

the emersonian

PLANT IT FORWARD FARMS URBAN FARMS FOR HOUSTON, SMALL BUSINESSES FOR REFUGEES

July Special Collection **SHARE-THE-PLATE**



Plant It Forward provides Houston with fresh, local produce by helping refugees grow their own urban farm businesses. Each farmer is trained to farm using organic methods and to sell their produce through farmers markets, farm stands, restaurants, and farm shares.

Plant It Forward offers economically disadvantaged refugees an opportunity to become self-sufficient through growing, harvesting and selling produce from a sustainable urban farm within the city of Houston. Each farm will have the potential to generate a fair wage for a family of four while providing premium sustainably-grown produce to Houstonians. Each farmer must have had prior farming experience, usually in their home countries and must complete a rigorous 12-month training program to be certified as a Plant It Forward farmer and entrepreneur. At the successful completion of the program, each farmer receives a mentor and an urban micro-farm to grow and sell their own produce under the Plant It Forward brand.



Plant It Forward Farms provides refugees with the tools, training, and business skills needed to become successful urban farmers. Houston is settling a record number of new refugees every year, many of whom have fled violence in their homelands and are starting new lives without the job or language skills needed to succeed. Plant It Forward Farms is helping these refugees become self-reliant entrepreneurs who can support their families and help our city grow.



Your Share-the-Plate donation makes a difference! You are casting a vote for local produce and the future of refugee farmers and their families. Your donation ensures that Plant It Forward Farmers can continue to provide Houstonians with local, organically grown produce.

You can also support the farmers by buying a **Farm Share**, a bag of fresh, local produce delivered to Emerson each Sunday, or shopping at **Farm Stands** located on the farms and **Farmers Markets** around town. For details, check <http://plant-it-forward.org/>

*Members and friends sustain the operating expenses of the church
with their pledges, enabling us to give away our Sunday offering.*

A Note From Katy



Summer is a great time for rejuvenation and reconnection. I write this as I travel to Columbus, Ohio for General Assembly —the annual meeting of thousands of delegates, professionals, and other enthusiastic UUs from around the country and the world.

This week I meet with hundreds of colleagues, learn about innovative programs in churches far and wide, and consider ethical and business issues. We'll honor those just receiving their credentials as religious professionals, as well as those retiring, and those who have died in the past year. It's always a rich and wonderful week—I hope you'll consider attending next year's General Assembly in New Orleans.

After that I split my time between the office and a few personal trips—family reconnections, good naps, catching up on fun reading (ok, some work reading, too), and a long-awaited anniversary getaway. Whether you're traveling or sticking around town, may you find ways to stay cool, recharge, and feed your soul!

On Sundays you're in town, yes, we have worship and classes—come on down! This Summer our children gain appreciation of other religions and cultures through the stories of other children, plus games and crafts in learning centers. Our teachers and assistants are ready to go.

Katy Carpman
Director of Religious Education



Summer Sunday School

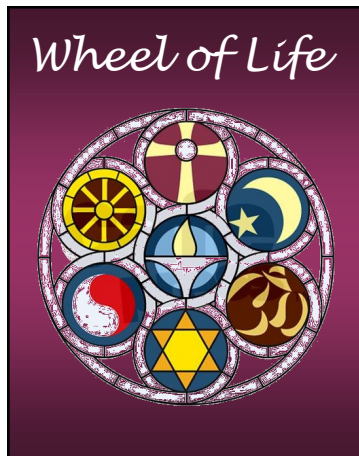
July 3: All Ages Attend Service

July 10: Tiva (Hopi) Sarah Boyd

July 17 Guntur (Muslim) Barbara Crotty

July 24: Mei (Taoist) Beth Hammer

July 31: Ben (Jewish) Kenny Jones



- We extend the sympathy of the congregation to the family and many friends of **Bill Atkerson**, longtime member, friend, and Intergenerational Orchestra founder and former conductor who died June 18.
- **A memorial service honoring the life of Charles Davis** will be Saturday, July 16, 2016, in the sanctuary at 2:00 pm. Chuck requested a ceremony filled with music and a few remembrances.



SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE

Typical Summer Sunday Schedule

9:45 AM Professional Childcare Begins

10 AM Adult Ed and Kids' Activities • 11 AM Worship • 11:15 AM Kids' Programming

Randy Partain is our Pulpit Speaker throughout the month of July.

July 3 - *Rain without Thunder and Lightning*

Frederick Douglass wrote that wanting justice but being afraid of conflict was like wanting rain without thunder and lightning, or wanting crops to grow without disturbing the ground. So much injustice that we see in our world is fueled by harmful religious ideas, yet we want to respect a diversity of faith traditions. How can we confront harmful religious ideas while still respecting the people who hold them? How much thunder and lightning can we tolerate for the nourishing rain of justice?

