them, Sarah read the introduction. There was general agreement that it was not necessary to provide print copies at the meeting. Phil Richardson announced his support for the plan and lauded the Board's efforts, but he still feels that the plan as it stands is inadequate and challenged the Board to improve it. He cited the potential for membership growth in the city and also his concern that our membership, attendance and pledges have been stagnant or declining in the past decade. The motion **passed unanimously**.

SAC Proposal for disbursement of 10% Endowment Gain: Sarah recognized Social Action Co-Chair Phil Richardson to present SAC's recommendations for recipients of the 10% Solution grants. Phil reviewed the background of the proposal and the procedure used to arrive at this year's list of recipients. Although this policy was voted in at the 2008 Annual Meeting, last year was the first time we had any money to give. This year's amount, \$45,430, is much larger. Phil said SAC built on last year's experience to further refine the selection process. The evaluation team, consisting of Phil, Barb Adams, David Bates, Tony Collins, Will Irwin and Carolyn Truesdell, had 13 "outstanding" proposals to evaluate. Their recommendations were passed to the full Social Action Council and thoroughly discussed before being passed on to the Board of Trustees. At their December meeting the Board approved the list being presented to the congregation today. The final list is as follows:

- Groppe Scholarships, \$6,164, proposed by Sherle Frost Watson
- Nature Discovery Center, \$10,000, proposed by Dick Mullineaux and Jim Porter
- Amazing Place Phone Tree, \$2,000, proposed by deForest Ralph
- Freeman's Town Restoration, \$6,000, proposed by Bob Hopkins
- Human Trafficking Prevention, \$10,000, proposed by Kay Kamas
- Mobile Farmer Market Trailer, \$4,830, proposed by Megan Evans and Francine Heller
- Drug Court Foundation Peer Recovery Program, \$6,361, proposed by Gabe Gelb

Phil then **moved** that the congregation approve SAC's list of recipients, the motion was **seconded** by Barb Adams and **passed unanimously**.

Congregational Straw Poll: Sarah recognized Ann May to present five proposed Congregational Study/Action Issues (CA/SI) for 2012-2016. Ann described the process by which CA/SI issues feed into the UUA's decision-making process, especially the Commission on Social Witness. DeForest Ralph said this process provides for direct congregational involvement and gives an opportunity to live our values. The final selection will be made at this year's General Assembly based on the results of the poll provided a quorum of 25% of the UUA's certified congregations take part. Each issue could be voted Yes, No or Abstain. Wilson Arabie said that the issues would be voted on individually and that a clear majority would be needed to designate each as either Yes or No. Those issues with no clear majority either way would be designated Abstain. The five proposals and the results for each are: 1) Climate Action and Adaptation Plans : Why Greenhouse Gases and their Effects Matter to Us (Yes); 2) Ending Slavery (Yes); 3) Exploring Class Barriers (Abstain); 4) Families, Population and the Environment (Yes); and 5) Reproductive Justice: Expanding Our Social Justice Calling (Yes). None of the votes were unanimous, though proposals 1, 2 and 5 passed with heavy majorities. The Yes vote for #4 was closer, and #3 was evenly split. Ann said the results will be posted online and that Business Administrator Karen Van Horn will submit them to the UUA by the deadline of February 1st.

Elections

Sarah called on Nominating Committee Chair Will Irwin to present candidates for the Board of Trustees and the Congregational Committees. He presented the following candidates for the Nominating Committee: Vanessa Morales Knight, Karen Tidholm, David Bates and David Bergt. There were no nominations from the floor. Will **moved** the election of these candidates, Eric Watson **seconded** and the motion **passed unanimously**. On behalf of the Nominating Committee Will presented Ken McLeod, Kay Bergen, and Barbara Crotty as candidates for the Committee on Ministry; Larry Kelly **seconded**. There being no nominations from the floor, the motion **passed unanimously**.

Will then presented candidates for the Board of Trustees. He noted that instead of the usual three candidates for three-year terms each, this year due to vacancies that occurred since the last Annual Meeting we have two incumbents who need to be confirmed for the next year, plus two candidates for full terms. First he **moved** the election of Larry Huelbig and Wilson Arabie to continue on the Board for another year. Eric Watson **seconded**. There being no nominations from the floor, the motion **passed unanimously**. Will then **moved** the election of Rachel Shada and Jay Jackson to the Board of Trustees, each for full three-year terms. John Shada **seconded**. There being no nominations from the floor, the motion **passed unanimously**. Will announced that the chair of the 2012 Nominating Committee is Mary Ann Rusk.

Sarah then turned to the election of the Board officers. She requested and received a **motion and a second** to elect Sherle Frost Watson as Vice President. The motion **passed unanimously**. In like fashion Larry Huelbig was elected President for 2012, and Billye Smith, Liz Gammell and Mary Pedersen were elected unanimously to continue as Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer and Board Secretary respectively.

Sarah praised the contributions of outgoing Trustees Robin Sickles and Janet Meininger. She also lauded Beth Hill's leadership of the Coordinating Council, and then turned the gavel over to Larry Huelbig. Larry asked Janet to present Sarah with a gift of behalf of the Board—an appropriately embossed leather-bound journal. The congregation responded with a standing ovation.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Pedersen, Board Secretary

**Congregational Budget Meeting
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church
Sunday December 9, 2012**

The meeting was called to order at 12:26 pm by President Larry Huelbig. It was determined that a quorum was present. Paper copies of the budget were made available in addition to the PowerPoint presentation. Larry alluded to the two “town hall” meetings and the Adult Education session in which the Board had presented the budget and other financial issues to the congregation. He said the Board has tried to keep the congregation informed as discussion of these issues proceeded at the Board level.

Larry then reviewed a few basic financial issues. First, the church is experiencing a shortfall in both the collection of pledges for 2012 and pledging commitments for 2013. Cash flow problems are nothing new, and the canvass was only completed in November, so it is only recently that the extent of these shortfalls became clear. The Board will be studying this situation in depth in the coming year, and Larry offered his views on some of the reasons for it. A one-time-only major contribution was booked as a planned contribution, creating the impression that it would be repeated. He also cited demographic changes within the membership and the uncertain national economy as possible factors.

The second issue is a change in the way the open offering is handled to a share-the-plate concept, further described below. In other congregations this has resulted in an increase in overall giving, both for the church and its outreach programs.

Finally, Larry said the proposed budget features a major hit to the Endowment totaling \$90,000. Of this \$50,000 is the planned endowment draw for the operating budget, and the remaining \$39,754 matches next year’s mortgage principal, and was required to make the budget balance. He said that use of part of the endowment for operating expenses is typical of non-profit and educational institutions. He also pointed out that the mortgage expense will disappear in mid-2014 if the congregation agrees with the Board’s recommendation that we not refinance any portion of the balloon payment. He repeated that the Board will be analyzing this situation, but at this time they do not see any unambiguous solutions.

Before going through the budget line by line, Larry asked that comments be kept concise and non-repetitive, and that no one speak again on the same topic until all others have been heard. He thanked Eric Watson for his assistance running the PowerPoint presentation.

Larry began with the expense side, noting the modest staff salary increases and associated benefit costs. He pointed out that our dues to the local, regional and continental UU associations are a function of the membership numbers we report each year. Under Religious Education (both youth and adult) the Boniuk membership, previously funded at \$1000, was dropped, due to a perception that the church was deriving less benefit from it than when Dr. Jill Carroll was associated with the program. Under Social Action the functional line item was reduced from \$3000 to \$1000, but this is for committee function only and does not include the money they raise for outreach projects. There will be no 10% Solution grants this year since there was no year-over-year increase in the Endowment. Larry alluded to the share-the-plate offering that is planned for 2013 implementation to provide a funding source that will not have such wide fluctuations from one year to the next. He asked Vice President Sherle Frost Watson to elaborate. She said that every week 25% of the open offering will go to the church operating, 25% to our major food program, Meals on Wheels, and 50% to other designated charities. She said that SAC is now soliciting applications from the congregation for that segment of the plate.

Other expenses included changes in utility costs and the fact that the mortgage payments include more principal and less interest, which continues to be reimbursed by the Delaney Foundation. The Office Administrator for Communications salary stays the same since she has not yet been here one year, but she will be eligible for pension contributions. The Leadership School and Board Emergency Fund were dropped.

On the Income side the Board projects a \$15,000 decrease in planned contributions, plus no secondary pledge campaign, plus a reduction in new member pledges based on past experience for a total decrease of \$41,000. The Board does not plan to hold a supplemental pledge campaign next year, feeling that it may be counterproductive. Both the open offering and special collections should rise. As already noted the interest reimbursements from the Delaney Foundation will decrease and there is a substantial increase in the funding from the Endowment.

