

## **Annual Congregational Meeting Agenda**

Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church

Sunday, January 26, 2014

Approve the minutes of the January 27, 2013 annual meeting

Review 2013 annual reports

The following items will be presented for a vote. Everyone who has been a member for at least 90 days is eligible to vote.

- Vote on proposed Congregational Study Action Issues for 2014-2018
- Motion I (The precise language changes to the Constitution appear in the attachment.)
  - Amendment to the Constitution as brought forward by the Committee on Ministry to increase the number of members of that Committee from 5 to 6 and extend the term of committee members from 2 to 3 years.
- Motion II (The precise language changes to the Fiscal Calendar appear in the attachment.)
  - Amendment to the Fiscal Calendar in the Policy Manual as brought forward by Carolyn Truesdell and Dick Cheney
    - (1) to require the attendance at the November Board Meeting of the Finance Committee chairperson or delegate, in addition to the Personnel Committee chairperson or delegate, and
    - (2) to require that the meeting of the Congregation to vote on the Proposed Operating Budget will be scheduled for Week 2 or Week 3 of December (whichever allows ten days' notice after the budget is submitted for congregational approval "not later than November," as required by Article 4 of the Bylaws).
- Motion III (The precise language changes to the Constitution appear in the attachment.)
  - Amendment to the Constitution brought forward by Tony Collins to revise the conditions under which a person would cease to be a Member.

Review progress of consultant engagement planning

Elections

- Elect new members of Board of Trustees – Michael Condit, Victor Koosh, Wade Greiner
- Elect Board officers – President: Kris Taylor and Vice-president: Richard Loftin
- Elect new members on the Committee on Ministry – Greg Hunt, Robin McElfresh, Ken McLeod (returning)
- Elect new members on the Nominating Committee – Sarah Boyd, Betsy Gelb, Carole Huelbig

## Annual Report 2013

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**Minutes**  
**Annual Congregational Meeting**  
**Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church**  
**Sunday January 27, 2013**

The regular annual meeting of the congregation of Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church was called to order at 12:25 pm by President Larry Huelbig. The Reverend Becky Edmiston-Lange gave an invocation. Larry reviewed the agenda and the contents of the Annual Report packet. The minutes of the Annual Meeting of January 2012 and the December 2012 budget meeting were approved unanimously.

Larry then turned to two proposals to be voted on by the congregation. The first was a **motion to adopt** the recommendation by the Board and the Finance Committee that the mortgage balloon payment due in June 2014 be paid in full from the Endowment Fund. Although this date is still nearly 18 months in the future, Larry said that the Board was aware of some anxiety in the congregation over this issue. Several options were considered, including prepayment, refinancing and the issuance of bonds, but all had significant financial and/or legal repercussions. With the Endowment balance currently near \$2 million the Board agreed with the Finance Committee that the \$728,000 balloon payment should come from this source. Larry added that this payout will make more funds available in future operating budgets that previously went to the mortgage principal, and pointed out that this is an appropriate use of Endowment funds. Gabe Gelb **seconded** the motion. There was no further discussion, and the motion **passed with one opposed**.

Larry then presented the second proposal, a **motion** to cancel the 10% Solution adopted in 2008 to fund community service outreach. Since then this approach, which is based on the use of 10% of a year-over-year increase in the Endowment, has yielded anywhere from no funds at all to over \$45,000. The Board sought a means of funding community outreach that would avoid such large fluctuations and decided on a one-year trial of a share-the-plate concept. Therefore in 2013 the open offering will be divided as follows: 25% for operating funds, 25% for Interfaith Ministries' Meals on Wheels, and 50% for other charities of the congregation's choosing. Because the congregation had voted to adopt the 10% Solution, their consent was also needed to discontinue it. Larry added that pledge payments would not be affected. Several members **seconded** the motion, which **passed unanimously**.

**Elections**

Larry referred to the Bylaws requirement that the congregation elect the members of the two Congregational Committees (the Committee on Ministry and the Nominating Committee) as well as the Board of Trustees. He added that there is provision for nominations to be made from the floor. The slate for the Nominations Committee includes David May, Jennifer Norten, Jill Rose and Mary Ann Stanley, all for two year terms. Eric Watson **seconded** the motion, which **passed unanimously**. For the Committee on Ministry, the slate presented includes Susan Green, Tom Jorgensen and Clara Kosloff, also for two years each. There were several **seconds**, and this motion **passed unanimously**.

The slate for the Board of Trustees includes Tony Collins, Richard Loftin, Kris Taylor and Shannon Thurmond, all for three year terms. Mary Ann Stanley **seconded** the motion. When Will Irwin asked why we are electing four Trustees for full terms instead of the usual three, Larry replied that this is just the way the vacancies on the Board fell out. The motion then **passed unanimously**. Larry thanked departing Trustees Beth Hill, Wilson Arabie and Barbara Adams, and praised the Board as a whole for its hard work and dedication to the church. The congregation applauded.

On behalf of the Board Larry then nominated Sherle Frost Watson for Board President. The motion was **seconded** by several people, including Sherle's husband Eric. She was **elected unanimously**. Incoming Trustee Kris Taylor was nominated as Vice President, there were several **seconds**, and the motion **passed unanimously**. Next Billye Smith was nominated to continue as Treasurer. Larry noted that she has served most capably in this capacity and, in addition, as the Board's "moral compass." Her nomination received several **seconds**, and **passed unanimously**. Finally Deborah Landis was nominated as Board Secretary, **seconded** by Mary Pedersen. Deborah was **elected unanimously**.

Larry recognized the services of outgoing Board Secretary Mary Pedersen. Trustee Larry Kelly presented Mary with a bouquet of flowers and the congregation rose and applauded. At Mary Ann Stanley's request Larry recognized Art Pedersen's long service as church librarian, and the congregation applauded.

Betsy Gelb spoke briefly on behalf of the Membership Committee, asking every Emerson member to talk up the church with friends, neighbors, colleagues and family. She waved several “conversation-starter” bumper stickers that she would sell for \$3 each.

Larry then turned the gavel over to Sherle Frost Watson. She immediately called for a standing ovation for Larry Huelbig, and the congregation responded with enthusiasm. She praised his calm, professional style and steady leadership. She thanked the congregation for entrusting her with this responsibility and asked for their “input, support, questions, commentary and thoughtfulness” in the year ahead. She expressed confidence that the congregation will move into the future in unity.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Pedersen, Board Secretary

**2013 Annual Report – Co-Ministers  
Becky and Mark Edmiston-Lange**

Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church is very fortunate to have excellent leadership and staff who are able to continue to move ahead through what are challenging times for congregations across the United States. The Board of Trustees and Officers of the Congregation deserve enormous credit for their sturdy efforts and loyalty to the entire congregation. They have risen to several challenges over the year—and charting a positive course ahead will again offer more challenges. We want to particularly thank our retiring President, Sherle Frost Watson, our retiring Past President Larry Huelbig, and our new President Kris Taylor, who each have repeatedly offered sterling examples of the wisdom of lay leadership of the congregation.

We also want to thank our amazing staff. They are a hardworking, energetic, talented and imaginative collection of people who daily bring their talents to create and sustain the wide ranging programs at Emerson. High fives to Karen Van Horn and Emily Brown in the office, Katy Carpman in religious education, Bonnie Rosensteel, Hui Shan Chin (keyboards), Bill Tackett (EIO) in Music and Arts, and Efrain Vasquez our sexton.

As you know we launched an innovative program at Emerson this fall, the Living Text Project. We were (and remain) excited about where this program could lead us as a congregation. Although it is still early on in the launch we see many encouraging signs. First and foremost, our visitor traffic has greatly increased. Although this has not yet translated into an increase in membership, it is the case that a higher percentage of these visitors have increased levels of participation than we have seen in the past. In addition, after reaching a low point last spring, attendance at worship services has begun to rise once again.

