

emerson UNITARIAN  UNIVERSALIST church .
the emersonian

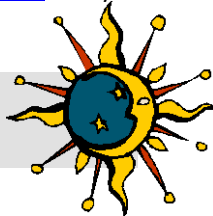
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2016 ISSUE | WWW.EMERSONHOUSTON.ORG

Holidays at Emerson!

*Deck the Halls
Potluck*

Sunday, December 4, following the worship service and classes, we'll have a potluck lunch and then take some time to decorate our Sanctuary in Gathering Place for the holiday season, and Emersonian artisans will have a craft fair to help you shop local! What dish will you bring? Sign up [online](#) today!

WINTER SOLSTICE



Wednesday, December 21, at 7:30 pm in the Sanctuary

As the days get shorter and the nights get longer, we gather again to reflect on what gifts come to us in times of darkness. Come, join us for a family-friendly evening of music, readings, and candlelight as we honor the darkness of winter and encourage the return and warmth of the life-giving sun. We will be delighted by the music of Mim and Ed Freiter and other talented musicians. With fiddle, flute, harp and other instruments, their music moves us from the dark silence of the quiet earth to a hopeful call for the return of the sun. As with many ancient traditions that used fire and candles to entreat the sun to return, our service includes lighting a circle of candles all around the Sanctuary. Following the service, please join in the merriment in the Gathering Place, with cookies and treats, and maybe even a little impromptu dancing. Please bring a plate of goodies to share. Want to help in the service? If you want to be an usher, candle lighter, or reader, we ask you to attend a short practice on Sunday, Dec. 18 at 12:15 PM. Contact Ann May or Robin McElfresh at ministryforearth@gmail.com if you are interested in helping. To arrange childcare for younger children, please call the church office at (713) 782-8250 by Friday, Dec. 16.

Ken Ludwig's
The Game's Afoot
or...
Holmes for the Holidays



The Emerson Players

The Emerson Players take the stage again for Christmastime fun and frolic, murder and mayhem on Friday, December 16, Saturday, December 17 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday matinee on December 18 at 2:00 p.m. You won't want to miss the Players' romp through this Edgar Award Winner for Best Mystery! Tickets (\$15 adults, \$5 students - play is rated PG13) will go on sale after Thanksgiving or reserve at any time by email at emersonplayers@gmail.com.

If you are interested in helping in any way—be it selling tickets at the door to working lights/sound, helping with set-up the weekend before, or being a stage hand, please email courtney.svatek@gmail.com.

Originally produced by Cleveland Play House. Michael Bloom, Artistic Director. Kevin Moore, Managing Director. Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

Childcare Notice:

So our childcare staff may share the holidays with their families, our nursery will be closed on December 24, 25 and January 1.

Revels

As I write this, Thanksgiving is just around the bend and the holiday season will soon be upon us. In many shopping centers the autumn decorations of oranges and golds, and of pumpkins, gourds and Indian corn have already given way to the reds and greens and sparkling lights and Santas of Christmas.

I find myself resisting “getting into the holiday spirit” this year. I also resent the shortening of the days. I want bright days, not gray. The gray matches too closely the heaviness in my heart. At the same time, I don’t want forced cheerfulness. I’ll sing my seasonal carols when the mood seems right, thank you very much, and not just because your piped-in Muzak is so adept at co-opting my auditory cortex!

I know the holidays can be a hard time for those recently bereaved. How many times have I written about that this time of year? And so I am following my own advice of years past and am making plans so that “the empty place at the table” doesn’t smack me in the face. I’m sharing Thanksgiving Day with a friend and her family. I’m going to Miami for the week of Christmas Day to New Years to visit one of my college roommates, Mimi, and her husband, Noel. I may also see Mark’s brother Guy and sister-in-law Sallie, who live in Key Largo, while I’m there. And assuredly, there will be phone calls back and forth to the rest of Mark’s and my family.

Most of all I am trying to be gentle with myself and allow myself to feel whatever I feel. There will be tears, I know. But I suspect there will also be laughter and joy, gratitude and hope as current good times unfold and remembered good times are recalled and treasured - if I am open to what might happen. The better part of me knows that the extent of my feeling of loss is because of the depth and richness of what Mark and I shared - the pain of my grief is a measure of our love. That richness and depth and love have not disappeared. They are still there and will no doubt bless me again if I can but let them.