Larry called for a motion to adopt the 2013 budget. Betsy Gelb so **moved** and Ann May **seconded**, opening the floor for discussion. Nancy Lipp expressed dismay that some of our staff salaries are below what they should be, and that two positions do not pay a living wage even though the compensation is consistent with similar positions in this area. Nevertheless she said she would support the budget.

deForest Ralph objected to completely deleting the Boniuk membership, and offered an **amendment** to reduce that line item to \$100 as a place-holder. He noted that we had speakers from the Boniuk Center for both the worship service and adult education, and cited our common purpose in promoting religious tolerance. Beth Hammer **seconded**. Larry cautioned that the \$100 has to come from somewhere. Bob Hopkins suggested that the Boniuk Center apply for one of the SAC's shared giving slots. Aaron Knight said that \$1 would suffice as a place-holder. The vote on the amendment was 22 for and 39 opposed, so the amendment **did not pass**. Mim Freiter then **moved an amendment** that the Boniuk line item be restored at \$1 and Aaron Knight **seconded**. Betsy Gelb promptly produced \$1 from her wallet, which, to the amusement of the congregation, was passed through several hands like a hot potato before coming to rest with Finance Chair Tony Collins. This amendment **passed easily**.

Phil Richardson spoke in opposition to the budget, saying that pledge income has been decreasing in recent years and that this time both the Board and some major committees are pledging less. He added that the agreement he and Brian Coolidge reached with the Delaney Foundation a few years ago was that Emerson would pay the mortgage principal out of operating income if the Foundation would continue to pay the interest. Further, he contended that the hit to the Endowment would be as high as \$140,000 if, as is often the case, Building and Grounds maintenance emergencies arise. He proposed that the budget be sent back to the Board. When Larry asked for his specific recommendations, he suggested that an outside-the-Board committee of church members be appointed.

Several other members spoke on both sides. Even those who supported the budget did so reluctantly, many of them along the lines Phil presented. But there was also general agreement that the Board had done the best they could. Will Irwin cited obligations that cannot be avoided. Zena Taylor pointed out that this budget contradicts goals of the long range plan adopted several years ago. When Pat Bissonnet asked what next year's Board could do, Betsy Gelb repeated her often-stated conviction that the church needs a serious plan for growth and feels that should be the Board's focus going forward. Furthermore, she said each member should be talking up the church with friends, family members, neighbors and co-workers, and she hopes that the Board will show leadership in this direction. Larry recognized Sherle Frost Watson, who recapped the decision-making process at both the Board level and that of the Finance Committee. She described a Board meeting that ran until midnight trying to find some alternative and gave an impassioned defense of the Board's actions while acknowledging the serious defects in the budget being presented. She pledged to continue the hard work that needs to be done and gave Larry Huelbig credit for giving the process a big push. Barbara Hopkins suggested amending the Bylaws so that deficit budgets are not allowed. Gabe Gelb would like the Board to study the

income side. While agreeing with his wife Betsy that a growth plan is needed he said we should also find out why we are getting less money from our members. Carolyn Truesdell agreed with much of what both Phil and Gabe said but feels there are no good alternatives this year, so she will reluctantly support the budget. Larry recognized Finance Chair (and Trustee candidate) Tony Collins, who wished to address Gabe's comments. He said that according to his research the church's average income/member is high compared to other UU congregations but the median pledge is less so. This is the point that must be addressed and it will take time. Staffing costs particularly cannot be dealt with in a short time frame. The Board must set priorities and where necessary create a transition plan to implement them. Incoming Stewardship Chair Victor Koosh sees both the need and the opportunity to create positive incentives for members of all ages to support the church. David Bates accepts the use of Endowment funds for major maintenance and long-term capital expenses but is opposed to using the Endowment for day-to-day operating expenses. He says we have little room to maneuver in the budget. We need to either generate more income by increased rentals or increasing our membership, or reduce costs by restructuring the cost of ministry. At current revenues we may not be able to afford two senior ministers. Bob Hopkins described his year as President with a bare-bones budget and said he agrees with Phil. Deborah Landis considered that the economy and personal financial issues are larger factors than how people feel about the church.

Several members asked to **call the question**, several others **seconded** and those present agreed to proceed to the vote. The amended 2013 budget **passed by 51 votes for and 15 against**. Larry thanked everyone for attending and contributing to the discussion, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Pedersen, Board Secretary

2012 Annual Report – Co-Ministers Becky and Mark Edmiston-Lange

The past year has been filled with significant accomplishments at Emerson. The Southwest Conference's Annual Meeting in April hosted by Emerson was widely regarded as one of the best ever by delegates for the Conference. In the Fall Emerson hosted internationally recognized President of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee Bill Schulz at our annual fellowship dinner. In November we provided the venue for (also internationally recognized) Amy Goodman speaking for a fundraising event for local radio station KPFT. The next weekend we hosted the Texas Bioneers Conference. In December our choir and Emerson players joined forces with Jazz Education Inc for a stellar evening of music and comedy.

All of these are signal events, any one of which any congregation would be proud to have worked hard to accomplish in a year. Emerson did them all. And these are just the unusual moments. When you consider the range of our core programs of worship, education, the arts, and social action – Emerson is quite the “accomplished” congregation.

But what of the year ahead? More of the same – only more so. That is, we are excited about the coming year's potential for expanding and deepening, not only the programs – but the quality of the faith or philosophy upon which those programs depend.

Three years ago Emerson was selected to participate in the Leap of Faith program in which Emerson was partnered with a larger Unitarian Universalist church for a year of reflection and study about our life as a congregation. That Committee (led by Linda Condit and which included Sarah Boyd, Nancy Lipp, Mark Andersen, Holly Gilliland, and Ben Withers) created a number of recommendations for the congregation under the banner of encouraging us all to strive for being more explicit in our expression of Unitarian Universalism. We would like this coming year to be one in which we continue on that theme. We urge this because we believe the greatest service we can supply both to our own congregation and the wider community is an explicitly positive Unitarian Universalism. We believe that this kind of faith is a significant missing piece in the world at large. That is, without it, we will likely find ourselves increasingly unable to address our most pressing collective problems – which in turn have dramatic impacts upon our individual well being.

Our world is one of increasing connectivity and yet, at the same time - increasing spiritual isolation. The combination creates strong pressures for individuals to hunker down into their own thought world or social enclave and simply dismiss those with whom one disagrees. This kind of mental isolation is true not only for those with such obvious loyalties as 2nd amendment devotees and those who argue for gun control. The broken connectivity between people exists at a far more elemental or everyday level such that disagreements, even in our own neighborhoods seem incapable of resolution.

We do not believe that Unitarian Universalism has the entire solution to this spiritual malaise. But we do believe our faith tradition has powerful insights for our living in a far more peaceable, and less stressful world. We look forward to explicating this faith with you over the coming year.

In faith, reason and affection – to build a better world,
Becky and Mark

2012 Annual Report – President’s Report to the Congregation
Larry Huelbig

Board Focus

During 2012 Emerson’s Board of Trustees focused upon two related topics: short- and intermediate-term financial issues; and increasing congregational awareness of and participation in, the financial issues.

The financial issues under consideration by the Board and congregation include:

- Should the mortgage on church property be paid in full from the endowment at maturity in 2014?
- What are the appropriate levels of compensation for Emerson’s senior staff in the context of UUA Guidelines and compensation actually paid by churches of comparable size in similar geographic areas?
- Should the so-called “10% solution” for funding social action be replaced by a more predictable income stream?
- What are appropriate uses for Emerson’s endowment and what are the financial limits to those uses?
- How can Emerson balance its operating budget on an ongoing basis or at least minimize its reliance upon funds from the endowment?

In addition to Board meetings, these financial issues were considered in Emersonian articles, in two Town Hall meetings and at the annual congregational budget meeting. The congregation is to be congratulated on the attention, civility, good faith and quality of thought and expression exhibited at these meetings.

I do not mean to imply that a final decision was reached on all of these financial issues or that all members were satisfied with the Board’s recommendations. While there is an apparent consensus on some issues, such as payment of the balloon mortgage note, others, such as the proper use of the endowment, likely will continue to be discussed in some form for years. However, I sense that in 2013 the Board will not simply continue to debate these familiar issues. I sense instead that during 2013 the Board will seek the underlying facts, not bound by traditional thinking, and make difficult decisions where necessary.

I want to commend Board members for their good work this year: Barb Adams, Wilson Arabie, Sarah Boyd, Beth Hill, Jay Jackson, Larry Kelly, Aaron Knight, Rachel Shada, and Sherle Frost Watson. I could not have personally selected a better board. Everyone worked hard, was always civil to one another, exhibited good judgment and thought only of Emerson’s best interest.

I would like to give special mention to three people: Mary Pederson, Billye Smith, and Sherle Watson. Mary Pederson, our church secretary and historian of many years, took and transcribed Board minutes with the accuracy and efficiency equal to anyone in the business world. Billye Smith, our church treasurer, always has the appropriate data at her fingertips and acts as the Board’s moral compass when it strays. Sherle Watson, Emerson’s vice-president for 2012 and president elect for 2013, was a consistent source of support; together we formed a real partnership that I am certain will continue with my role as past president.

In closing, I want to urge everyone who is not already participating, to become active in Emerson’s groups and governance. If called upon to serve on a committee, to be a committee chair, or to be a member of the Board, please give the request your serious consideration. Few people join churches to assume these positions, but I have found that there is a direct correlation between the quality of time I devote to an organization and the benefits I receive and the friends I make. And, being an active church member, like voting in an election, gives one standing to complain.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your president during 2012.

Larry Huelbig

Financial Report for 2012

Emerson's consolidated financial results are presented on the following pages. The change in presentation results from a multi-year project to gain greater clarity into financial operations. I continue to welcome your comments and suggestions (billye.j.smith@gmail.com). During 2012, the board and finance committee have continued to review monthly reports in the prior format and well as periodic review of the new format.