July 10 - *Speaking the Truth in Love*

How you communicate plays a big role in defining your sense of community. If we want to create meaningful, authentic community, our communication has to be direct, honest, and respectful. Come learn how your intentional communication can help create meaningful, authentic community.

July 17 - Promises Not Worth Keeping

Sometimes we make promises to ourselves when we have been hurt. We decide how we must be or what we must do to be safe, loved, and accepted. Those promises may get us through painful times, but they can also get in the way of being fully alive. Giving our word more intentionally opens the way for us to live into our principles more fully.

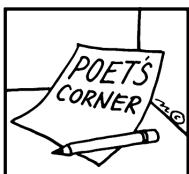
July 24 - You Can't Steal the Moon

You can't steal the moon. You can't give the moon away, either. We appreciate the moon's light on a dark night, just as we appreciate words of wisdom when we stumble in our lives. But the moon has no light of its own; the light we see is merely a reflection. What if we are the sun?

10 AM ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Immigration Justice July 10 through August 21

Motivated by the growing numbers of migrants entering the United States via the Mexico border, Africa, and the Middle East, the importance of the issue in our political discourse and its connection to current events this summer Adult RE offering will provide a platform of study and discussion for Emersonians and the larger community to reflect on historic patterns of migration, the role the United States has played (and still plays) in Latin America, and how we might engage meaningfully with immigration reform as a moral and social justice issue. Room 205/206. *See page 7 of this newsletter for more information.*



Third Sunday Poetry Group

A casual gathering of those who love poetry. Bring something you have written or a poem you wish you had written. July 17, Room 204.

Report from the President of the Board



As the summer heat is upon us, we are midway through 2016. Likewise, I am halfway through my term as President of the Board of Trustees. This is an appropriate time for a few observations about our church and its activities. I thought I would do this from a somewhat unique perspective. My first term as President was 33 years ago in 1983! I thought it might be interesting to compare 1983 and 2016.

Our church campus has changed significantly. We did not have Delaney Hall in 1983. There was no gathering space immediately outside the sanctuary. One had to go over to Westwood Hall for coffee and conversation. The RE classrooms were somewhat rustic and not well connected to the other facilities. Notably, Delaney Hall was constructed as a green space, and today we make good use of our facilities for both Emerson and community activities.

Emerson Church is more complex than it was in 1983. Our current mix of young and old members also existed then, but my sense is that it was more homogeneous. Worship services tended to be more formal and similar from week to week. Today, I am greatly impressed by the diversity in the form and content of the weekly services. Music was developing in 1983 with paid section leads in the choir. Today, our music program performs at a much higher level than one would expect from a church our size. We now also feature instrumental music, including the Emerson Intergenerational Orchestra.

The greatest difference I see between 1983 and 2016 is the commitment to social action and justice. Quite frankly, we didn't do much in that regard in 1983. Now we are very active, extending our influence through collaborative efforts with others. Examples are our support and involvement in Texas UU Justice, our strong stance in support of LGBTQ issues, our new Outreach Committee that has directed funds from our Endowment to meaningful initiatives, including health care for all Texans. Our ESL program (English as a Second Language) has reached people with a real need and in the process has actively involved our members with the community.

There are many more similarities and differences. Emerson was then, and remains so now, a community that invites diversity and is committed to the greater common good.

Michael Condit, President

Recurring Activities

Stitchers: Every Wednesday, 11 AM in Delaney Hall. Come for conversation, if not for craft!

Caregiving Support Group: Saturday, July 16, 10 AM in Room 204. Contact Sarah Rossmiller at sarahrossmiller@gmail.com.

Women's Evening Book Group: Wednesday, July 20, 7:30 PM in the Library. The book of the month is *The Boys in the Boat* by Daniel James Brown. Contact: Jill Rose, jillrose@gmail.com.

Sandwiches for SEARCH: Will resume in August. Contact: Barbara Hopkins, bbhopkins@sbcglobal.net.

Men's Book Group: Wednesday, July 20, 6:30 PM at Luby's, 2730 Fondren. The book of the month is *Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania* by Eric Larson. Contact: Dave Bergt, dbergt@comcast.net.

Daytime Book Group: Thursday, July 21, 10 AM in the Library. This month's book is *The Secret Chord*, by Geraldine Brooks. Contact: Dave Bergt, dbergt@comcast.net.



Emerson Takes Leading Role in Lifting up the Basic Human Need for Health Care

After months of planning and research, Emerson's elected Outreach Committee has extended grants to Planned Parenthood and Texas Impact, two worthy organizations that are involved in extending health care to all Texans.

We are proud to have jump-started a statewide campaign to enlist faith communities throughout Texas to enhance the future of health care in our state. "If you are a poor and uninsured resident," states a Houston *Chronicle* editorial, "Texas is terrible for your state of health."

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What can one church do about that?