Most of us have been conditioned to think that the holidays should be a time of great family togetherness and of unremitting good spirits. My experience is that for many people the holidays often fail to measure up. Family togetherness can sometimes be less warm and cozy than a little too cloying. And once we are past the footie-pajamas stage, the magic can wear thin, especially if we put unrealistic demands on ourselves to make absolutely sure the stockings, etc., are hung by the fire with the utmost degree of care.

But what if, rather than measuring our experience against that highly commercialized “Norman Rockwell” image, we forget everything we thought we knew about the way this season is supposed to unfold, and, instead, allow ourselves to be overtaken by what the season can reveal - by how, for example, human companionship does help ease the pain of sorrow; by how children (and maybe the child in us all) can believe that reindeer fly or that a tiny bit of oil can burn for days and days; and, by how light does assuredly penetrate the dark when we open the shutters of our heart. And perhaps most of all by the sheer fact that we are here, alive on this beautiful planet for yet one more spin of its orbit around the sun. That – and the fact that love is and always will be real.

May all of you allow yourselves be overtaken by something as wonderful and mysterious, as glorious and miraculous as love as we enter the holiday season. And may all of you find your way to Emerson for at least one of our holiday services. They – and the people you’ll meet here – may just be the thing that tips the scale.

In faith and affection,

Becky

CRAFT FAIR

On December 4, in conjunction with our Hanging of the Greens, we will have Emerson's second annual handmade sale. Whether you make items for fun, or already sell your items, please consider bringing some to the sale and giving fellow Emersonians a chance to support your work and find unique items for themselves and gift giving. If

you would like more information, please contact or chat with Robin McElfresh (melfreshrobin@att.net), Cynthia Miller (cynthia@themillerhome.net), or Beth Hammer (bethandjohnh@gmail.com).





Sunday Morning Schedule

Typical Sunday Schedule

9 AM EIO Rehearsal • 9:45 AM Professional Childcare Begins
10 AM Adult Ed and Kids' Activities • 11 AM Worship • 11:15 AM Kids' Programming

Please join us on Sundays for worship service.

December 4—Rev. Bruce Beisner
Minister of Bay Area Unitarian Universalist Church in
Clear Lake
"I Surrender!"

Unitarian Universalists have long affirmed the gifts of reason and conscience to guide us towards living our ideals. But there are moments in our lives when all our abilities aren't enough and we struggle and fail. In such times, perhaps we need to just get out of the way and allow the hidden goodness and god-ness within us (and beyond us) to come forth and show us the way.

December 18—Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange
and Katy Carpman
Surprised by Joy

We will share stories about being unexpectedly captivated by the magic of the holiday season. Has that ever happened to you? Bring your stories to share with the rest of the congregation about a time when you were "surprised by joy" during the holidays.

December 11—Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange
and Adrian Rodriguez
Music Sunday

Emerson's Music Department presents Saint-Saëns' hidden gem, *Oratorio de Noël*, with service elements by Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange.

December 24—Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange
Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

As twilight descends and night settles in, fill your hearts and minds with candles and carols and bask in the soft, sweet things of the season. Service is on Saturday, December 24, at 5:30 p.m.

Adult Education

10:00 a.m., Room 205/206

As Unitarian Universalists we are often asked to tell where we stand, especially regarding our beliefs about divinity and theology. In 1921 Rev. Lewis B. Fisher, dean of Ryder Divinity School stated, "The only true answer to give to this question is that we do not stand at all, we move. We grow and we march, as all living things must forever do. The main questions are not where we stand, but which way we are moving, not what positions we defend, but which way we are marching."

Our Adult Religious Education sessions in December will focus on Unitarian Universalist theology (or more frequently, our responses to others' theology), especially shifting points in our movement.