Also during 2012 the date for payroll was shifted one day earlier (from the first day of the month to the last). Given the fact that the church transfers the cash to fund the payroll in advance of the date it is paid to our staff, this shift serves to provide a clearer understanding of the cash position of the church at the end of any given month. The total funds expended in 2012 for the additional payroll (paid on 12/31/12 rather than 1/1/13) are \$17,242.

Church Funds

Emerson's total cash-and-investment position decreased \$69,916 (3%) during the year. The numerous factors which resulted in this change are delineated in the accompanying data and significant elements are discussed below.

The Endowment Fund balance at 12/31/12 was \$1,947,459 compared to a \$2,012,915 balance at 12/31/11, a decrease of \$65,456 (3%). The principal elements of this change are the use of \$40,075 for Social Action grants, the budgeted transfer of \$25,000 to operating funds and the loan of an additional \$45,000 to operating funds; offset by \$26,582 in interest and dividends, and a \$21,738 increase in the value of investments.

Source of Funds - Results Compared to Budget

The 2012 budget included income of \$847,830, in translating to sources of funds \$802,000 is operating sources including \$25,000 that is the release from Endowment funds and \$400 is investing sources. The \$45,430 budgeted for use from Endowment funds for Social Action grants is reported as a reduction in the balance of the fund, rather than as a source.

Actual Planned Contribution totaled \$528,842 compared to the budgeted amount of \$558,000, a shortfall of \$29,158 (5%) due partly to \$18,930 in pledged contributions which had not been fulfilled at year-end.

Actual Fundraises contributed \$38,701 to unrestricted operating funds compared to the budgeted amount of \$45,000, a shortfall of \$6,299 (14%) due primarily to the delay in the golf tournament. In addition, \$10,026 was raised for Fund-a-need efforts, and \$14,660 was used to for the Accessibility and Lighting projects.

Miscellaneous Income includes the mutual rebate received from Church Mutual Insurance, reimbursement of insurance deductible paid in prior year, amounts given for Anita's retirement and reimbursements for various operating expense.

Uses of Funds - Results Compared to Budget

The 2012 budget included expenses of \$848,545, in translating to uses of funds \$757,045 is operating uses, \$55,000 is investing uses, and \$36,500 is financing uses.

Budgeted operating uses (Unrestricted plus the budgeted use of Restricted Funds for Social Action) totaled \$751,038, which compares favorably to the \$757,045 budget.

The only meaningful variances where the cash used exceeds the budgeted amount for the reporting groups result from the additional expenditures related to staffing as a result of the previously discussed shift in payroll timing and the additional payment made for Anita's retirement.

The only meaningful variance where the cash used falls short of the budgeted amount is for Social Action. The facts that special collection expenditures, including those for scholarships, were \$6,517 less than budgeted and one selected \$4,905 grant recipient was unable to accept the grant cause this variance.

Respectfully submitted,

Billye Smith, Treasurer

**Business Administrator's
Annual Report
2012**

Thank you, Emersonians, for many years of continuous support and may you all have a safe and prosperous New Year!

Facility Usage

This past summer, Raising the Bar Creative Concepts, a group specializing in Academic and Just-for Fun Classes for Teens 'n 'Tweens held their summer classes at Emerson. Raising the Bar staff consists of experienced, certified teachers who enjoy teaching middle school kids. We look forward to having them on campus during the summer of 2013.

Westwood Hall continues to be the "home-away-from-home" for the Houston Feldenkrais Training Program. The group will be training three times a year – May, September, and November – until their graduation in December 2013. They have also inquired about the possibility of holding their 2014-2017 sessions in WWH. Feldenkrais truly does appreciate Emerson's beautiful campus.

KPFT held a standing room only fundraiser on November 2nd which included a book signing by Amy Goodman, host of Democracy Now.

Emerson hosted the 2012 Bioneers Conference November 9th and 10th.

Tanglewood Academy led by director, Glenda Lane, renewed their contract as did the Rebels Investors Group, Professionally Speaking Singles Toastmasters, and The Houston Tuesday Musical Group. Guitar Houston and UniTunes held their concerts at Emerson. Also, numerous neighborhood homeowners' associations held meetings in WWH.

Emerson is a very busy community some of its recurring usage, in addition to Sunday programming, included monthly board meetings, board retreats, coordinating council meetings, PAC theater events, sustainable potluck and movie series, solstice celebrations, spring auction, book groups, teacher training, committee meetings and numerous one-time events.

Facility Maintenance

Fortunately, this year, we did not experience any major maintenance issues.

Routine/non routine maintenance included the following:

- Fund-a-Need exterior pole lights were installed in the west end parking lot.
- Plumbing repairs
- Sanctuary A/C repairs
- Appliance repairs
- Carpet Cleaning
- Lawn Maintenance, performed by, Efrain Vasquez, Sexton.
- Tree trimming

Administrative

In an effort to reduce costs we switched from AT&T phone and internet providers to Comcast Business Class.

Listed below are some areas of my responsibility:

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

In addition, I assist with the master calendar, negotiate lease renewals, schedule equipment maintenance, program the computerized HV/AC system, supervise the Office Administrator for Communications, sextons and respond to emails.

Emerson members, Mary Ann Stanley, Jill Rose, Nancy Lipp and Mary Fehr volunteer their time to provide assistance in administrative areas of the church. Tom McDuffie continues to provide Efrain Vasquez, weekday sexton, with his Wednesday handyman guidance. Thanks to all of you for volunteering at Emerson!!

Again this year, I wish extend my thanks to Emerson's Board of Trustees, Co-ministers, Becky and Mark Edmiston-Lange, Keitha West, Katy Carpman, Bonnie Wellington, Efrain Vasquez, and Hans Coster for their continued support.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Billye Smith, Treasurer, for her assistance.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Van Horn, Business Administrator

EUUC Performing Arts Department Annual Report – 2012
Bonnie Wellington, Director of Music/Artistic Director

2012 was a year of major change and accomplishments for the EUUC Performing Arts Department. Long time Keyboard Artist Anita Butt retired, the Emerson Players Director, Hilary Henderson Ritz had a baby, Emerson hosted the SWUUC Conference, alongside all of the Department's normal business and performances. It was not an easy year, but certainly one that tested the Department as a whole and its individual members.

Turnings, as per tradition, kicked off the 2012 year with soloist Adrian Rodriguez and the choir performing "Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep," a preview of the Choir's Spring Concert from *Eternal Light*, by Howard Goodall. We said goodbye to Anita Butt in January, with the 29th being her last service with Emerson. Regular Keyboard sub and musician friend of Emerson, Michael Mertz assist with the music on January 29th as we said farewell.

The transition was fairly seamless with Emerson hiring Andrew Focks as the new Keyboard Artist, his first service playing on February 5th. Andrew came highly recommended and jumped right into the position, assuring a skeptical bunch that although Anita would be missed, the music would certainly continue and be of high quality. The EIO performed music from *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* as well as Bill Aterkson's arrangement of music from E.T. on March 25th, highlighting two of the cinematic scores of John Williams.

While simultaneously preparing for the Spring Concert, the Choir gave several performances over the SWUUC Conference weekend of April 27th, 28th, and 29th. The Choir, with support from guest instrumentalists, performed several movements from the beloved *Missa Gaia*, by Paul Winter and Peter Halley. Also, the EIO and Choir performed on the last day of the SWUUC Conference, Sunday, April 29th Sibelius' *Finlandia*. Although the attendance at SWUUC was less than expected, the Department truly showed its strength with very strong and diverse musical offerings.

After having survived the SWUUC Conference, the Choir gave their gift to the mother's of Emerson with their performance of *Eternal Light*, by Howard Goodall for their May 13th Spring Concert. This piece highly contrasted the music performed at their 2011 Spring Concert, featuring music by Mozart. The performance of *Eternal Light* was supported with additional leadership in the tenor section, by guest tenor Nicolas DeMelo. With Nicolas's vocal leadership, it became painfully evident that this was and still is a key role within the choir that needs continual support. Efforts were made to petition funding to create a position for a Tenor Section Lead, but that was unsuccessful.

Although the Summer “semester” is usually a quiet one for the church in general, music during worship still needs coverage and support, and the Emerson Players kicked off the summer in a big way; June began a little differently than had in years past. On June 2nd and 3rd The Emerson Players gave their performances of “Fox On The Fairway”, by Ken Ludwig, with Hillary Henderson Ritz directing. It was a very complicated script, ambitious to say the least, but the Players did a fantastic job, affirming their status as a force within the Department.

Emerson’s newly hired Keyboard Artist, Andrew Focks would be traveling throughout Europe on a Summer Concert tour, and Emerson had the treat of having Andrew’s friend and colleague Matt Cataldi, play for the summer services. June 9th was Andrew’s last service at Emerson before he left for the summer, and Matt’s first, the two pianists treating Emerson to several four hand piano works. Also, unlike years past, the EIO regrouped for the summer months and reconvened as the ESSO (Emerson Summer String Orchestra), performing Warlock’s *Capriol Suite* on June 24th. The rest of the Summer was peppered with performances by many talented Emersonians, both instrumentally and vocally, with members of the Emerson Players performing the skit “Star-Bellied Sneetches” on July 22nd, the Freiter/Hill clan performing Celtic music on July 29th, John Hammer’s band *Paper Windows* performing on August 12th, and a treble choir comprised of several Emersonian women performing *Path to the Moon*, on August 19th.