We have said throughout our ministry at Emerson that the future of the congregation depends upon its ability to serve as a “destination church” rather than as a “community church” or even a “program church.” The key to being a “destination church” is our offering something that has high value and which cannot readily be found elsewhere. We believe the Living Text Project is that something. We like to think of it as “church 4.0.” While some may not be entirely sure it matches their expectations about what a church is the Living Text Project is in many respects a return to some almost forgotten fundamentals of Unitarian Universalism—particularly the relationship between “the inherent worth and dignity of every human being” and “respect for the interdependent web of all existence.” And we should add, it is not that we as a religious tradition have forgotten these principals per se. Rather, what we have lacked is a robust and convincing process for helping these principals come alive in our life as a spiritual community. As we become more adept at engaging the Living Text Project we will be a more attractive destination for people seeking a sense of universal humanity honoring the one planet we all must share.

All of us working together can help that dream become a more vibrant reality in both our own lives and in the lives of all of those whom we touch. That certainly goes for sharing your enthusiasm with others about our work as a congregation—not forgetting to mention the friendships, great programs, and involvement in the Houston community that are all part of Emerson. And, because our visitor traffic is increasing, it is important to remember that being an “ambassador of hospitality” is one of the simplest ways we each can express our commitment to the inherent worth and dignity of every human being.

With faith and affection,

Becky and Mark Edmiston-Lange

**2013 Annual Report – President’s Report to the Congregation**  
**Sherle Frost Watson**

2013 has been a busy year at Emerson and the Board of Trustees has worked conscientiously to advance the goals of the church.

Thanks go to our Board members: Tony Collins, Larry Huelbig, Jay Jackson, Larry Kelly, Aaron Knight, Richard Loftin, Rachel Shada, Kris Taylor, and Shannon Thurmond, our Treasurer, Billye Smith, and our Secretary, Deborah Landis. They share a genuine respect for one another and a love for this church that is deep and profound. It has been personally rewarding to work with them.

Thanks go to our staff for their hard work and the special effort they put into the month-long time study that resulted in our first-ever Program Budget. It is gratifying to know that as a congregation we are actively supporting our primary goals for Education and Faith Development, Community-Building, Growth and Outreach, Worship and Social Justice.

Thanks go to the personnel committee. We have three new personnel this year. Emily Brown was hired as the office administrator for communications in March. Bill Tackett joined us as director of the EIO in August, following the retirement of Bill Atkerson. And Hui Shan Chin started as our keyboard artist in September when Andrew Focks left for graduate school. We are enriched by their skill and dedication.

Thanks to all the duffers and associates who organized and played in our first ever Golf Tournament. Not only was it a successful fundraiser but a good time was had by all.

Thanks to everyone who promoted and supported Emerson entering into a covenant with the newly-formed Texas Unitarian Universalist Justice Ministry. As part of the TXUUJM we look forward to making a difference in our state on important public issues such as women’s and gay rights, immigration, education financing, and evolution; and to helping others learn about Unitarian Universalism and the values for which we stand. And special thanks to Maenad Widdershins and Randy Partain for serving as our representatives.

And last, but certainly not least, thanks to everyone who has been involved in developing and implementing the Living Text Project. The hard work that has proceeded behind the scenes among our ministers, RE, Adult Education and Communications has been a triumph of coordination and excellence. You make us proud.

At the sunset of my term as Emerson’s Board president, I strive to remind myself that all we are in community together – all the joy, the heartfelt and honest endeavor, the friendship and warm familiarity – cannot be allowed to become overshadowed by our financial situation. I feel that it is important to remember why we are here, what makes us Unitarian Universalists and what binds us together as Emersonians.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherle Frost Watson

January 26, 2014

**2013 Annual Report - Business Administrator  
Karen Van Horn**

**Facility Usage**

The Feldenkrais Training Program completed four years of training sessions, which were held in Westwood Hall, with a graduation party during December 2013. Feldenkrais owners, Paul and Julie, had inquired about the possibility of holding their 2014-2017 sessions in Westwood Hall; however, they decided to consolidate their training operations to the two locations where they are well established and have a long history.

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 2014.

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 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**

Routine/non routine maintenance included the following:

- Major chiller repairs
- Additional smoke detector devices were installed in Tanglewood area.
- Plumbing repairs
- Sanctuary A/C repairs
- Roofing repairs
- Appliance repairs
- Carpet Cleaning
- Lawn Maintenance, performed by Efrain Vasquez, Sexton.
- Tree(s) planting and trimming

**Administrative**

Served on the Office Administrator for Communications Search Committee, along with Ken McLeod, David May and Jill Rose. Assisted in training, along with Jill Rose and Nancy Lipp, Emily Brown for the position of Office Administrator for Communications.

Listed below are additional 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 office 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 and Nancy Lipp 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. Sigsby Rusk spent countless hours assisting with setting up our new computers purchased with 'Fund a Need' donations. Thanks to all of you for volunteering at Emerson!!

Thank you to Emerson's Board of Trustees, Co-ministers, Becky and Mark Edmiston-Lange, Treasurer, Billye Smith, Emily Brown, Katy Carpman, Bonnie Wellington, Efrain Vasquez, and Hans Coster for their continued support.

Respectfully submitted,  
Karen Van Horn  
Business Administrator



## **2013 Annual Report – Emerson Performing Arts Department Bonnie Rosensteel**

2013 was a year of challenges, change, and overall growth for the Performing Arts Department. The department continued to deliver excellent performances from all individual performing groups, and was successful in providing more collaborative works than in past years. There was some turnover in the staff, which could have negatively impacted the cohesion and success of the department, however, this was not the case.

The year began with a challenge. Long time member and EIO Director Bill Atkerson was leaving Emerson and the EIO due to inherent differences in opinion on how the music at Emerson was to be represented, and the vision for the future of the EIO. Bill's final performance conducting the EIO was on April 21<sup>st</sup>. They performed "Piano Concerto in A Minor," by Edvard Grieg first movement (Allegro Molto Moderato), with Andrew Focks as the piano soloist. It was a very good performance, but also left everyone feeling unsure of what the future would hold.

I formed an EIO search committee, with the help of PAC Chair Stephen Lipp, in late April to begin the process of looking for a new EIO Director. On the committee were: Ken McLeod (Personnel Committee Chair), Ben Lee (EIO member and parent), Mike Howard (EIO member and parent), Andy Andrews (EIO member), Stephen Lipp (EIO member and PAC Chair), and myself. With help from our Office Administrator for Communications Emily Brown, we posted the job opening on the TMEA (Texas Music Educators Association) website, Craigslist, and Emerson's website. Most of the hits we received were from TMEA. The committee quickly identified the core requirements we wanted the new hire to possess. These traits were arrived at not based on the EIO of the past, but based on where we wanted the organization to go. To this end, it was determined that someone with a focus in music education was desired. Ten hopefuls applied, and five were invited for a formal interview with the committee. Finally, two were selected for the live audition to conduct the EIO in a mock rehearsal. Bill Tackett was the stand out candidate. He possessed all of the "must haves" the committee had been looking for:

- Musical Education: experience and ability to arrange instrumental scores
- Ability to play an instrument: thinking of this person actively participating during worship services
- Experience working with children: as the EIO is inter-generational, and wants to continue that, this is a key requirement.
- A collaborative attitude with team spirit: one that is able to work within a team, and also provide instruction and constructive criticism to better build from within the department

There was a high level of anticipation as Bill Tackett began his tenure at Emerson in the fall. If there was any doubt, it was quickly squashed. The EIO gave several stellar performances early on under Bill's leadership: Bill and EIO member Grace Howard represented the EIO on Homecoming Sunday with *Duet in D Major* by Carl Stamitz. The EIO in its entirety gave a fantastic performance of *Danse Macabre* by Camille Saint-Saëns on October 27<sup>th</sup>, and a collaborative performance with the choir of *A Christmas Festival* by Leroy Anderson on December 15<sup>th</sup>. The EIO also collaborated and performed in December's Holiday Show. This was the first time the EIO provided such a presence during the annual Holiday production, and they have been providing a much stronger presence overall since Bill has come onto the staff.