December 4

Humanism and Unitarian Universalism – History and Today - Gabe Gelb

December 11

A UU look at theological considerations regarding feminist and LGBTQ issues - Janet Meininger

Towards a More Peaceable Holiday Season

Ah, the holidays – company shindigs and neighborhood gatherings and all of the family events... so much small talk and time to be together
Here are my hints to a more peaceable holiday season:



- Children ALWAYS get asked about school; older and it's work. Older still and they're asked how they enjoy retirement. Disrupt the status quo –ask what they're doing for fun, what they're reading, what recently made them say "Wow!"
- Potlucks mean you can always ask about the food they brought -get the recipe or another good takeout suggestion!
- Social media can be a blessing – "Oh, I just love seeing pictures of your dog..."
- Family gatherings are a chance to hear a story from your history—especially useful this year might be stories about origins and resilience.
- And oh, yes—we've just had a brutal election cycle. Need some ideas on civility? I love the resources at [Teaching Tolerance](#).
- Conversations do not need to be shared 50-50, right down the line. Magic can happen when you let someone open up, or when you have that chance to be heard deeply.

And of course, you don't need to fill every silence. Sometimes it's enough to be together.

- Take a walk.
- Make something together, whether it's bread or a bookshelf or sidewalk chalk art, or putting new flowers in grandma's front bed.
- Family games, puzzles, or companionable reading
- And if the silences are getting you down, you can always watch a movie together—at the theaters or at home. (Have I mentioned that Redbox, Netflix, and Amazon video are available 365 days a year?) [Common Sense Media](#) is a great online resource to find age-appropriate movies.

I look forward to sharing multigenerational time with you and yours this month, at our many holiday events (see page 9) and on Sunday mornings.

With love,

Katy Carpmán, Director of Religious Education

Wheel of Life



Our hearts go out to the Aucock family on the death of long-time Emerson member John Aucock. We think especially of John's spouse Patty and his daughter Meredith. A memorial service for John will be held at Emerson on Saturday, December 3 at 3 p.m.

Our condolences also go out to Lisa Singerman on the death of her uncle.

Our thoughts are also with Lydia Kelly for her ongoing health concerns; with Michele Coron for complete recovery of her voice; with Betsy Sevy for her ongoing health concerns; and, with Kay Kamas and Jim Porter as Kay's sister Jean Ann recovers from colon surgery.

Congratulations to Mark Andersen on the publication of his second book.

Congratulations to Olga Sosa-Nelson and Dom Nelson on the birth of their beautiful son Julian on November 24th!

We wish the Jackson/Waugh family well on their job transfer to England. We will miss them and hope they return in due time.

We hold in our hearts all those in our church community, named and unnamed, who are hurting or troubled. We wish you healing and peace.

Christmas Day Brunch



Emerson hosts our traditional Christmas Eve service, Saturday, December 24 at 5:30 p.m. Christmas Day we'll have an informal brunch and time for sharing, rather than a full worship service. We join together in delicious community! December 25, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Westwood Hall.

Ongoing Activities

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

Ministry for Earth: Sunday, December 4, from 9:45-10:45 a.m. in the Library.

Covenant Group: Immediately following service in Room 205/206 on Sunday, December 4. Contact Derrick Elliot at xela3764zqp@gmail.com

SURJ HTX (Standing Up for Racial Justice): Action Group Meeting in Room 205/206 on Tuesday, December 6 and 20, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Sponsored by Fight for Justice Coalition, Coordinating Council for Social Action.

Sandwiches for SEARCH: Thursday, December 8, at 10:30 a.m. in Westwood Hall. Contact: Barbara Hopkins, bbhopkins@sbcglobal.net.

ESL: Our successful ESL fall semester classes are winding down. The last classes (and "party") are scheduled to be held on Saturday, December 10. Registration for the 2017 Spring Semester and first day of classes are yet TBD. For more information contact Deborah Landis at dlandis570@aol.com.

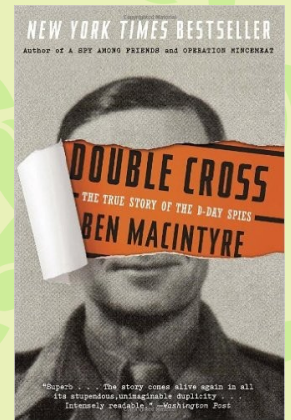
LGBT+Allies Emersonians Potluck Lunch: Every second Sunday of the month. The next gathering will be on Sunday, December 11, in Room 209, at 12:15 p.m. For additional information, please contact euulgbtq@outlook.com.

Caregiving Support Group: Saturday, December 17, at 10 a.m. in Room 204. Contact Sarah Rossmiller at sarahrossmiller@gmail.com.