Homecoming kicked off on September 9th with the EIO performing Mouret’s *Rondeau* (the “Masterpiece Theatre” theme), and the choir performing a Swahili song entitled *Amani*. This was a great start to the new Worship calendar year with very early in the season representation from the EIO, and the choir performing their piece from memory, a cappella, standing on the front of the chancel. This was a new challenge for the choir, as singing from memory is not something they typically do, and certainly not that early in the season.

The Emerson Players gave their performance of “Comic...Cynic...Scoffer...Dreamer: The Life and Plays of George Bernard Shaw,” Anna-Louise Bruner (playwright and director) on October 5th and 7th. Although Hilary Henderson Ritz was on leave having recently had a baby boy, the Players, as per precedent, said “the show must go on,” and gratefully worked with Anna-Louise on her show for their fall presentation. A large cast, and represented by several generations, the Players yet again showed their resilience and commitment to the organization.

The EIO gave their performance of *Suite from the “Legend of Zelda,”* arranged by EIO Director, Bill Atkerson on October 21st. In true EIO form, Bill arranged the piece for every generation within the ensemble: *Zelda* is a game that has been around for a couple of decades, the music from which can be recognized by gamers of several generations. Also in October, the choir learned that it would need to say goodbye to their newly hired and beloved Alto Section Lead, Brittany Hines-Hill. Brittany would be going back home to New Jersey for personal reasons, and it was a double blow: she had fit in very quickly with the choir and staff at Emerson, and we would now need to fill her position in the middle of a semester and during the busy Holiday Season.

December was met with great anticipation as the Choir, Players, and RE children and youth shared the chancel for the Bubbha Thomas Holiday Concert with internationally recognized Jazz Education Inc, of Houston for the annual Holiday Show (previously known as Vespers) on December 8th. The show was a huge success, also ambitious, having numerous moving parts (children and youth, props, scheduling, staging, music planning and arranging, guest musicians, logistics, lights, sound, etc.), and was a televised event benefiting the Houston Food Bank. The show included the Emerson Choir, the Emerson Players (showcasing skits written by Emersonian Vanessa Morales-Knight, and the return of Hilary Henderson Ritz directing), the children and youth of the RE Department, vocal soloists, holiday tunes arranged in house, and the talented musicians of Jazz Education Inc. Attendance at the show was by far the largest audience Emerson has seen for a Holiday Show in December in several years. The very next day, December 9th, the EIO performed *Christmas in the Trenches*, Bill Atkerson’s own arrangement, with Adrian Rodriguez as the vocal soloist. The EIO and choir also performed a joint piece, *I*

Heard the Bells on Christmas Day, also arranged by Bill Atkerson. As per usual, the Christmas Eve service was musically supported by choir die hards, and the choir directed by Bill Atkerson.

2012 was a tough one; an amazing, challenging, and hard earned success. There were several staff changes that required a great deal of outreach and audition scheduling, non-standard additional performances that required additional music. Babies were born, schedules were changed, plans were made, and then changed, and then changed again. It was a challenging year, but one that truly showed the guts and strength of the Emerson Performing Arts Department. Each and every time we rose to the occasion, and delivered something that Emerson can be proud of. We showed at SWUUC just how good a little choir of 20 can sound. The Emerson Players proved that the show must go on. The entire department came together and showed in December just how diverse we are and how much we have to offer...and we did that on TV. Despite all of the challenges the EUUC Performing Arts Department faced in 2012, we still not only met the challenges presented, but were able to exceed expectations and give some of the best performances given in recent years.

**2012 Annual Report - Director of Religious Education
Katy Carpman**

What would the world be like if we lived up to our Unitarian Universalist principles? Fairness and equity in all relationships? Peace and justice? Recognizing the divine spark in every soul and knowing that we are all connected?

Well, Sunday School is a great place to practice. Each class has a covenant-an agreement of how we want to be together. We share stories of many lands, of those who came before us, and of the women and men still working to build a better world. We engage in deep discussions and take part in the hard work in age-appropriate ways. We get to know each other, and to have FUN.

Outside of the classroom, our children and youth attend and participate in worship, fellowship, and social action projects and events. Our older youth get involved with the larger community, especially with other Young Religious Unitarian Universalist (YRUU) groups.

As the director of religious education, I work with the RE committee, with teachers and advisors and mentors, and with the children and youth to help bring together this grand experiment. I work closely with Becky and Mark, with staff, and with scores of volunteers and the committees, developing connections as well as helping the thousands of logistical details come together.

It is a real pleasure to do the work I do, and to get to be in relationship with so many world-changers.

If you are not currently involved with religious education, I urge you to come on by and witness the magic!

Just a few highlights from the year:

- Our Coming of Age and Youth Sunday worship services - recognizing the transitions and wisdom of our youth as a corporate body
- Summer Programs- children now attend the start of worship every Sunday, even during the summer. Our new Spirit of Adventure program with guest teachers was a big hit, and our high school youth enjoyed another summer of movies, fellowship, and a summer's-end beach trip.
- Deck the Halls potluck – a jubilant gathering of RE families and the congregation at large for a delicious lunch, then making our sanctuary beautiful for the holidays
- Finally, thank you for your support as I completed my credentialing process with the Unitarian Universalist Association in 2012.

With love,

Katy Carpman, Director of Religious Education

2012 Annual Report Committee on Ministry

Members: Edna Kelly, Kris Taylor, Ken McLeod, Barbara Crotty, Mark Edmiston-Lange, Becky Edmiston-Lange, Kay Bergen. Kay resigned in September to focus her energies elsewhere.

Description of Committee: This Committee shall promote and facilitate the ministry of the church, including but not limited to the relationship between the Senior Minister(s) and the congregation. Article V, Section E of Emerson Church's Constitution

The Committee on Ministry evolved from a former committee on ministerial relations, in order to provide a more positive and productive force for promotion of ministry within the congregation.

The Committee on Ministry continued to work on moving the congregation toward greater participation in "shared ministry." Our ongoing efforts in this regard included:

- Past CoM members currently serving on the Behavioral Covenant task force, which is working on guidelines for relations among church members.
- Participating in the Leap of Faith process by considering our involvement via the "Emerson AIMS" worksheet. We hope to engage the entire congregation in a caring ministry, awakening all members to opportunities for ministry. We want to acknowledge the gifts people have, raise awareness of needs, and share the narrative. Members of the CoM wrote their own statements entitled, "What Our UU Faith Means to Me." We want to expand opportunities for public recognition for high-profile and lesser-known Emersonians.
- Providing "Spotlight on Ministry" articles for the *Emersonian*.
 - Greeters
 - Office Staff
 - SWUUC Planning Committee
 - Ministry for Earth
 - A Welcoming Congregation
 - AV Committee
 - Art and Mary Pederson
- Continued extensive study and research regarding the need, potential and feasibility of a system for providing short-term care for Emerson members, such as meals or transportation. A brainstorming

meeting for the congregation was held on March 4. Personal invitations were extended and the meeting was well-attended. Despite wide publication and personal contacts, as well as solicitations at the Time and Talent Fair in May, the desired “sparkplugs” and core group of at least five volunteers did not materialize. As a result, the project was shelved.

- Presenting “Articulating Our Faith,” a UU curriculum, during Exploration Sundays each month, September 2012 – May 2013. Ken McLeod is coordinating, assisted by others on the Committee. While the sessions got off to a slow start, attendance has picked up and those attending are finding the sessions very worthwhile.
- Kris or Edna, co-Chairs, attended the Coordinating Council Meetings.
- Kris attended the Adult RE Visioning Session.
- Edna attended the annual ministers’ review on September 6.

Prepared by Edna Kelly, co-Chair of the Committee on Ministry
January 8, 2013

Bios for 2012 Nominees

FOR BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Tony Collins: I grew up in England in a very small village, not very near Oxford. I went to Church of England schools all the way through college, most of the time knowing I was an atheist. After considering archeology, I became an engineer, and went to graduate school in Canada. I came to Houston to teach at UH, and when that visiting post ran out, I joined Schlumberger.

I was married at First Church, and a few years later we moved to Paris for 3 years. I helped found the Paris Fellowship, and was Treasurer of the European District for 2 years.

When we came back I became active at First Church, where I was Finance Chair and Treasurer for a long time. I served on the board during some very difficult years.

My daughter Christine had two welcoming ceremonies: in Houston, and in Oxford where Frank Schulman presided. She was very active in YRUU after we moved to Emerson in 2008, and is now studying Music Education at UNT in Denton.

My wife Jane also loves music, but does not attend much during the school year.

Since joining Emerson, I joined the Finance Committee, becoming Chair almost immediately, and Buildings & Grounds, where I am Chair by default. (There are no other members: hint, hint). I am also one of the leaders on Rebuilding Together Houston.