Andrew Focks, Staff Keyboard Artist at Emerson for close to two years left the Houston area to pursue his DMA in Ohio in June of 2013. Not only was there the enormous task of finding a new Director for the EIO, but finding a suitable replacement for Andrew as well. This was no small feat. Luckily, Matt Cataldi was in Houston during the summer of 2013, which provided some breathing room for scheduling auditions and hiring a new Keyboard Artist. Hui Shan Chin auditioned in June, and was superb. Shan has been a fantastic addition to the music staff at Emerson and made the transition seamless in Andrew's departure. Her piano skills are diverse and her ability to perform a wide range of music is simply perfect for the musical needs at Emerson.

The Players' production of "Fox on the Fairway" and the joint Holiday Production with Houston Jazz Inc in 2012 left big shoes to fill, and fill them they did. The Players repeated their success in comedy and collaboration. The Emerson Players gave a great performance of "Dearly Beloved," the weekend of April 7<sup>th</sup>. The cast delivered a laugh out loud performance of this southern based comedy. Many Emersonians and surrounding community members came together to create the set dressing and run sound and lights. Hilary Henderson Ritz continues to create entertaining performances,

utilizing the space in Westwood Hall and customizing scripts. Although the players did not perform in the fall season, they collaborated with the entire department during the December Holiday Show. With a script written by Hilary, the players were an integral part of the show and helped create an icy and mystical wonderland in the 2013 production. This production utilized adults, children and youth, and Hilary created a script that highlighted all their strengths

The Audio Visual (AV) team continues to push through adversity and navigate the audio system at Emerson, there to record and monitor every service and performance. A couple of gremlins crept in and out of the system, as per usual, in the fall of 2013. The team solved the problem by swapping out some cables behind the chancel. Overall the system continues to present issues, and over time, it will continue to deteriorate and will need to be overhauled/replaced. The AV team is an integral part of worship each week; a team of volunteers that often work without recognition to make sermons heard, balance music levels, and provide technical knowledge for those needing audio assistance in the weekly services. The already small team is down one member (Jon Palmer is going back to school), and will soon need some relief.

The Choir continues to provide standout music on a weekly basis during worship services, and gave several excellent performances in 2013. Nature was the focus of the choir's major performances in 2013, whereas in previous years more liturgical works had been performed. The 2013 Spring Concert was "A Dvořák Sunday," where the choir gave a lovely performance on Dvořák's *Songs of Nature*. Having the accompaniment arranged for a string quartet that was to perform with the choir was a challenge with this particular performance. Prior to his departure, Bill Atkerson had committed to arranging the accompaniment for this performance, however upon his leaving this task was left unfinished. Luckily, Emersonian Randy Partain, having received his DMA in music composition, generously agreed to take up the task and created a beautiful arrangement for the string quartet and piano to accompany the choir.

The fall season of 2013 provided new challenges for the department with the beginning of the Living Text Project, or the LTP. With the initiation of this project, the choir took on learning music from different cultures and languages which they had not performed before, including Indian, Sanscrit, Hebrew and Chinese. The choir rose to the challenge and has learned much in the process. The December Holiday Show was also a great success. Collaborating with the EIO and Emerson Players, the choir sang musical selections all focused on nature and the darkest point of winter. Overall, the number of members in the choir are down due to individual circumstances. Several members of the choir have taken ill or have had family members with illness that has caused a decrease in the headcount. Although the choir continued to perform with success, this downward trend cannot continue if the choir is to have a future. The goal going into the new year will be to recruit and increase the number of participants in the choir. 2013 was filled with challenges; major turnovers in the music staff, new staff hiring process, music selection and programming, and living up to the performances of 2012 (following SWUUC and the Holiday Show joint production with Houston Jazz Inc.). Despite these challenges, the Performing Arts Department has continued to flourish and is working collaboratively more than ever. There was a much greater presence from the EIO and children and youth thanks to Bill Tackett's leadership. The department was able to perform a beautiful Holiday show, unique for the season and thanks to Hilary Henderson Ritz's efforts, different from the Christmas themed services of the past. The department was able to provide quality, diverse performances thanks to the generosity and talent of those musicians in the congregation. It is certainly a team effort, and will continue to be in the following year.

Bonnie Rosensteel  
EUUC Director of Music

## 2013 Annual Report – Director of Religious Education

**Katy Carpman**

Wouldn't it be wonderful if our Annual Report could include pictures? Among the images I would share with you:

- The record-breaking number of children and youth helping out at this fall's Rebuilding Together Houston house
- Children dancing with each other, with their parents, and with Becky and Mark at our Fellowship Dinner
- The beaming faces of our graduating seniors after Youth Sunday
- Our Coming of Age classes on their retreats, with and without wildlife

Even better—if I could offer a video, capturing special moments and everyday conversations:

- Guest speakers in our classes, talking about wonder and worship with preschoolers, about Green Sanctuary with our kindergarteners, etc.
- A fascinating discussion in youth group of boycotts and offsets and how we make ethical decisions in our complicated world
- Brainstorms and going deeper at all levels—how to be a friend, how to disagree respectfully, what promises we would like to make to one another
- Games, experiments, and so much fun!

Our Sunday School program continues to be one of the bright and multifaceted jewels in Emerson's crown. We are providing a nurturing and exciting program for children and youth in their growth as Unitarian Universalists.

In February of each year, we send Religious Education enrollment numbers to the Unitarian Universalist Association. In February of 2013 we certified 132 children and youth, and we will certify 135 next month. While we were sad to see a few families move away, and so proud of our graduating youth heading off to college, we also welcomed several new families, saw others return, and joyfully greeted new babies as well.

Perhaps the most exciting development this year has been our Living Text Project, coordinating the topics of worship and Sunday School and the Adult RE Sacred Texts track. This program gives us a stronger grounding in the central stories of so many in the world, and helps us draw out the wisdom still contained in these ancient tales and texts, attaching it to our own triumphs and trials. And when everyone is on the same page, it is easy to find common ground in our conversations at coffee hour or on the drive home!

We continue to develop linkages with other committees, both to increase multigenerational opportunities and to keep visible the philosophies of faith development and lifelong learning. I am especially pleased with all the good work being done as we increase all-ages participation in the social action that is core to our faith. We're setting the groundwork for a Junior Greeter program with the membership committee, giving tweens opportunities to practice hospitality.

I was fortunate to attend 21<sup>st</sup> Century Faith Formation training, looking at how our world is changing and how we can be more accessible in the digital age—website design, social media presence, and how we can do ministry with our family and the wider community 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It has been a real blessing to work on such things with our wonderful new Office Administrator for Communications, Emily Brown.

I am so very grateful to work with wonderful volunteers leading Sunday School classes, and the RE Committee and I are working to find enjoyable short-term opportunities for people of every age and ability. I encourage everyone to try a shift as a class assistant or a playground Guardian Angel, to help out at a special event, or to consider what expertise you would like to share with the children and youth of this congregation.

2014 shows every sign of being a great year for faith development at Emerson. We have ten amazing Coming of Age youth working hard to articulate their beliefs—get their May 4<sup>th</sup> service on your calendar now! As I write this, I am working with Houston-area youth and supportive adults, preparing to host Emerson's first rally since 2010—over one hundred youth and advisors from Oklahoma, Texas, and Louisiana will be laughing and learning and doing good works together. Thank you for supporting Emerson's Sunday School program. We are truly building a better world!