The obvious answer: Join with others, through Texas Impact, an Austin-based consortium of religious congregations working to influence the Texas Legislature. Use the "people power" of many faiths to communicate to legislators, and provide materials to the leadership of those congregations to explain why that communication could change the lives of hundreds of thousands of Texans.

ABOVE POLITICS



The Texas Impact campaign is called ABOVE POLITICS: Health Care for All Texans. Emerson pledged \$50,000 as a two-year commitment to fund this effort, joined by a \$100,000 grant from the Episcopal Health Foundation. Our funds come from 3% of the average of the total value of the endowment for the trailing three year period.

REACHING BEYOND OUR WALLS

Our grant of \$25,000, with additional support from Emerson congregants, has enabled Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast to launch *Reaching Beyond Our Walls*, a Faith Leaders Outreach Program, and continue a comprehensive communications strategy to counteract the opposition attacks on Planned Parenthood. Anjel Johnson, PPGC Public Affairs Field Manager, is actively implementing the program and we look forward to an update in September.



The Outreach Committee is excited to share our grant recipients with you. Look for further details in future issues of the *Emersonian* as plans become reality. Please contact any of the following Committee members with questions or for more information: Edna Kelly, chair; Dr. Ben Withers, Carolyn Truesdale, Karen Ostrum George, and Gabe Gelb.

July Upcoming and Ongoing Events and Activities

ESL Classes at Emerson



Our English as a Second Language class needs volunteers. We need friendly

people who can be a leader or participant in a conversation class on Thursday nights from 7 to 8:30 pm at the church. Our ESL students want to practice speaking English. If you have questions or need help with training or materials for leading a group this summer, contact Deborah Landis at 713-504-0819. We hope you can join us this summer.

Peace Camp at Emerson!

An exciting week of Peace Camp is being planned for **July 25-29** at Emerson. The focus will be on developing inner peace, learning about resolving conflicts, coping with bullies, dealing with racism, and how to build a “beloved community”. **Ages 5-18 are invited to participate.** There have been many



requests for scholarships, so please consider sponsoring a low income youth.

Registration is online at peacecamphouston.org.

Progress on Fund-A-Need 2016: Extending Our Welcome

Thanks to all the generous donors we are taking steps to improve the safety, sustainability and beauty of our buildings and grounds. So far the money raised in the auction has paid for:

- Installation of new light fixtures with brighter LEDs all around Delaney Hall.
- Pruning of major dead and damaged branches from all trees, including trimming trees on north driveway to meet safety standards. A reinforcing cable in a large dual-stemmed tree near the playground to support its continuing growth safely was also added.

IN PROGRESS: Contracting with our current grounds maintenance crew to remove the overgrown plants on the south side of Delaney Hall. Consulting with contractors and arborists on the safest, most effective and least expensive way to repair the uneven concrete between Delaney Hall and Westwood Hall.



More about our Adult RE Offering for the 2016 Summer

This four-session UUA course on immigration justice is designed for congregational study groups, with the expectation that participants will gather for the four sessions. During the summer months, this may prove difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, this offering will be paced on an every other week basis with the off week offered for guest speakers or a modified repeat and/or recap session for those that weren't able to attend the original session.

This schedule will also allow time for participants to prepare for the sessions with the provided reading material from *Undocumented* by Aviva Chomsky and watching selected videos or video clips at home. In addition, selected excerpts from *Detained and Deported: Stories of Immigrant Families Under Fire* by Margaret Regan will be provided and incorporated into the sessions.

Immigration Justice

7/10/16 - Immigration Justice Session One - with inclusion of *Detained & Deported* + Film Segment Flipping

7/17/16 - Speaker Event TBD or Immigration Justice Session One Catch-up/Recap

7/24/16 - Immigration Justice - Session Two - with inclusion of *Detained & Deported* + Film Segment Flipping

7/31/16 - Speaker Event TBD or Immigration Justice Session Two Catch-Up/Recap

8/7/16 - Immigration Justice - Session Three - with inclusion of *Detained & Deported* + Film Segment Flipping

8/14/16 - Speaker Event TBD or Immigration Justice Session Three Catch-Up/Recap

8/21/16 - Immigration Justice - Session Four



From our Wayside Pulpit, June 19-26

“An idea is a curious thing. It will not work unless you do.”

—Jaeger’s Facts



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Come Learn What Membership Means at Emerson.

Join Emerson Sunday - The Membership Committee welcomes you to a conversation about Emerson and to sign the membership book if you are ready to join. Meet in the Library at 12:30 pm. **Next Class: July 10.**

Child care is provided. Please RSVP to the office at mary@emersonhouston.org at least five days before the event.

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PR News

Please send all submissions for the Eblast, Order of Service and website weekly by Tuesdays to pr@emersonhouston.org.

**Next Newsletter deadline is
Tuesday, July 19.**