Richard Loftin

- A member since 2008 (moved to Houston...prior member at All Souls Tulsa).
- RE teacher for K-1 and 2-3 since 2008.
- Served on Stewardship Committee in 2009, 2010, and 2011. Stewardship Committee Co-Chair in 2011.
- Helped organize the Annual Congregational Dinner for Stewardship in 2012.
- Attended LSU, Rice. BS and MS degrees (Geology) from LSU.
- Senior Staff Geologist, Apache Corporation
- Married to Alisha Denton Loftin
- Two Children, Connor (9) and Evan (7)

Kris Taylor: Kris 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 and district conference planning committees. She is just completing a two-year term on the Committee on Ministry, which she co-chaired in

2012. Away from Bering Drive, she is a freelance writer, editor and public relations counselor (no alarm clock, no commute, no dry cleaning bills!) and volunteers actively with the Houston Grand Opera Guild. She reads voraciously, stitches avidly, gardens hopefully, and lives with two v-e-r-y interesting rescue dogs, Max and Harley.

Shannon Thurmond: She has been a member of Emerson for 10 years. She has two children in the Religious Education program and has assisted through the years with various youth classes, special events and as Guardian Angel. Shannon is a licensed Social Worker and has worked for the State of Texas over 17 years, primarily with programs for special needs children. She was raised in San Antonio but considers herself a Houstonian as she has lived here for 22 years.

FOR COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY:

Susan Green: I grew up in St. Louis. I am a librarian at Lone Star College-Cyfair, where I wrote a book with two colleagues, entitled *Joint Use Libraries: Models that Work*. My husband Mark and I have been members of Emerson for many years, raising our three children here, Lydian, Eleanor and Channing. I have taught many classes of RE and served on the RE committee.

Thomas Jorgensen: I am a teacher currently working with special needs students at River Oaks Academy and find fulfillment working with children. After leaving the Mormon Church, my wife and I had no religious affiliation until we started attending Emerson UU Church over 2 years ago. I have enjoyed the Adult RE programs especially the BYOT class which helped me to accept and value my own personal religious convictions. My wife and I have four sons and three grandchildren. The only bumper sticker I have ever put on a car expresses my feeling---COEXIST.

Clara Kosloff: I began attending Emerson Unitarian Church in 1984. Although not a member yet, I actively volunteered in the Religious Education Dept. I formally became a member in 1991. During my years at Emerson I volunteered in Religious Education as a teacher, as Schweitzer Club sponsor and as a member of the Religious Education Committee. Later I volunteered as a Befriender and for several years I was a member of the Choir. In addition I have served on the nominations committee and worked with my fellow covenant group members on the Unitarian Universalist District Conference.

I am a retired school teacher. I actively taught for the Houston Independent School District as an elementary and secondary Special Education teacher for 29 years before retiring in 2004. Since that time I have taught and supervised classes in Adult Education for Houston Community College and tutored primary students in reading and math. I am currently tutoring adults in ESL.

FOR NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE:

David May: He joined Emerson in 1992. He has served on Emerson's Public Relations Committee, now Communications Committee, from 1993 to the present. He was Chair of the UUA Metro Growth Program for Houston UU Churches. He managed the Houston UU Network Public Radio announcements and fundraising from 1995 to 2012. He served on the Ministerial Search Committee and the Lay Pastoral Ministry Team and served as Chair of the Membership Committee, Emerson Outreach Board, the Personnel Committee and the ad hoc Emerson Policy Manual Committee. He served as Emerson Board President and Past President. He has served on the UUA Commission on Social Witness for two terms and as Chair for three years. David has a Ph.D. in Plant Ecology from the University of Texas at Austin, serving on the faculties of Utica College of Syracuse University and the University of Denver. He received a J.D. from the University of Denver, and has practiced as an environmental lawyer. He is retired.

Jennifer Norten: She has been a member of Emerson since 2009. She has two daughters ages 16 and 11 and has been active in the RE program as a teacher and committee member. She is an avid supporter of Emerson arts and has assisted in directing several holiday pageants. She recently tried her hand as a cast member in the fall play.

Jill Rose: I joined Emerson around 1986 after having been active for several years; joining the church was a commitment that I did not take lightly. Over the years I have worked on a number of committees and church organizations including (in no particular order and not exclusively), the Board, choir, RE (in almost every capacity over the years!), a couple of search committees, AV, Emerson Players, Investment Committee, Women's Book Group and as an office volunteer—as well as several other groups that are no longer active. Emerson is truly my church home. Outside of church life, I am a retired Kindergarten teacher with two adult daughters who grew up at Emerson. I enjoy reading, traveling, writing a quarterly newsletter for my neighborhood library and managing the library at my former school. Integrating living and beliefs is a lifelong project.

Mary Ann Stanley: I was brought up in the traditional but liberal Christian Church and remained active in my local churches 1983. The next 20 years or so I attended various churches until I found Emerson in 2003 and joined in January, 2004. I served on the Adult Ed committee for six years and taught three courses in Adult Ed during that time, and sang in the choir for 8 years. With Ken Salzman, I co-chaired the Spring SWUUC Conference this year with our Memorial Area Covenant Group. Currently I serve on the Worship and Communications Committees and volunteer each Monday in the Emerson Business Administrator's office.

2012 Annual Report - Adult Religious Education Committee
Co-Chairs: Norbert Welk and Robin Sickles

Committee members: Robin Sickles (co-Chair), Norbert Welk (co-Chair), Dr. Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange (Advisor and Spiritual Mentor), Katy Carpman (Religious Education Director for Youth and Young Adult Programs), Aaron Knight (BOT liaison), Michael Condit, Deborah Landis, Kenneth Jones, Mitch Froehlich, Barbara Elmore, Margaret McElrath, Randy McElrath

Vision and Mission Statements:

Vision: Emersonians living their lives based on UU principles.

Mission: Provide intellectually and spiritually stimulating programs supporting UU principles.

The theme of presentations in the fall focused on EEU programs supporting our Senior and Aging Adult congregants.

Based on recommendations by the **Leap of Faith program** we continued the dialogue on how the many programs within Emerson that provide spiritual fellowship for its adult members may be viewed in a larger educational context.

On October 27 the Committee and leaders in the EEU community met during the day for a retreat to discuss a variety of issues involving our programs. The visioning day was lead by Charles McMullen, Director of Adult Religious Education and Public Programs at The First Unitarian Church of Dallas. We have attached various documents that speak to the particulars about the visioning day, which all involved felt was a very positive and fruitful meeting. We recognize that for the ARE program to be robust each Sunday experience must of course provide religious education, but also faith development, and spiritual formation.

We continued and added to the Track II offerings in our third Exploration Sunday during the 10:00-10:45 time slot as well as programs at other times during the week, particularly on evenings (**Track III**). These offerings include:

Track II-Articulating your UU faith-Ken M. and the Lay Ministry Committee (fall/spring)

Track II-Women at Mid-life-Pam, Judy, and Phyllis (2nd Sunday)

Track II-Abolitionists-Kay and Kenny

Track II-The Pencil Factory-Concord/Walden Pond and the Transcendentalists-Janet/Idolina/deForest

Track II-Ministry for Earth (Ann May and Megan)

Track II-Poetry (Carolyn Truesdale)

Track II-Keys to Unitarian Universalism-Becky/Mark/Katy

Track III- Spirituality, Kenny J. and Becky E-L

Track III-Building You Our Theology –Mark E-L

Track III-Psyche, Soul, and Spirit-Unitarian Universalist Approaches to Spirituality-Becky E-L.

Respectfully submitted,

Norbert Welk and Robin Sickles, Co-Chairs

Adult RE Schedule
Sept. 2011– June 2012

JAN. 2012	FEB. 2012	MAR. 2012	APR. 2012	MAY 2012	June 2012	August 2012	Sept. 2012
1 New Years Day No ARE	5 Leap of Faith-C Linda Condit-	4 Concord, Massachusetts: American Thought, Community & Unitarianism-Idolina Hernandez and Deforest Ralph-C	1 Norbert Welk-C Death of Joseline	6 The Sikh Center-C Dr. Rajinder Singh	3-Ken McCloud-Get title of his talk-C ARE meeting	5	9-Homecoming No ARE
8 Frances Jones-C	12 EUU Abolitionists-C Kenneth Jones	11 Ann May-C EMFE	8 - EASTER No ARE	13 Holly Gilliland, Phyllis and Bill Burchfiel-C Book Club presentation-Juana Bordas	10-Hiltan Kurwa-C Jain Society	12	16-Bring a Friend to EUU- Exploration Sunday
15 Exploration Sunday Mike Parks Director of Boniuk Center	19 Exploration Sunday-ARE Pamela King Director of Boniuk Center	18 Exploration Sunday	15 Exploration Sunday	20 Exploration Sunday- Time and Talent	17-Exploration Sunday 29 SWUUC Spring Conference- Susan Smith-"The Discovery"	19-ARE Meeting after Church-C The Doctrine of	23- Cath Conlan Blackwood Educational Land Institute- Bioneers-C
22 Spirituality-C Becky Edmiston-Lange	26 Marcella Murff Icet "FOOD everywhere! Last Organic Outpost-C	25 Art Forms and Spiritual Practices-C Dan Havel	22 Covenant Group-C 7-November of October's and November's program-C	27 Memorial Day, Nov. 2012 4-ARE Elder Law Firm Christina Ilesher-Houston Estate	24-End of ARE for the summer Days Dec. 2012 2-BOT-Budget	26	30-EUU Kenny Jones- Abolitionist-C
			14- Emily Stickle- formerly of Interfaith	11-Dafting and implementing advance directives-Aging Dick Cheney-C	9- Denise Atkerson- Interfaith		
			Ministries and currently at U. St. Thomas-"Aging in Place."-C Beck E-L sermon: "Saying yest to life"		Ministries for Greater Houston-General program contents and their "Meals on Wheels" program in particular -C		
			21- Exploration Sunday	18- Exploration Sunday	16- Exploration Sunday		
			28- Center for Aging Research- UT School of Nursing)- Carmen Castro and Greg Shelly- Harris County Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program-C Becky E-L sermon: "Living life as if you need it"	25-Thanksgiving- No ARE 20	23-Christmas- No ARE 30-Christmas /New Years-No ARE		

Suggested Follow up to ARE Vision Day from Charles McMullen

1. Take the categories – development, education & formation and pair them with the words from your mission statement that we worked with. There will be, what, 24 combinations - you certainly don't have to create a class or program for all 24 combinations but it may be helpful to think about the nuance of each.