Respectfully submitted,

Katy Carpman, Credentialed Religious Educator

## **2013 Annual Report - Committee on Ministry**

**Chair: Barbara Crotty**

**Members:** Ken McLeod, Susan Green, Clara Kosloff, Tom Jorgensen, Barbara Crotty (Chair)

The main accomplishment this year was to consider and articulate the role and purpose of the Committee on Ministry, which has not been adequately clear to the Nominating Committee or to the members. Much time is spent simply trying to get the committee oriented each year. With half the committee cycling off each year and the remaining half being people who just figured out what is going on, it has been hard to make progress. We created the following document for ourselves and to guide the Nominating Committee. We also drafted a plan to increase the term of membership and the number of members to facilitate having more experience in the committee and, it is hoped, to increase productivity. That plan will be presented as a motion to amend the bylaws at the January Congregational Meeting.

### **Committee on Ministry Description of Role and Duties**

"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." (Emerson UU Constitution, Article V, Section E)

The CoM's goal is to increase the congregation's sense of its own ministry, as a group and as individuals, helping them to find ways to use their talents and unique abilities to bless the world. It takes the lead in assessing, monitoring and supporting the congregation's ministry and its effectiveness. It lifts up and celebrates areas of strength. For example, CoM members have written "Spotlight on Ministry" articles for the newsletter about the work of various Emerson groups and individuals. It discerns areas that deserve additional resources and attention. For example, when the Leap of Faith team identified that the most pressing need among our members is discerning how to live out and describe your faith as a UU, the CoM was asked to address it. CoM members obtained and led a 5-session Adult RE course called *Articulating Your UU Faith*. It was the 2011 CoM that shepherded the congregational process which resulted in the Statement of Purpose and Identity, "Our beloved community of faith, reason and affection welcomes all to grow in mind and spirit as we build a better world." CoM also facilitates communication between the ministers and the congregation, as needed.

Qualities to look for in candidates for CoM:

- Trust, integrity and confidentiality are essential to the work of this committee. Members should have the trust of the congregation, the Board and the ministers.
- They should have a sense of the greater purpose and goals of the church, as opposed to a special interest within the congregation.
- Experienced member of Emerson, not brand new. A variety of lengths of membership on the committee could be helpful (e.g., 5, 10, 15, 20 years)
- The committee as a whole should be representative of the range of activities and programs within the church.
- Generally cooperative attitude, not carrying an agenda.
- Attends worship services frequently.

Time commitment: CoM meets once a month, often skipping the month of July. Varying amounts of additional time will be needed to work on special projects as they come up and as the member chooses to participate. The 2013 CoM meets on the 4th Tuesday from 7:30-9:00 p.m.

## Bios for 2014 nominees

### FOR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Mike Condit:** Mike and his wife Linda have been members of Emerson since 1979. Mike previously served on the Board from 1981-84 and was President in 1983. He currently serves as co-chair and coordinates the Sacred Text track for the Adult Education Committee and is a trombonist with the Emerson Intergenerational Orchestra. He is a retired rheumatologist and now spends most of his time studying a variety of subjects—including philosophy, theology, and history—as well as enjoying activities with his grandchildren.

**Wade Griener:** Wade Greiner was born and grew up in Moline, Illinois. He was a member and past President of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur in central Illinois before moving to Texas and becoming a member of Emerson. Wade was an attorney for over a decade, lastly as an Assistant District Attorney in Galveston County, Texas, before doing a mid-life career switch to teaching. He now teaches physics at Westbury High School in Houston. His varied outside interests include spending time with his family, traveling to Civil War sites, bicycling, chess, reading and Bob Dylan.

**Victor Koosh:** As a Soviet Jewish refugee I was lucky to make Houston my home as a child in 1976. I married my wife Alejandra in Mexico and we started our journey as a multi-cultural family, first in Houston and then in Germany. We have a wonderful eight-year-old daughter Isabella, and we joined Emerson in 2008. The Emerson community has been extremely welcoming and our family has been blessed with very strong friendships that will likely last a lifetime. We coordinate a covenant group and I have served on the Stewardship committee for 3 years, of which I am currently chair. I very much enjoy being a member of the Choir which has brought back my love for singing and performing with the Emerson Players was very rewarding. I am an Eagle Scout and enjoy giving back to the community through board service with the Boy Scouts and Lemonade Day. Professionally, I work for a small software company that serves the upstream oil & gas industry. I am certain Emerson's future is bright and am excited to help build that future.

### FOR COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

**Ken McLeod:** A UU for c.40 years. Former DRE of the Baton Rouge Unitarian Church. Served on UU committees at the congregational, district and national levels, including the task force that formulated the Welcoming Congregation concept. Presented workshops/lectures at local, district and national UU conferences. At Emerson: Chaired 50th anniversary committee, serves on Lay Pastoral Ministry Team, chairs Personnel Committee, serves on Committee on Ministry, served on steering committee for Welcome Mat (LGBT film series), served as a greeter, served as a Coming of Age mentor, presented numerous adult education programs, facilitated the adult education course: ARTICULATING YOUR UU FAITH, trained to lead the adult OWL course, and directed LOVE LETTERS for the Emerson Players.

**Greg Hunt:** Greg was raised a Lutheran in Atlanta where, while at Georgia Tech, he discovered the UU congregation of Atlanta, before moving to Augusta, Georgia and meeting his wife Jacqui at the UU church there. They moved around a lot before settling in Marietta, Georgia to raise their 3 sons: Alex and Eric who remain in Atlanta, and Chris who moved with them to Houston in 2011. As a long-timer UU he's held many administrative roles, but has most enjoyed his involvement in youth, social action, and outreach ministries. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with family and friends, anything involving music, and playing outside.

**Robin McElfresh:** For whatever it is worth, I am a native of Texas and have lived in Houston since I was five. My parents are both deceased and I have one older brother, very recently widowed, who lives here and a younger brother in Encinitas, CA. I do not currently have a significant other. I have a BFA in Studio Art and also attended the Art Institute of Houston where I received a certificate in Layout and Production Art (and came to realize after the fact I do not care for creating commercial art!).

I have somewhat of a generic Christian background and was only a random churchgoer with friends as a child. My parents found spiritual fulfillment in nature and being loving, supportive people. I did some searching as a teenager and young adult. I did not join a church until my dear friend Don Whittaker introduced me to the Episcopal Church. Any church that would accept him was fine by me. I also loved the ritual of the denomination. I was baptized as an adult in the church. However, I came to realize that I did not really believe in what would have made me a Christian—the divinity of Jesus. To this day, he is someone who lived an exemplary life but I do not believe he—if he existed—was any more or less than human.

Don had gone through a crisis of faith with events in his life and came to a point where he denied existence of any god. But both of us believed that human beings are spiritual and since we were both seeking, we attended a winter solstice service at Emerson. And started attending regular services early the next year. It was certainly the right decision for both of us.

Not in any particular order: What is important to me and/or a source of joy—being a good citizen of this planet/activism, the environment, animals, music/drum circle, baking, my friends and family, reading (sci-fi, some fantasy, non-fiction on different topics), art, crafts using recycled materials, walking and more besides.

### **FOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

**Sarah Stoffer Boyd:** I grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma and attended the church of my grandparents and parents, First Presbyterian Church. But when questioning matters of faith and history I was told to make up my own mind; thus the beginnings of becoming a UU.

I joined Emerson in 1983, and taught Kindergarten when my daughter was young, and later worked with the Membership, Personnel and Stewardship Committees. I served on the Board of Trustees from 2007 to 2012, and was President in 2011. I was a member of the Leap of Faith team, attended the Dwight Brown Leadership Experience, and have been involved with the Covenant Groups since they began at Emerson. I have also been active with the Auction Committee for several years.

I am married to Charles Boyd and we are parents of 4 and grandparents of 9, so we enjoy taking trips to visit them throughout the year. Although officially retired, I enjoy working part-time as a postpartum doula providing support and education to new families.

**Betsy Gelb:** Betsy has been a UU since 1960, chaired Emerson's worship committee, then joined the Board of Trustees for five years, chairing it in 1998. She has also chaired the church's annual canvass and currently greets newcomers the first Sunday of each month. A professor of marketing and entrepreneurship at the University of Houston, she grew up in Evanston, IL. She and Gabe have children and grandchildren in Evanston and in Seattle.