Emerson Poetry Group: A casual gathering of those who love poetry. Bring something you have written or a poem you wish you had written. Sunday, December 18, at 9:45 a.m., Room 204.

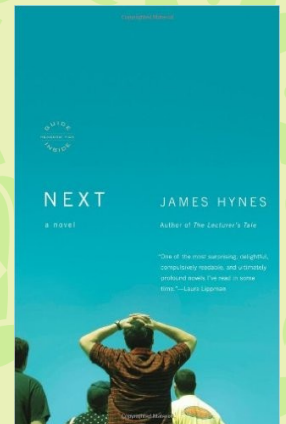
BOOK CLUBS

MEN'S BOOK GROUP



This month's book is *Double Cross: The True Story of the D-Day Spies* by Ben MacIntyre. For meet up date and time, please contact: Dave Bergt, dbergt@comcast.net.

WOMEN'S EVENING BOOK GROUP



Wednesday, December 14, 7:30 p.m. in the Library. The book of the month is *Next* by James Hynes. Contact: Jill Rose, jillrose@gmail.com.

Get on the Bus!



Texas UU Justice Ministry – Emerson UU Justice Ministry
Legislative Action Day – Wednesday, February 15, 2017

\$30 per person – Round Trip Houston – Austin
6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

55 seat Cruiser with Rest Room
Coffee, Breakfast & Road Snacks

Checks payable to Emerson UU Church, to 1900 Bering Dr.,
Houston 77057 by January 26th

Contact Kenny Jones, uuv4jhoutx@gmail.com

Houston UU Network Luncheon

Houston UU Network will host a luncheon at Emerson UU, Saturday, January 21, 11:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. The UU Network includes representatives from the eight area UU churches. The Network hosts the annual UU Music Festival, funds and helps

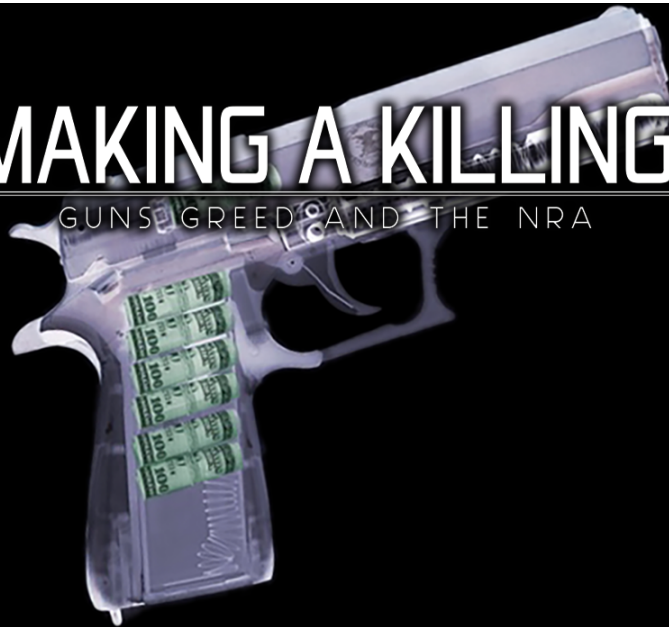


with the Houston Pride Parade, provides support for UUV4J, and promotes dialog among the Houston area churches. The Network always wants to do more to help with communication between area UU churches. Join us with your ideas on how to get our UU message to more, learn about your network, the UUV4J, and what's happening in the UU Southern District.

BRAVE NEW FILMS

MAKING A KILLING

GUNS, GREED, AND THE NRA



Making a Killing: Guns, Greed, and the NRA tells the stories of how guns - and the billions made off of them - affect the lives of everyday Americans. It features personal stories from people across the country who have been affected by gun violence, including survivors and victims' families. The film exposes how the powerful gun companies and the NRA are resisting responsible legislation for the sake of profit - and thereby putting people in danger. The film looks into gun tragedies that include unintentional shootings, domestic violence, suicides, mass shootings and trafficking - and what we can do to put an end to this profit-driven crisis. Through this film and campaign, Brave New Films will work with partners to fight for a country where public safety is more valued than profit.

JOIN US TO DEMAND – AND ACHIEVE – COMMON SENSE GUN LAWS NOW!

When: Saturday,
12/10/16, 7:00 p.m.,
(Light refreshments and
conversations—6:30
p.m.)