As an example, what's the difference between: faith development, faith education and faith formation.

Imagine how a program for each might have a different focus or format.

Pick a direction that seems most appropriate for your congregation right now.

Check resources like Tapestry of Faith and other curriculum sources, consider books, study guides and online resources you come across.

Think about who might be qualified to lead that program, from inside your congregation or outside.

Think about the most appropriate format for the program

– one-time event, short series of 3-6 weeks, longer format or on-going group.

Then schedule it.

Do the same for affection development, affection education and affection formation & with reason, mind & spirit...

The exercise gets really interesting when you get to grow, welcome & build. Consider what “welcome” development or “welcome” formation might be, or “build” development, “build” education and “build” formation

– what adult religious/faith/spiritual development would help us build a better world?

...and the same for “grow” – our personal growth and the growth (maturation) of the congregation.

When you get stuck go back to our pages of free association for each word and see what might be there to help you imagine possible programs.

[Just now I'm totally enamored by the idea of “welcome” formation - The question is: “What kind of formation do adults need to make welcome more incarnate and more apparent and more abundant in our world?”]

If you go through the whole list you could have 8 specific programs that you could offer over the course of the next year.

Bold face suggestions you can accept, reject or modify:

Your congregation is big enough and diverse enough to offer multiple choices for adults on Sundays.

You've got space to run three or more concurrent classes ... and there are at least 2 time slots that you could use. I'm not suggesting that you offer 6 different classes every Sunday but I am suggesting that there could easily be 3 or 4 different classes or programs on any given Sunday.

Not sure what that would do to your 3rd Sunday programming, but I am suggesting that *every* Sunday be more like 3rd Sundays. And that makes your current schedule problematic, because if you offer *What Moves Us* from Tapestry of Faith and a class using Marcus Borg's *Heart of Christianity* then you don't want to interrupt those series every 3rd Sunday.

Maybe move the 3rd Sunday groups to 9 a.m.

I'd suggest you keep your current Adult Ed group and let it continue to meet at the same time and place they meet now.

The new programs are meant to attract new folks (some regulars may be siphoned off to the new classes, especially as you tap leaders and offer more interesting programs, but that's fine too).

Also:

Some other questions from Peter Block's book *Community* that would be great for this group:

How valuable do you plan for this effort to be?

What is the story you keep telling about the problems of this community?

What is your contribution to the very thing you complain about?

What are the gifts that you hold that have not been brought fully into the world?

One Other Thing:

I should have brought evaluations for everyone to complete before I left.

Since I didn't do that I'm asking you to please help solicit some feedback and get it to me.

I'd like to know what hit, what missed, what was under-developed or missed completely.

Maybe ask folks to name the most important thing they got from the time together, what they could have done without.

I would truly appreciate any honest and frank feedback.

Again, Katy, thank you so much for the opportunity to work with your group. It was truly a delight to meet all of you and to be in your beautiful space.

Keep up the good work! - **Charles McMullen**

2012 Annual Report – Caring Committee
Co-Chairs: Mary Ann Rusk and Judy Williams

After the loss of our beloved Chair, Gwen Essinger, Mary Ann and Judy have become co-chairs of the Caring Committee. The committee is made up of many dedicated individuals that provide refreshments for family and friends in Westwood Hall after a Memorial Service.

As co-chairs, we want to thank all the committee 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

2012 Annual Report – Circle Dinners
Chair: Mary Ann Rusk

Circle Dinners provides an opportunity to connect with members of our church to share a great potluck meal and conversation.

The format for Circle Dinners is to meet every other month starting with September, November, January, March and May on the third Saturday of the designated months. The dinners are held in members' homes with the exception of the May dinner. The May dinner is held in Westwood Hall with the entire group meeting with designated hosts.

Currently, the group is composed of approximately 65 members and additional members are welcome at any time. If you wish to join this group, please contact mafrusk@comcast.net and you will be contacted for the next dinner.

I took over chairing this group after the loss of Gwen Essinger who organized great dinners for our group. At present, I am following the same format that was established years ago for this group but welcome any suggestions to increase the number of our group. At this time, it is an adult only group.

I wish to thank all the hosts who have held Circle Dinners in their homes and future hosts for this year.

Mary Ann Rusk: Chair

**Communications Committee
Annual Report
2012**

The Communications Committee manages external publicity and general Church communication with the congregation, including managing Emerson's website, Facebook page, Twitter Account, EBlast , direct mailings, Facebook and Gay & Lesbian Yellow Pages ads and the Church sign in coordination with the Administrative Assistant for Communication, Keitha West.

The members of the Communications Committee include: Mark Edmiston-Lange, Betsy Gelb, Pat Grealy, Greg Hunt, Brett Jones, Larry Kelly, David May, Mary Ann Stanley, Kris Taylor, Keita West, and Sherle Frost Wilson. The Board Liaison is Wilson Arabie.

In 2012, the Communications Committee:

1. Maintained and updated external public relations and internal communications,
 2. Placed an Emerson ad in the Gay & Lesbian Yellow Pages,
 3. Advertising for individual events at Emerson, such as:
 - a. the Emerson Summer Concert
 - b. the Amy Goodman Pacifica Radio Program
 - c. the Jazz Ed Performance,
 4. Designed and direct mailed postcards for the Emerson Religious Education Program and Bring a Friend Sunday in the Fall and again for holiday programs in the Winter,
 5. Advertised on Facebook.
- Submitted by David May, Chair

Annual Report Finance Committee

The committee has two main responsibilities: review of the financial results, and preparation of the budget. Our members are:

- John Homier
- Dick Cheney
- Tony Collins

Will Irwin retired from the committee this year after serving since before I joined the church

Ex-officio

- Mark Edmiston-Lange
- Billye Smith , Treasurer
- Sherle Watson, Vice-President

This year, we introduced a new element to the budget process. We solicited input from the committees in early summer, asking them each for three versions. These were

- Normal Expectation: Continuing Current Activities
- Wish List: What would we do if money were not a limitation
- Austerity: The lowest amount to be able to continue the activity at all

Everybody took these requests very seriously, although some dreamed bigger than others. We created budgets based on all three versions. This made the process of reconciling needs and available resources go more smoothly and more effectively than the previous year,

Tony Collins, Chair.

2012 Annual Report- Investment Committee Co-Chairs: John Homier and Dick Mullineaux

Henry Groppe retired from co-chairmanship and membership in 2011. He will continue to be an advisor for the committee. Henry's skilled leadership of the Investment Committee has been a major factor in our church having our excellent facilities and accomplishing our mission. We all owe him a vote of thanks.

Will Irwin first succeeded Henry and John Homier has now succeeded Will as co-chairman.

Division of the Endowment Fund into two segments of approximately \$1,000,000 each was described in the 2010 Annual Report: an investment fund managed by the Mitchell Group and a cash reserve fund composed of fixed income instruments and cash. This segregation will be reviewed after mortgage refinancing has been accomplished. Until then the Investment Committee will manage only the investment fund. Decisions on use of the cash reserve fund will be made by the BOT and the congregation. Actions required to convert fixed income instruments into cash will be executed by the investment committee as needed to implement those decisions.

Results for the investment fund are:

Starting value	\$1,000,000
11/30/2012 Market value	\$1,039,900

Dick Mullineaux, co-ch

2012 Annual Report - Lay Pastoral Ministry Team

The Lay Pastoral Ministry Team ("LPMT") is a group of volunteers who provide a confidential Ministry of Presence to Emerson congregants and friends as an extension of, but not a substitute for, the pastoral care services of Co-Ministers Becky and Mark Edmiston-Lange. Lay Pastoral Ministry support is usually requested during times of life transition, such as illness, death of a loved one, marriage, divorce or separation, birth, loss of employment, retirement, or confinement to a nursing home. LPMT members develop confidential relationships that vary from a brief ministry of one or two phone conversations to visits sustained over many years.

Throughout the year, the Emerson team

- Provided many hours of Ministry of Presence to many Emersonians;
- Continued the Joys, Sorrows, and Milestones candles and cards in the sanctuary. (Every Sunday an LPMT member prepares the bowl to receive the tapers, extinguishes and removes the tapers after the service, and gathers any cards deposited in the two boxes. At our monthly

- meetings, we lift up the Joys, Sorrows, and Milestones that are mentioned on the cards or otherwise known to us. Often the cards also request contacts for pastoral attention.); and
- Delivered holiday poinsettias to a number of Emersonians with limited ability to travel.