**Carole Huelbig:** I have been a member of Emerson since 1978. During the last 35 years I have served in the following capacities: Church school teacher, member of the R.E. Committee, mentor for Coming of Age, member of the Board of Trustees, President of the Board, and Co-chair of Canvass. In recent years I have been active in Long-range Planning, Grounds/Landscaping and the Ministry for Earth Committees. I also enjoy participating in many of Emerson's group activities and events such as Crop Walk, Circle dinners, Caregiver's Support Group, and Women's Evening Book Group.

**2013 Annual Report – Adult Religious Education Committee**  
**Chair: Mike Condit**

The year 2013 saw significant changes in the approach to and content of Adult Education at Emerson. The guiding principles were that Adult Ed (1) would provide more than one offering on most Sunday mornings, (2) would strive for offerings lasting more than one week so that topics could be covered in more depth, (3) would have more of an academic focus in some of the offerings, (4) would provide content specific to Unitarian Universalism on most Sundays, and (5) would help develop a sense of camaraderie and connectivity throughout the church.

A multi-track system was developed consisting of up to four tracks, plus continuing the Poetry group on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month. One track focuses on sacred texts and their associated religious traditions. Two tracks specifically discuss Unitarian Universalist issues. The fourth track is involved with current and social issues. These tracks began in September. In the first half of 2013, the previous pattern of individual presentations was continued. There were also seven sessions on Spirituality in World Religion. Weekly meetings called “Un-Conversations” were begun in the spring to explore areas of interest for current and social issue sessions in the future.

The Sacred Text track has been very successful. Four sessions were presented in September and early October on Hinduism, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Upanishads. Nine sessions were then presented on the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament. Attendance at these sessions has been very good, ranging from 35-45 per week and drawing people new to Adult Education and several from outside Emerson. The Sacred Text track has been part of the larger Living Text initiative in the church, which has correlated the worship services and sermons, the youth Religious Education program, and Adult Education so that the same or related topics are presented in each area of the church on a particular Sunday. The Un-Conversations have continued with a small but dedicated group of people each week. There have also been UU topics presented during 2013, many by the ministers and by the Youth RE Director, such as “Keys to Unitarian Universalism,” “Building Your Own Theology,” and “Articulating Your UU Faith.”

In 2014 the Sacred Text track will continue with sessions on Confucianism, Taoism, Women in Religion, and Earth-based Religion. There will also be several single-week presentations by church members on other topics. The Un-Conversations will continue, as will the Poetry group. Several possibilities for multi-week sessions on Social Action issues have been discussed, and the plan is to offer one or more by spring. There is also discussion regarding having some of the offerings in all tracks held at times other than Sunday morning, allowing more time for development of the topics and discussion.

Submitted by Mike Condit, Chair  
January 2014

## **2013 Annual Report – AV Committee**

**Chair: Jill Rose**

The purpose of the AV Committee is to provide audio (and to a much lesser degree, visual) support for the activities of the church.

Its primary function is to provide sound amplification in the Sanctuary during Sunday services throughout the year as well as Memorial Services, Solstice and Equinox services and other services as requested by the ministers. The Committee also provides audio support to other activities of the church and church-sponsored groups on request. A concomitant responsibility is to record and make available copies of services on a regular basis and of other events as requested. A secondary function is to make video projection available on request; we have not supported video recording as a committee.

### Successes:

- We fulfilled our purpose by providing sound as requested.
- We made 173 copies of services that people requested resulting in \$865 deposited to the AV account. (We ask for a \$5 donation per copy to help defray expenses of consumable items: ink, printable CDs, etc.)
- We make gratis copies of services for the ministers and for the Lay Pastoral Ministry Team.
- We purchased a new large projector screen to replace the old, torn, mildew-ed large screen.
- We purchased a replacement projector when the previous one stopped working.
- We purchased a new computer for the Sanctuary to record services and run the screens in The Gathering Place replacing the previous, unreliable computer.
- We purchased an additional mic stand.
- We purchased a new printer for printing labels on the requested CDs when the previous one broke down.

### Challenges:

- The system is old, limited and, to a degree, mysterious. Although we did replace the main computer in the Sanctuary this year, there are ongoing audio issues that we continue to try to resolve.
- The scope of mic-ing needs keeps expanding. We appreciate the confidence shown to our committee of AV (more or less skilled) amateurs as we are asked to manage increasingly complex scenarios, but we are limited by equipment and, in some cases, by our own expertise.
- The committee needs additional members. We started the year with seven members, including a father-son team, of whom four were interested in digitally recording and mastering the sound for the copies. One additional member came on the committee early in the year and later opted not to continue. Three members left the committee at the end of 2013, and personal and organizational appeals throughout the year have not resulted in lasting new members. We need eight or more members for optimum staffing; we start 2104 with half of that complement. We offer on-the-job training—no previous AV experience is necessary.

### Appreciation:

- We thank Sigsby Rusk for his ongoing attention to our computer system needs.
- We also express appreciation to Jon and Sean Palmer and to Mark Collins who have been dedicated committee members for many years and “retired” at the end of 2013. We will miss them.

Committee members: Kevin Crotty, John Hammer, Jill Rose, Leo Vandermuelen

Submitted by

Jill Rose



## **2013 Annual Report – Buildings and Grounds Committee**

**Chair: Tony Collins**

The building function is a committee of one, primarily serving as support for Karen as she coordinates necessary repairs. The most notable action was the first major repair on the AC for Delaney Hall. This is a modular system, so the whole building got uncomfortably warm rather than any one area becoming unbearable, but it was a heads-up on the need for attention.

We will miss Mary Pedersen who took responsibility for the upkeep of most of our plantings.

Tony Collins

## **2013 Annual Report – Caring Committee**

**Co-Chairs: Mary Ann Rusk and Judy Williams**

The committee is made up of many dedicated individuals who provide refreshments for family and friends in Westwood Hall after a Memorial Service when requested.

This past year we offered receptions after memorial services for the families of Jayne Lauten-Berg and Jo Ann Deforest.

Thank you to all the committee members who are always so willing to help to provide a serene and welcoming space for friends and family to visit together.

We welcome new members and suggestions from our church community.

Mary Ann and Judy, Co-Chairs

## **2013 Annual Report – Circle Dinners**

**Chair: Mary Ann Rusk**

Circle Dinners is one of the longest standing entities at Emerson. It was organized many years ago to connect members and friends of Emerson with an opportunity to share a potluck meal and engage in conversation in smaller groups in individual homes. This remains as an adult only group.

The dinners are held every other month beginning in September thru May. Thus the dinners are held on the third Saturday in September, November, January, March and May. The May dinner is traditionally held in Westwood Hall with the entire group meeting together at designated host tables. The May dinner allows members whose homes are not large enough to accommodate an individual dinner.

There are approximately 60 to 65 people in the group with typically four dinners held each designated month.

I wish to thank the many hosts/hostesses who have opened their homes to continue this way of getting to know each other in a more casual way other than working on a committee together.

If you would like to join this wonderful group of members and friends, please contact me at [mafrusk@comcast.net](mailto:mafrusk@comcast.net) for your name to be added to the list.

Mary Ann Rusk  
Chair

## **2013 Annual Report – Communications Committee**

**Chair: David May**

The 2013 members of the Committee were: Emily Brown, Joe Dowlen, Mark Edmiston-Lange, Pat Grealy, Greg Hunt, Larry Kelly, Brett Smith, Mary Ann Stanley, and Sherle Frost Watson. Our able Board Liaison was Shannon Thurmond. We also received much assistance from Katy Carpman.