Where: Sanctuary/The
Gathering Place, Em-
erson Unitarian Universal-
ist Church

Sponsor: Emerson Jus-
tice Ministry, Coordinat-
ing Council for Social
Action

For more information,
please contact Kenny
Jones at
uuv4jhoutx@gmail.com

Emerson's E.S.L. Program is Concluding its 5th Semester

CHECK OUT OUR E.S.L. PROGRAM ON FAITHIFY,
THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION'S CROWD FUNDING WEB SITE

By Deborah Landis

Emerson's ESL Program Coordinator

The Program Grew by Leaps and Bounds

With the dedication and devotion of the many volunteers who staff and run Emerson's E.S.L. program, it grew by leaps and bounds this semester. The program grew from 3 class levels on Saturday afternoons last semester to 6 class levels on Saturdays this semester. For the first time, classes which build on each other were taught on Tuesday and Thursday nights from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Both the Saturday afternoon classes and the Tuesday and Thursday night classes have been well attended breaking all previous semester attendance records. Adding together attendance for both the afternoon and evening classes, the average attendance each week is over 100 students.

We Have Twelve Amazing Volunteer Teachers Each Week

We have 12 amazing volunteer teachers who donate their time and expertise to working in the classrooms with our students each week. Some of our teachers are members of the church and the teachers who are not members learned about our program from the internet and from friends. The following is a list of our 6 Saturday teachers: Norbert Welk, Clara Kosloff, Geraldine Shawa, Lisa Rockett, Michelle Corron, and Vanessa Sanchez. Our 6 Tuesday and Thursday night teachers are as follows: Fran Elin, Tina Obut, Elisabeth Lindheim, Christine Snitkin, Burt Johnson and Chris Stafford. Some of our regular class room assistants include Ian Sachs, John Menier, Dennis Kirby, Dan Rigney, and Jaya Jacobson just to name a few.

Four Childcare Volunteers Were Added This Semester to Enhance Our Childcare

For the first time this semester, we had 4 adult volunteers who began working with the paid child care workers. Our volunteers are Anna Louise Brunner, Carole Huelbig, Megan Bladen-Blinkoff and Veronica Davis. Thanks to these women for working with the children this semester. Their time and efforts have meant a lot to the parents who need someone to care for their children so they can attend our ESL classes.

Assistant Coordinator Volunteers Do All the Behind the Scenes Work

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



The funding for Emerson's ESL project next year is uncertain at the time this article was printed. We have submitted a second grant proposal to the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program's Fund for Social Responsibility but the decision on our grant application has not been made yet. In order to fund our childcare program for 2017, we are asking everyone in the congregation to donate what they can on the Faithify crowd-funding website set up by the Unitarian Universalist Association. Go to Faithify.org then click on the tab at the bottom of the home page that says "RECENT PROJECTS" and you will find our program entitled "Help Immigrant Students! Free Bi-Lingual Childcare for Their Kids" We must raise \$3,600 by December 14th or we will not receive any of the money donated under that amount. The \$3,600 amount will pay for only one

semester of childcare for 2017 so please give what you can. Contact Deborah Landis if you need help navigating this web site at (713) 504-0819 or dlandis570@aol.com.





EMERSON UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH
PRESENTS

ORATORIO DE NOËL

BY CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS

SUNDAY | DEC 11 | 11 AM

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS
THE AUSTIN CHAMBER SINGERS



For ticket information, please visit www.unitunes.org. Saturday, December 3, at 7:30 p.m. All monies support the performer, with a significant portion to charity as well.

Holidays at Emerson!

Please Join Us! All Are Welcome!

12/4 **Deck the Halls Potluck** 12:15 p.m.

Share a potluck lunch following the service, then help decorate Emerson for the holidays!

12/4 **Second Annual Handmade Sale** 12:15 p.m.

Find unique items for yourself and gift giving!

Emerson Players Presents *The Game's Afoot**

12/16 and 12/17 7:30 p.m.

12/18 2:00 p.m.

The Emerson Players take the stage again for Christmastime fun and frolic, murder and mayhem!

12/21 **Solstice Service*** 7:30 p.m.

A service of readings, contemplation, and song celebrating the changing season. A reception with seasonal foods follows.

12/24 **Christmas Eve Service** 5:30 p.m.