Jim Porter has taken on additional personal responsibilities and commitments, and will no longer serve on the team, although he maintains his lay pastoral relationships with two Emerson congregants.*

The members of the team during 2012 are

Kay Bergen	Phyllis Burchfiel	Dick Cheney	Joe Dowlen
Edna Kelly	Pam Lewis	Mina McDuffie	Tom McDuffie
Ken McLeod	Sally Phillips	Jim Porter*	Judy Taylor
Barbara Thorn	Jonathan Watson		

2012 Annual Report Leap of Faith Team

Members: Mark Andersen, Sarah Boyd, Linda Condit (chair), Rev. Mark Edmiston-Lange, Holly Gilliland, Deborah Landis, Nancy Lipp, and Ben Withers.

Members began working on the Leap of Faith (LoF) project in 2010, when Emerson was selected for participation. The Board of Trustees approved the LoF recommendations in 2011 and incorporated them in its strategic plan in 2012. This past year the team focused on communication, implementation, and transfer of responsibility for these recommendations. Even though our team concluded its regular meetings mid-year, members continued to provide support for implementation. Now key committees are taking responsibility for instituting changes in their areas.

Communications

- Details of the recommendations were communicated in weekly e-Blasts and the monthly newsletters.
- The team made a presentation at an Adult Education program on February 5th to inform, generate discussion and receive feedback.
- Members met with the Coordinating Council and key committees to pass responsibility for implementation.

Implementation of Recommendations

- Adopt the Emerson AIMS to Grow model and its use by other committees in contexts such as Emerson AIMS to Serve. We *awaken* interest about Emerson in the greater Houston Community and *involve* those who come as visitors. Then we *motivate* prospective members into increased activity within Emerson and becoming members. Next we help members to *shine* the light of our faith in the congregation and the wider community. *Team members held a workshop in September with committees to work on implementing the AIMS model and to create charters.*
- Update the church committee structure to have fewer standing committees, which would be umbrella organizations for various working committees and groups. This recommendation encompasses having committee charters and term limits for committee chairs as well as leadership development. *A subcommittee of the Coordinating Council is working on its structure and charter and encouraging committees to develop charters. A number of committees have done so.*
- Increase the paid staff with two part-time positions of a Membership Coordinator and a Religious Education Assistant over the next 3 to 5 years. *There is interest on the respective committees when affordable.*

The challenge identified as being the key to growing our membership is “to make the UU faith more explicit in our congregation and in our daily lives.” This challenge has inspired many of our recommendations above. *The*

Committee on Ministry has taken responsibility for this challenge. They are conducting a nine-session course on Articulating Your UU Faith and also doing projects related to individual faith journeys. Our Co-ministers and DRE will be facilitating a six-weeks series on Keys to Unitarian Universalism.

Other Recommendations

Our report contains numerous other ideas, which have been shared with various committees. Most ideas have been put into practice or are in the planning stages. For example, the Adult Education Committee is focusing on lay theological educators and broader offerings. For several years, we have had classes with six sessions of Building Your Own Theology taught by Mark Edmiston-Lange as well as lay educators. We hope that covenant groups will be formed from some of these classes.

Library Committee

The Library Committee, consisting of Carolyn Craig, Shirley Coster, and Art Pedersen, continued to maintain the Schulman Library, located on the second floor of Delaney Hall. New books were added and less relevant books were removed. Thanks to all those who donated books to the library. Next year, 2013, the position of Library Chair will be vacant. The current chair is moving. Those interested in the library and in contributing to the intellectual life of the congregation, please contact Art Pedersen or Carolyn Craig.

Submitted by Art Pedersen

2012 Annual Report - Membership Committee
Chair: Eric Watson

At the end of 2011 certified membership was 447. At the end of 2012 there were 432 certified members. This represents a slight decrease of approximately 3%. It should be noted that the decrease included a review and removal of 36 members per constitutional guidelines. There were 31 new members. There were three resignations, one member moved and we suffered the loss of four members by death.

With a couple of exceptions most of the new members are under 50; there are a few single adults, a few one parent families and a preponderance of couples with one or more children. This bodes well for the future life and growth of the church.

The stability of our membership is a remarkable feat considering that main line denominational churches in the US are experiencing declines. We can attribute this maintenance to excellent greeters, monthly Join Emerson Sundays, the new RE director and the spiritual challenges from the pulpit that appeal to modern liberals.

Without the tremendous support of committee members this past year could have been very tough. It was particularly disappointing when Ian Winlof got promoted and had to move. Ian handled greeters and ushers and was my co-chairperson; Ian will be sorely missed. Fortunately, two of our newer members, Heidi and Brett Jones, jumped right into the fray. Brett is very effectively managing greeters and ushers and Heidi has already started handling the logistics for Join Emerson Sunday. Heidi's support was timely since Nancy Lipp's new job put a time constraint on her continued work on our committee. Her energetic support will be missed. Karen Tidholm (past membership chair) has been a tremendous support in details in the office and new member recognition. She did wait until I was up to speed before moving to Fort Worth. She will also be sorely missed. The good news is Mary Fehr arrived just in time and is helping in the office now. Betsy Gelb (volunteer extraordinaire) has decided that she would be more valuable on the communication committee. Communication is an integral part of the process of getting visitors to our door, so I am excited about Betsy's service on Communication, but will miss her support. I am particularly grateful for her help with our Committee Charter, which was completed this year.

Conversations with our newest members indicate an overwhelming interest in growing their spirituality, and giving of their personal time and resources to serve liberal causes. The new members did not come here to sit in the pew, be entertained and send in money every week. The spiritual challenge of Becky and Mark's sermons and service opportunities at Emerson are exactly what our newest members are seeking.

This committee includes greeters who are on the committee, but prefer to only perform that invaluable function. This is particularly significant because the vision to maintain membership is to encourage involvement, but not burn out. Greeters can greet as little or as much as they are able, which also provides an excellent "entry level" involvement for new members.

Join Emerson Sunday, implemented in 2011, continues to be a tremendous success. This is done in the Library after church one Sunday a month. Beginning in March this will be the first Sunday of each month. This format provides an opportunity to explain what is expected of membership and makes it more intentional than simply completing a new member card. New member recognition continues once or twice a year during the Sunday service to publically recognize those who have recently joined.

The new year will be focused primarily on working closely with the Communication Committee to improve our presence via social media, increasing the number of visitors every Sunday and continued improvement in maintenance of current membership.

Personnel Committee

The Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church Personnel Committee was chaired in 2012 by Jim Porter. Committee members are Sarah Boyd, Bill Burchfield, Janet Meininger and Ken McLeod. Larry Huelbig served as the board's liaison to the committee.

During 2012 the Personnel Committee conducted an extensive survey of other Unitarian Universalist Churches fitting the profile of Emerson Church in the UUA Salary Guidelines. The purpose of the survey was to establish what the other churches were paying their ministers and their senior staff.

Jim Porter
Chair – Personnel Committee

RE Committee Annual Report

Our Beloved Community of Faith, Reason, and Affection

The Religious Education Committee works with our Director of Religious Education for the faith development needs of all children and youth at Emerson. We recruit and support our scores of teachers, advisors, guardian angels and mentors in their work. Emerson's Sunday School classrooms and programs are strong, with great learning and enthusiasm.

Welcomes all

We have put considerable energy into inviting the congregation to join us joyfully throughout the year, for special events (e.g. Easter egg hunt and activities, UNICEF Carnival, Deck the Halls Potluck, all-ages Christmas pageant) and any-Sunday activities. We all benefit from a strong Sunday School program, and we all have gifts to share.

To grow in mind and spirit

We provide Sunday School Classes for ages three and up, September through May. In addition, our Summer Sunday School program in 2012, Spirit of Adventure, was a great opportunity for "guest experts" in the congregation to get to spend an hour with our children and younger youth.

Children and youth attend and participate in our worship services in age-appropriate ways, starting in the service all Sundays, and taking part in our congregation's major liturgical events (Turnings, Flower Communion, Homecoming, major holidays.) And of course, our annual Coming of Age (eighth grade) and Young Religious Unitarian Universalists (high school) services are youth-developed and led.

The RE Committee organizes and supports trainings for both adults and youth throughout the year, in addition to other programs to deepen relationships and faith, from Coming of Age Retreats to trips and lock-ins for our high school youth.

As we build a better world.

The work of social justice is core to our congregation and to the Sunday School program. At all ages children and youth practice their Unitarian Universalist values. In 2012, the RE Committee organized or supported the following endeavors: Mitten tree, Self-watering containers, Rebuilding Together Houston, UNICEF Carnival, Superbowl of Caring, Boxtops for Education, UUSC Guest at Your Table.

The RE Committee looks forward to a great 2013. You can learn more about our offerings at <http://emersonhouston.org/childrenyouth.html>, and we welcome conversation and collaboration!