Major projects for 2013 included:

1. Redesigning our website and highlighting the Living Text Project on our website;
2. Supporting the Living Text Project using the Meetup website to alert people in Houston about our Adult Education offerings on Sacred Texts;
3. Encouraging Adult Ed visitors to stay for the coordinated services on the Living Text Project;
4. Implementing the Google Analytics tool to track visitors to our website;
5. Updating and maintaining our Facebook and Twitter accounts to announce Church programs and maintain interest;
6. Developing a blog on our website to include videos by Mark Edmiston-Lange and guests;
7. Putting the Wayside Pulpit quotations on the North-facing side of our Church Sign and keeping the sermon titles current on the South-facing side

Submitted by David May, Chair

**2013 Annual Report – Finance Committee**  
**Chair: Tony Collins**

The Finance Committee consists of Dick Cheney, John Homier, Wayne Chandler, and our newest addition, Eric Watson. Billye Smith and Mark Edmiston-Lange serve ex-officio.

We reviewed the finances monthly and generated the first draft of the budget in October.

**2013 Annual Report - Investment Committee**  
**Co-Chairs: John Homier and Jill Rose**

The Investment Committee lost a great friend and guiding light when Dick Mullineaux passed away earlier this month. He will be greatly missed by all of us.

In line with the committee's leadership plan, John Homier was elected to succeed Henry Groppe as co-chair of the committee in the spring of 2013. Jill Rose was elected to succeed Dick Mullineaux as co-chair effective the first of 2014.

As described in last year's report, the assets of the Endowment Fund have been allocated in two parts:

1. Cash and equivalents to service the planned mortgage retirement at the end of June 2014 and for other liquidity needs as directed by the Board of Trustees, and
2. Long Term Investments.

The balances and changes in these allocations during the year 2013 are as follows:

Allocation	31 December 2013	31 December 2012	Change
Long Term Investments	\$1,243,398.98	\$1,043,678.33	\$199,720.65
Cash and Equivalents	\$770,465.49	\$903,780.51	(\$133,315.02)
Total Endowment	\$2,013,864.47	\$1,947,458.84	\$66,405.63

There were no deposits or withdrawals from the allocation to Long Term Investments during the year. These funds are primarily invested in equities managed by the Mitchell Group on our behalf. During the year, this portfolio appreciated 19.1%.

Net of earnings of approximately \$6,000, the allocation to Cash and Equivalents decreased by \$133,315 during the year. Withdrawals were as follows:

- \$39,754 for budgeted payment of mortgage principal
- \$50,000 for budgeted transfer to the operating account
- \$7,717 for unbudgeted maintenance expenses
- \$42,000 for unbudgeted shortfall in the operating account.

Amounts due during 2014 for scheduled and final payments under the mortgage are \$20,858 and \$727,773, respectively, for a total of \$748,631.

17 January 2014  
John Homier and Jill Rose, Co-chairs

## **2013 Annual Report - Library Committee**

**Chair: Glenn Roberts**

The book cataloging program "ResourceMate" which Art Pedersen had purchased a few years ago required an annual payment for continued use. Therefore I developed a new cataloging program which also incorporated a database containing data on all the books in the Schulman Library. This program became operational in December of 2013, and provides the ability to search for books using title, author, or Dewey Decimal code. Previously one had to manually search through index cards stored in drawers in the library.

The computer in the library was very old and slow and lacked the facilities to accept newer programs, so I replaced it with a newer computer which had just been retired from the Audio Visual facility in the Sanctuary. This made it possible to install the program described above.

The major problem currently for the Library Committee is to determine how to make room for new books on the shelves, which are very full.

The members of the Library Committee currently are:

Glenn Roberts (Chairman)  
Carolyn Craig  
Sigsby Rusk

Submitted by Sigsby Rusk  
January 10, 2013

**2012 & 2013 Annual Report - Partner Church Committee**  
**Chairs: deForest Ralph and Martha Ralph (deceased)**

Because of illness from December 2012 through January 2013, the report of 2012 was not submitted. This report covers 2012 and 2013.

Unitarianism, as a religion, was first articulated in the mid 1500's, in Transylvania, by Francis David. It was here that the name "Unitarianism" was first applied to our religion. After the fall of communism in 1989, UUs in North America were again able to contact, and support, the Unitarians in Transylvania and Central Europe. In 1993, the Partner Church Council (UUPCC) was formed as an affiliate of the UUA, to coordinate and enhance the support efforts.

Emerson's Partner Church Committee is Emerson's link to the UUPCC, as well as to our partner church in Transylvania, St. Nicholas. Through our association with the UUPCC, we participate in the support of UUs around the world, primarily in Central Europe, the Khasi Hills in North Eastern India, and in the Philippines.

Our partner church, St. Nicholas, is located in the town of St. Nicholas, in the northeastern part of Transylvania, which is now part of Romania. The people in that area are ethnic Hungarians. In Hungarian, the town is called Gyergyoszentmiklos; in Romanian it is called Gheorgheni. St. Nicholas has a congregation of about 125. Until November of 2008, it was the "daughter" church of the Unitarian church in the nearby larger city of Csikszereda (M- Cuic). One of the Special offerings in 2012 was for St. Nicholas. In 2003, Emersonians raised \$25,000 for the purchase of a "Prayer House" by the St. Nicholas congregation. DeForest attended the dedication, presided over by the Bishop, on October 3, 2004.

Committee Chair, deForest Ralph, served on the on the Board of the UUPCC from 2007 until July 2013. In addition to attending Winter Board meetings and the Annual meeting at General Assembly, he participated in monthly phone conference Board meetings. He developed a Funding Development and Endowment program for the UUPCC, which is now being implemented. His 6-year term ended in July of 2013.

The Committee has also been supportive of the Balazs Scholar program, centered at our UU Seminary in Berkeley California, Star King. This program supports a Unitarian minister from Transylvania for a year of study at Star King. During the year, the Balazs Scholar visits, and preaches at UU churches, primarily in the western part of the US. One of the Special Offerings in 2012 was in support of this program. deForest has established endowments in support of the Balazs Scholar at both Starr King and Meadville Lombard, our seminary in Chicago, in Martha's name.

In October 2012, deForest attended the Second International Convocation for Unitarian Universalist Women held in Marosvasarhely (Tirgu Mures), as a delegate from Emerson Church (deForest is a Global Sister). One of the Moderators and organizers for the Convo was Dr. Eva Patko, the wife of the former minister at St. Nicholas, who with her husband Endre, spent the Winter holidays with deForest and Martha here in Houston, when he was the Balazs Scholar that year. deForest, was the speaker at the final dinner of the Convo.

While in Transylvania for the Convo, deForest was able to visit with several former Balazs Scholars and take Communion in Unitarian churches. He also visited with the Bishop and other church officials and discussed the needs at St. Nicholas. He also visited with a committee at St. Nicholas. At that time, they were being served part time by the minister in Csikszereda. Since then, a permanent minister has gone to St. Nicholas.

For 2014, our goals are to establish contact with St. Nicholas and build a relationship with the new minister and with the congregation, using the internet and Skype.

deForest Ralph, Chair

**2013 Annual Report – Performing Arts Committee**  
**Chair: Stephen Lipp**

The Performing Arts of Emerson Unitarian Universalist church performed a wide array of selections during the 2013 calendar year. Performing Arts at Emerson consists of seven entities: 1) Chancel choir, 2) Orchestra, 3) Emerson Players, 4) UniTunes, 5) Guitar Houston, and 6) Houston Tuesday Musical Club. The chancel choir continued its tradition of rousing worship services along with a spring concert, a kickoff Sunday and Christmas services. The choir is led by Performing Arts director Bonnie Rosensteel with choir leads Tina Boosahda (soprano), Adrian Rodriguez (male) and Megan Wilhelm (alto). The choir and worship services also rely on the keyboard skills of keyboardist Hui Shan Chin. For 2013 Christmas, the choir with help from the Orchestra, the Emerson Players and several children and youth performed the freeform composition “Midwinter Dream” which was composed by Player’s leader Hilary Henderson Ritz. This performance featured five choir numbers, one solo vocal piece, and three orchestral pieces including Vivaldi’s “L’Inverno” from his suite “The Four Seasons.” Interspersed with the performances was the Players thespian performance of a medieval setting in winter. This performance of Saturday night, December 14 was followed on Sunday morning with the orchestra’s performance of Leroy Anderson’s “Christmas Festival.”