Fill your night with candles and carols, and bask in the soft, sweet things of the season.

12/25 **Christmas Day Brunch** 10:30 a.m.

We join together in delicious community!

*Childcare is available for starred events, with reservations at least two days in advance to alejandra@emersonhouston.org, or (713) 782-8250.

Nominees for the Election to be held at the 2017 Congregational Meeting

by Linda Condit

Our annual meeting on January 29, 2017 will include the election of three members of the Board of Trustees, four new members of the Nominations Committee, two new members of the Committee on Ministry, and two new members of the Outreach Committee. The 2016 Nominations Committee is delighted to list our nominees below:

For the Board of Trustees: Kenneth Jones, Ben Withers, Jane Zachritz

Kenny is currently serving a one-year term and is being nominated to serve a full three-year term.

For the Nominations Committee: Beverly Hanson, Larry Kelly, Deborah Landis, Richard Loftin

For the Committee on Ministry: Sarah Boyd, Pamela Cummings

For the Outreach Committee: Jane Collins, Lori Reeder

Emerson's constitution provides for the possibility of additional nominations for any of these roles. Individuals may be nominated by a petition signed by 15 voting members of the church and submitted to our Nominations Committee at least 35 days before the annual meeting. A hard copy, addressed to the committee, could be mailed or dropped off at the church. The meeting is scheduled January 29, 2017 at 12:15 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

Brief biographical sketches of all nominees, those from the committee and any nominated via petition, should appear in next month's Emersonian.

Our Nominations Committee consisted of Barb Adams, Shannon Butler, Linda Condit, John Hammer, Florrie Snively, Kris Taylor, and Eric Watson.

Congregational Meeting coming up

Congregational Meeting on Budget will be on Sunday, December 11, in the Sanctuary at 12:15 p.m.

Annual Meeting is on January 29, 2017 in the Sanctuary at 12:15 PM. Your vote is needed at both meetings.

Annual Reports are due January 3, 2017 by e-mail to alejandra@emersonhouston.org.

Amazon for Emerson

We received \$342.98 from Amazon during 2015 and \$236.12 so far in 2016. Emerson receives about 6% rebated when shoppers use our special hyperlink to browse Amazon.com when making purchases. Use the special "Amazon for Emerson" link in the left margin of every e-blast. Details about Amazon, Randalls and other rebates are at:

<http://emersonhouston.org/giving-overview/donate-while-you-shop/>



December Share-the-Plate

UU Ministry for Earth

UU Ministry for Earth connects and inspires an active community of UUs for environmental justice, spiritual renewal, and shared reverence for Earth. UUMFE established UU Young Adults for Climate Justice (UUYACJ), a network of UU young adults from across North America, linking our faith to our commitment to a stable climate and a just society. Aly Tharp, the network coordinator, and core network members have creatively engaged young adults to deliver 100 worship services on climate justice and will deliver the 100th sermon at General Assembly 2017 in New Orleans.

Recently, UUYACJ helped create the first UU-sponsored skill-building workshop for young adult climate justice activism; follow-up training is in the works. Young adults are at the forefront of the UU presence at climate actions today: at demonstrations in Portland and Oakland; as official observers at the UN climate talks in Marrakech; and at Standing Rock. UUYACJ is taking the lead in the UU-wide climate justice campaign, Commit2Respond. Our young adults are out on the front lines, representing the rest of us. Please support them by donating to UU Ministry for Earth.

75% of the collection will go to HCDCF and the remaining 25% will go to our standing recipient, Meals on Wheels.

Please note: As you make your Year-End Contributions, the general rule is that a contribution is effective when delivered. This means a check deposited in the church offering in January 2017 cannot be deducted, for tax purposes, in 2016, even if it is backdated to 2016. However, checks that are mailed and postmarked in 2016 are deductible in 2016, even if not received until 2017.



Warmest wishes from
all of the staff for
Happy Holidays and a
Happy New Year!

-Becky, Karen, Katy, Ale, Adrian and Shan

emerson UNITARIAN  UNIVERSALIST **church**

Becky and Mark Edmiston-Lange, Co-Ministers

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emersonhouston.org

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twitter.com/emersonhouston



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: December 18**

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

Stay Connected!



emersonhouston.org

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meetup.com/emersonseekers

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, December 13