2012-2013 RE Committee

Jill Shaffer (2011-2014), chair
John Hammer (2012-2015)
Kay Kamas (2010-2013)
Adrian Rodriguez (2012-2015)
Florrie Snively (2011-2014)
Judy Williams (2011-2014)

Annual Report from the Social Action Committee

Members as of December 2012: Jane Zachritz (Interim Chair), Tony Collins, Ann May and deForest Ralph; Mark Edmiston-Lange (Minister Liaison); Jay Jackson (Board Liaison); Florrie Snively (RE Liaison)

Members Who Resigned During 2012: Leticia Anderson, Bob Hopkins, Barbara Hopkins and Phil Richardson

Events Sponsored or Co-Sponsored by SAC during 2012

- Souper Bowl of Caring (February) – This event was co-sponsored with RE. Our youth participated in building 11 “canstructions” and raised \$1,216.96 for the Houston Food Bank.
- ReBuilding Together Houston (April and October) – Renovated two houses over 2 weekends in April and October. Had an average of 30 attendees over the 2 weekends on each of the rebuilds.
- Pride Parade (June) – This event was attended by most UU churches in the greater Houston area. Emerson coordinated the purchase of 1,000 wrist bands which were distributed along the parade route. The wrist bands were underwritten by the UU Network and Emerson. We had approximately 15 attendees from Emerson.
- Big Dipper Dash (September) – Co-sponsored with the Emerson Abolitionists. We had 8 participants from Emerson and Megan Evans won the women’s division for the 2nd year in a row.
- Shop Smart Event (September) - Co-sponsored with the Emerson Abolitionists. Human Rescue and Restore Coalition staged this fair trade event in Westwood Hall. Despite a rainy afternoon, we had good traffic for this event, many of which were non-Emersonians.
- Green Bazaar (November) – This event was sponsored by Ministry for Earth. SAC provided volunteers for booths and sponsored a shredder to attract attendees. \$359.00 was raised by the event.
- CROP Walk (November) – Special thanks to Barb Adams for setting up the donation site and handling the t-shirt sales and to Deborah Landis for publicity for the event. We had approximately 20 walkers which was the largest attendance of any church at the event.

Projects Sponsored by SAC during 2012

- Self-Watering Containers for Houston Area Food Bank (March) – 50 self-watering containers were completed by volunteers from Emerson at the Houston Food Bank. We had approximately 20 volunteers. The Food Bank then distributed the containers to selected recipients and monitored the success of the project. Our special thanks go to Christel Collins and Zena Taylor.
- In addition, SAC assisted the Emerson Abolitionists with the Rice University Alternative Spring Break. The Emerson Abolitionists received Board approval for 12 students and 1 faculty member from Rice University to use Westwood Hall as a staging area for work on a project involving human trafficking. Volunteers visited the students each evening during their stay.

Endowment Fund Grants

Endowment fund grants were awarded in Spring 2012. The Board will be taking another look at the endowment grants to see if they are feasible in the future but this program has been suspended.

The endowment grants that were awarded in 2012 were as follows:

Amazing Place - \$2,000.00
Drug Court - \$6,361.00
Freedom Town - \$6,000.00
HRCC - \$10,000.00
Nature Discovery - \$10,000.00

Special Collections

January – Drug Court - \$1,328.50
February – Partner Church - \$504.00
March – UU Ministry for Earth - \$842.00
April – Balazs Scholarship - \$670.00
May – Groppe Scholarships - \$1,012.75
June – HATCH - \$385.00
July – Last Organic Outpost - \$390.00
August – International Scholarships - \$484.00
September – Freedom Place - \$1,488.00
October – UNICEF - \$1,840.07
November – The Gathering Place - \$327.00
December – Blackwood Educational Institute - \$467.00

In addition, a total of \$5,923.50 was donated to Interfaith Ministries' Meals on Wheels Program in 2012 and an additional \$1,480.96 was donated to the Houston Food Bank. A total of \$14,028.75 was donated to the Groppe Scholarship Program in 2012.

Share the Plate Pilot Project

SAC presented a Share the Plate Proposal to the Board of Trustees at the September meeting which was approved and then presented as a Pilot Project at the Town Hall meeting on October 7th. In 2013 the open offering each week will be divided as follows: 50% will go to 1-2 organizations selected by a special sub-committee; 25% will go Interfaith Ministry's Meals on Wheels program; and 25% will go to the Emerson operating budget. The Pilot Project did not require congregation approval.

Major Expenditures for 2012 Projects and Upcoming Projects for 2013

- Green Bazaar – \$300.00 – Co-sponsored a shredder with Ministry for Earth to attract attendees to the bazaar.
- Friends for Life Beautification Project – \$150.00 - Proposal submitted to Friends for Life and approved by the Director. SAC will arrange for a work day in March 2013 to plant a median at the shelter and install stepping stones.
- Freedom Place Blanket Project – \$300.41 - SAC has purchased the material for the blankets and Beth Hammer has made a pattern. SAC will arrange a work day at the church in February 2013 to cut out and

stitch the blankets. Arrangements will be made for the finished blankets to be delivered to Freedom Place by a member of Emerson who has completed the volunteer training.

- Freedom Place Plaque - \$57.00 – To honor the work that members of our congregation have done at Freedom Place. The plaque is to be installed at the entrance to the therapy room.
- Pride Parade - \$200.44 – Co-sponsored the purchase of 1,000 wristbands with the UU Network to give away at the parade.
- ReBuilding Together Houston - \$489.16 – Expenses for supplies, lunches and a new air compressor.
- Recycle4U - \$247.70 – This is a pilot project (6 months) where arrangements have been made for recycling pick-up from Emerson on a monthly basis.

Special Report from Ministry for Earth – Highlights for 2012

- Organized monthly sustainable supper and environmental movie evenings.
- Organized Equinox/Solstice services.
- In February, represented Emerson at the Sustainable Living Fest in Market Square.
- Workdays included the Trash Bash in March and Adopt-a-Beach cleanups in April and September.
- In April, held a Vegan Bake Sale and donated proceeds to UU Animal Ministry. A total of \$131.75 was raised.
- In September, organized a letter writing table in support of the Coalition of Immokalee workers and the Fair Food Campaign.
- On November 3rd, held a Green Bazaar. There was computer recycling, free onsite document shredding, a bake sale, green products and service vendors plus local non-profits that Emerson supports. Special thanks go to Robin McElfresh for organizing this event and to the many Emersonians who contributed to the Bazaar: music by Paper Windows (John Hammer and friends); quilt raffle (Louise Parmeley); handmade notecards (Kris Taylor); plant stands (Tom Jorgensen); jewelry (Barb Adams and Florrie Snively); candles and lotion (the Stitchers' Group); and vermiculture demo by Barb Elmore; and volunteers who staffed the tables and baked.
- On November 11th, supported the Bioneers Conference, organized by Blackwood Educational Land Institute and directed by Cath Conlon.
- Arranged for placement of box and pick-up of used clothing by IMGreen.
- Arranged for Pilot Project (6 months) with Recycle4U to pick up recyclable materials from Emerson.

Worship Committee Annual Report 2012
Co Chairs: Carolyn Truesdell and Rachel Shada

As a standing committee at Emerson UU Church, the Worship Committee (WC) has two primary roles: providing worship services the twelve Sundays a year when the ministers are away from the pulpit and giving the “Welcome” at the beginning of each Sunday’s worship service.

In 2012, the WC coordinated individual services in January, March, May, June, October, and November, and six consecutive services in July and August. This year we coordinated an “extra” service due to the “last” service of the 2011 year coordinated by the committee falling on January 1, 2012 rather than the last Sunday of the December due to the timing of the Christmas holiday. The congregation was exceptionally positive about the WC’s seven summer services which were inspired by our beloved hymn, “Spirit of Life.”

The committee members work diligently to include members of the committee and the larger congregation in the services we plan. However, to insure quality and variety in our services, we often seek outside speakers to whom we award an honorarium. In 2012, five of our services featured Emersonians as pulpit guests. The other seven services highlighted visiting pulpit guests, including Earl Canfield (ANSWER), Jill Carroll (Scholar and professional speaker), Leonora Montgomery (former Emerson member), Bob Tucker (Center for Contemporary Theology), Rev. Emilee Whitehurst (Rothko Chapel), Mike Pardee (Boniuk Center), and Jeff Kripal (Rice University Religious Studies Program). The 13th service of the year coordinated by the committee featured Katy Carpman, Emerson’s Director of Religious education, delivered the Sunday after Thanksgiving.

The Committee is comprised of a small number of dedicated members: David Bates, Susan Raffle, Mary Ann Stanley, and deForest Ralph, with Carolyn Truesdell and Rachel Shada serving as co-chairs. Ex-Officio members include our Music Director Bonnie Wellington – (who has been invaluable in coordinating music for the WC led services) and Mark Edmiston-Lange. Katy Carpman, Director of Religious Education, attends the meetings to coordinate activities with the children. Larry Huelbig (Board President) also pitched in this year and supported the WC by occasionally delivering the weekly Welcome.

In addition to coordinating services, this year the WC developed a Mission Statement and Charter, as recommended by the Coordinating Council. This was a worthwhile effort that has helped to clarify our purpose. We look forward to taking the effort a step further in 2013 by working on a vision for the committee.

We are looking forward to another productive and successful year in 2013. In addition to planning our Summer Series, the WC continues to seek ways to incorporate more lay participation in worship services and will continue to seek new members to join our merry tribe.

Yours in faith and service,