The Orchestra, after being founded and led by Bill Atkerson for 13 years, is now being led by Bill Tackett. In Atkerson’s farewell performance the orchestra performed the first movement of Grieg’s Piano Concerto in A minor, with former Emerson keyboardist Andrew Focks at the piano. After a search for Bill Atkerson’s successor, Bill Tackett became the second director of the orchestra. Immediately the orchestra sprang into action with a performance of Saint-Saëns “Danse Macabre” on Sunday, October 27. Bill Tackett continues adding to the musical repertoire and the orchestra has also purchased three tympani and a bass drum during the past year.

The Emerson Players performed “Dearly Beloved” in the spring. Hilary, the Emerson Players’ director, then took on the task of both writing and directing the varied cast through the Christmas show. In all, Hilary has done a great deal of work in both directing and creating the stage plays that the congregation continues to enjoy.

UniTunes continues to use the Emerson Sanctuary for folk concerts the first Saturday from October through May. Bookings continue to be filled with attendance averaging 100 plus per performance. The volunteers who maintain this “Coffee House” venue, with particular note of Beth Hill, Rick Lloyd, Dan Barfield and Kevin Crotty, are to be applauded for their expertise and commitment.

Guitar Houston continues its use of the Emerson Sanctuary for classical guitar concerts for the second Saturday from October through May. This group may be the best kept secret of the Performing Arts entities. The performances are purely acoustic with world-class talent performing in the ambience of the Sanctuary. Acts are well-attended, with an average of 80 persons per performance.

The Houston Tuesday Musical Club continues to meet at Emerson from September through May for monthly meetings. The group also rents space for their yearly competitions, the Artist Concert. Westwood Hall is also leased several times during the year for receptions. The club enjoys meeting at Emerson because of the excellent piano and beautiful Sanctuary.

Stephen Lipp

Performing Arts Chairperson

## **2013 Annual Report – Personnel Committee**

**Chair: Ken McLeod**

Committee Members: Sara Boyd, Bill Burchfield, Larry Huelbig, Janet Meininger, and Ken McLeod, Chair.

### Activities for 2013

- Committee meetings were held on an ‘as needed’ basis in 2013.
- The Committee actively participated on the Search Committee for the Office Administrator for Communication, represented by the Chair.  
Chosen: Emily Brown
- The Committee actively participated on the Search Committee for the Emerson Intergenerational Orchestra Director, represented by the Chair.  
Chosen: William Tackett
- The Committee advised the Music Director and Administrator relative to contracting of new keyboardist and the restructuring of contracts for Music Director and Lead Soloist to clarify no longer relevant distributions of labor.
- Advised the Board of Trustees relative to salary adjustments for all staff for 2014. Grudgingly in the light of current finances, the Committee recommended not to increase any salaries in fiscal 2014.
- Advised relative to keeping pensions in line with changing guidelines.

Report respectfully submitted by

Ken McLeod, Chair, Emerson UU Church Personnel Committee

## **2013 Annual Report - RE Committee Annual Report**

**Chair: John Hammer**

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 dozens of teachers, advisors, guardian angels and mentors. We are happy to report that Emerson's Sunday School classrooms and programs are rich with great learning and enthusiasm.

Our most obvious programming happens during the 11 a.m. hour with Sunday School classes for preschool through high school, September through May. During the summer we have an all-ages Spirit of Adventure program with guest teachers from the congregation.

Children and youth attend and participate in our worship services, starting in the service all Sundays, and taking part in our congregation's major liturgical events (Turnings, Flower Communion, Homecoming, holidays). 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.

Social justice work is core to our congregation and to the Sunday School program. At all ages children and youth practice their Unitarian Universalist values. In 2013, the RE Committee organized or supported the following endeavors: Mitten tree, Rebuilding Together Houston, UNICEF Carnival, Souper Bowl of Caring, UUSC Guest at Your Table. We also take part in a variety of special events (e.g. Easter egg hunt and activities, UNICEF Carnival, Deck the Halls Potluck) and many Sunday activities.

This year we have been especially excited to explore the Living Text Project, as the themes of the congregation are tied together—our children and youth benefit from this integration.

We continue to look for ways to link with other congregational programs and to involve all adults in the supporting the RE program. The Sunday School program requires the work of many hands and hearts, and we invite you to be a part of the joy.

The RE Committee looks forward to a great 2014. You can learn more about the RE program at <http://emersonhouston.org/childrenyouth.html>, and we welcome conversation and collaboration! Our monthly meetings are generally the first Thursday of each month, in the Library at 7 p.m.

### **2013-2014 RE Committee**

John Hammer (2012-2015), chair, Wade Greiner (2013-2016), Adrian Rodriguez (2012-2015), Jill Shaffer (2011-2014), Florrie Snively (2011-2014) and Judy Williams (2011-2014).



**2013 Annual Report – Social Action Council**  
**Chair: Jane Zachritz**

MEMBERS OF SOCIAL ACTION COUNCIL AT CLOSE OF 2013: Jane Zachritz (Chair), Tony Collins, Alicia Loftin, Ann May, deForest Ralph, Robin McElfresh , and Florrie Snockhart (RE representative)

**PROJECTS AND EVENTS**

***Souper Bowl of Caring (02/03)***

Souper Bowl for Caring is our annual collection of canned foods and other packaged items for the Houston Food Bank and coincides with the Super Bowl. Our church youth created “canstructions” and collected additional funds for the Houston Food Bank as our church members voted on their artistic creations. A total of \$1,844.59 was raised in February for the Houston Food Bank, including \$565.83 raised during Souper Bowl of Caring.

***Beautification Project at Friends for Life (03/02)***

15 church members and friends of Emerson participated in a beautification project at Friends for Life, a no-kill animal shelter in the Heights. We weeded, pulled out dead plants, planted new butterfly plants and ground cover, and installed new stepping stones for the volunteers who walk the dogs. After the project was completed, we were treated to a tour of the shelter and our adults and children got to visit with all of the animals. Funds for plants, soil and paving stones were unanimously approved by SAC at the close of 2012.

***Visit to Saint Francis Wolf Sanctuary (03/16)***

In conjunction with St. Brendan’s Celtic Community, our church members car-pooled to St. Francis Wolf Sanctuary in Montgomery County for a tour of the sanctuary. We heard a special talk given by the founder about the plight of wolves in the United States and Canada, ongoing conservation efforts and the specific work of the St. Francis Wolf Sanctuary, especially with regards to human/animal therapy. Our church members were then introduced to each of the wolves and actually got to “meet” two of the wolves in a controlled environment.

***ReBuilding Together Houston (Spring – 04/06 and 04/13)***

This was Emerson’s 48<sup>th</sup> house. Over two weekends, Emerson church members and friends of Emerson came out to renovate the house of Annie Criswell. Ms. Criswell was presented with the last quilt made by Mary Pedersen, who provided special lap quilts for many of our homeowners over the years. Our Crew Leader was Gavin Mason and our lunch coordinators were James Dean/Jill Shaffer and Peggy Sweeney.

***Houston Pride Parade (06/29)***

A t-shirt “glam” day was held in the Emerson work room the weekend before the parade and our church members were able to wear their creations as they danced on the First Unitarian Church float and marched in the parade. Due to a soaring heat index that day, we had a low attendance for the parade, but a few stalwart church members came out and showed their “pride.”

***ReBuilding Together Houston (Fall – 10/19 and 10/26)***

This was Emerson’s 49<sup>th</sup> house. We had a record 40 volunteers our first weekend and 25 volunteers our second weekend to renovate the house of Ms. Adelle Parish. The weather was beautiful and a lot of families came out to share in this great experience! Our Coming of Age class made this one of their volunteer projects and most of the class worked on the house over the course of the two weekends under the direction of Greg and Jacqui Hunt. Our Crew Leaders were Gavin Mason and Tony Collins and our lunch coordinators were Jill Shaffer and Peggy Sweeney. A special afghan made by Beth Hammer was presented by Beth to the homeowner.

***CROP Hunger Walk (11/03)***

This year’s special recipient in Houston for the CROP Hunger Walk was Interfaith Ministries’ Meals on Wheels, an organization near and dear to Emerson. We had incredible weather for the walk and a total of 12 walkers and 4 dogs. Our youngest walker was 2 years old! Emerson raised over \$2,700 for the CROP Hunger Walk, the largest amount raised by all of the organizations that participated in the walk.

***Alternative Gift Mart Benefitting Heifer International (12/08 and 12/15)***

The Social Action Council voted to offer an alternative gift mart during the holiday season. We elected to focus on one organization to test the waters. Heifer International was chosen since a past Coming of Age class raised 1 ½ arks and church awareness regarding this organization was high. Over the course of two Sundays, Emerson church members donated \$900.00 for flocks of ducks, groves of trees, gaggles of geese, hives of bees, and herds of goats.

### **SPECIAL COURSE**

The Social Action Council, in conjunction with Ministry for Earth, offered the course “Hungry for Change.” The course was proposed by Ann May and unanimously approved by the Social Action Council in 2012 to purchase books and the course was offered in the Spring of 2013. This course has led to two vegan luncheons to demonstrate how ideas from this course can be put into practice and both luncheons were very well attended. A page is also being built on our website to provide resources for our church members so we can put into practice what we have studied.

### **GUEST LECTURE**

The Social Action Council, in conjunction with the Emerson Abolitionists, hosted Deb Murphy, the Youth Services Specialist from HATCH. She spoke to us about the many outreach efforts of HATCH including the Safe Zones Project, Project Remix and the HATCH Prom. HATCH is an important organization in the fight against human trafficking.

### **RECYCLING INITIATIVES**

Ann May organized a new recycling program through Recycle4U and arranged for IMGreen to have a donation box for clothing placed on the back parking lot of Emerson.

### **EMERSON ABOLITIONISTS**

In addition to HATCH lecture, the Emerson Abolitionists showed the documentary “The Dark Side of Chocolate.” In addition, Beth Hammer, along with assistance from Nancy Lipp, Linda McCollough, Mina McDuffie and Bonnie Homier, worked on butterfly wraps throughout 2013 for Freedom Place and a wrap was presented to the first “graduate” of Freedom Place in January 2014. The funds to purchase the materials for the wraps were unanimously authorized by SAC at the close of 2012.

### **TEXAS UU JUSTICE MINISTRY**

Randy Partain and Maenad Widdershins agreed to become the liaisons to the Texas UU Justice Ministry (TXUUJM). At the end of 2013, our liaisons had participated in discussions regarding the Texas Special Session. A specific focus of the TXUUJM has been how to formulate a response to the increasing restrictions being placed on reproductive rights. Randy and Maenad will also be polling members of Emerson to see which issues they are concerned about so the specific concerns of Emersonians are presented to the TXUUJM.

### **OTHER EMERSON SOCIAL ACTION ACTIVITIES**

The following social action activities were coordinated Kenny Jones:

- “Do the Math!” Screening and Webcast
- Viewing of the documentary “The Healthcare Movie”
- Climate Reality Leadership Corp Presentation
- Viewing of the documentary “Bidder 70”

### **SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

In 2013, Emerson migrated to a Share the Plate method of collection in which 50% of the plate was donated to a special organization, 25% to Interfaith Ministries’ Meals on Wheels, and 25% to the church operating budget. A copy of the collections by month is attached. The special organizations were chose by a sub-committee comprised of Tony Collins, Beth Hammer, Alicia Loftin, Joy Partain, Caroline Truesdale and Jane Zachritz. In addition to Meals on Wheels, following are the organizations that were selected:

JAN – Freedom Place  
FEB – Houston Food Bank  
MAR – Children’s Assessment  
APR – UU Ministry for Earth  
MAY – Groppe Scholarships

JUN – HATCH

JUL – Friends for Life/Galveston Bay Foundation (split collection)

AUG – Groppe Scholarships

SEP – Freedom Place

OCT – UNICEF (substitution)

NOV – UU Partner Church/Balasz Scholarship (split collection)

DEC – UU Philippines Relief Fund (substitution)

The special collection for October was originally scheduled for Texas UU Justice Ministry but the organization failed to obtain 501(c)(3) status by the deadline. Emerson had historically given to UNICEF during the month of October in conjunction with the Halloween Carnival, so SAC unanimously approved a request to substitute UNICEF for that month. The special collections chosen by the youth, the Red Cross and the SPCA, were originally scheduled for December, but the Board of Trustees requested an urgent special collection for the UU Philippines Relief Fund in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan. SAC unanimously approved this request via e-mail and the collection for the Red Cross and the SPCA were moved to January 2014.

#### **FUNDS APPROVED ON 12/01 FOR 2014 PROJECTS**

SAC unanimously voted to fund a project to install a butterfly garden at Freedom Place in Spring 2014 and to offer the course, “Behind the Kitchen Door” (tentatively scheduled for Spring 2014). In preparation, gift certificates were purchased from Buchanan’s Nursery (\$150) and Lowe’s (\$50) for the garden project. These companies were chosen since we have Emerson church members who are employees and can make our funds go farther. Karen will keep the gift certificates until we are ready to purchase the plants and soil for the project. In addition, course books were purchased for “Behind the Kitchen Door.”

#### **2013 Annual Report - Usher/Greeter Committee**

**Co-Chairs: Mary Ann and Sigsby Rusk**

We accepted the position of coordinators for ushers and greeters at Emerson Church in November of 2013. Since then we have begun trying to recruit more volunteers for these tasks since many who had been ushering had decided to stop, at least temporarily. There is still a need for more greeters and at least four more ushers so the recruiting effort will continue.

We are assisting in revising the set of tags displayed in the name tag kiosk in The Gathering Place to remove tags of persons no longer involved with Emerson.

We have also begun attending the meetings of the Membership Committee, as it was felt that these activities are related to and should be coordinated with the activities of the Committee.

Mary Ann Rusk

Sigsby Rusk

**2013 Annual Report - Worship Committee**  
**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 2013, the WC coordinated individual services in March, May, October, November and December, and six consecutive services in July and August. The committee members work diligently to include members of the committee and the larger congregation in the services we plan. However, to ensure quality and variety in our services, we often seek outside speakers to whom we award an honorarium. In 2013, eight of our services featured Emersonians as pulpit guests. The other three services highlighted visiting pulpit guests: Jill Carroll (scholar and professional speaker), Rev. Darcy Roake from New Orleans (an ordained minister and a UUA employee), and Rabbi Michael LeBourkian (formerly of the Jewish Congregation on Bering and now a UU in Austin). The Committee is very appreciative of the excellent services given by our members. Thank you to Kay Kamas, Pam Lewis, Mary Ann Stanley and the Memorial Area Covenant Group, April DeConick and the Parents of Young Children Covenant Group and Mike Condit. In addition, Worship Committee members deForest Ralph, Carolyn Truesdell, Rachel Shada and April DeConick gave sermons individually.

The Committee in 2013 was comprised of a small number of dedicated members: David Bates, Mary Ann Stanley, Leo Vandermeulen 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. Sherle Frost Watson (Board President) also pitched in this year and supported the WC by occasionally delivering the weekly Welcome.

David, Mary Ann, Rachel and Carolyn all retired from the Committee at the end of 2013. Leo, April and deForest continue on, but the Committee is in transition. I understand that our ministers have some new ideas about the responsibilities of the Committee. We also hope that more Emersonians will choose to join. They will find the experience rewarding and exciting.

Yours in faith and service,

The Worship Committee