



emerson UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST church. the emersonian



Winter Solstice Celebration

Thursday, December 21, at 7:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Open to the public. A celebration for all ages.

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 others. 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 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. We welcome your help as an usher, candle lighter, or reader and ask you to attend a short practice on Sunday, December 17 at 12:15 p.m. 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 Monday, December 18.

Guitar Maestro Rhett Butler returns to UniTunes on Saturday, December 2nd!

Take a break before the holiday rush to enjoy some stellar virtuosic guitar music compliments of the incomparable Rhett Butler (yes, that's his real name)!

Rhett is a jaw-dropping guitarist with a unique technique – usually finger-picking up and down the fret board with two hands – and sometimes with two guitars at one time, producing an incredible, beautiful, unique sound all his own. This will be an inspiring evening of instrumental music, including Rhett's original works, and covers which he has made all his own.

As usual, the show starts at 7:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Tickets are \$15 online by PayPal/credit card at www.unitunescOFFEEHOUSE.org or \$20 at the door cash or check.

Come join us!

The UniTunes Coffeehouse Crew



Revels

As I write this, just before Thanksgiving, there is a bit of a nip in the air, although the sun is shining and the sky is a bril-

liant blue. It is in the sixties, but up until just yesterday we had been setting or breaking record temperatures. My mulberry tree is so confused! The leaves that were there in the summer have all long fallen and been raked or swept away. The tree is mostly bare branches at this point. And, yet at the same time, there are new fragile green leaves emerging. Such is the crazy mixed up season which is late fall, early winter in Houston.

Some might think that the holiday season at Emerson is also a crazy mixed up time, celebrating as we do Winter Solstice, Hanukkah, and Christmas. But perhaps, like the weather, it is instead a glorious potpourri. In the weeks ahead there will be special events and worship services which will give all of us the chance to celebrate our treasured UU values of hope for a better world to come, light that has the power to dispel the darkness and love which embraces all. Everyone should be able to find something at Emerson this holiday season which will stir your spirit and warm your soul. And our Emerson holiday celebrations will be further enriched by your active participation. (Please note the special Holiday insert for handy reference.)

But, at the same time that I urge you to partake of Emerson's holiday feast of events, I would also add a note of pastoral concern. This is a time of year when it is very easy to expect too much of oneself, whether that expectation has to do with attending a flurry of events and activities, being the perfect holiday hosts and hostesses, decorating to the max, or finding the absolutely perfect gifts for everyone on one's list. Add to these pressures the messages from the culture that encourage us all to spend more than we can afford, eat and drink more than we know is good for us, and, not the least, embrace an

idealized notion of holiday family togetherness. Is it any surprise that many people find the holidays not a source of joy and renewal but rather a difficult and distressing time?

What to do? Sam has some very helpful suggestions in his column about how to navigate with grace through this holiday season. I commend his column to you and underscore what he says about the two of us being ready to listen and reflect with you. And I would second his recommendation that taking time to listen to yourself and to reconnect with your deepest values – through a spiritual practice or just sitting with your feelings – may be the surest course through rough waters. Many of us have suffered loss this year – loss of home and precious possessions, loss of a sense of security, and loss of people we love. It is important to remember that through it all, at our deepest core we are still the same people.

And that brings us back full circle. What's important about this holiday season is that it reawaken in us all our treasured UU values of hope for a better world to come, light that has the power to dispel the darkness and love which embraces all. When it comes to choosing how to spend one's time this holiday season, perhaps church is a good place to remember what the holidays are really about. And, if you find yourself needing a little extra encouragement to be true to yourself this holiday season, remember that your ministers are only a phone call away.

In faith and affection,



Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange, Senior Minister

December Share-the-Plate—Benevolence Fund

The Share the Plate recipient this month is the Emerson Benevolence Fund. Administered by the Senior Minister, the Fund provides immediate financial assistance to members of the congregation or the community who are experiencing a financial emergency. Sometimes people in our congregation hit a rough patch for which they have no easy answers. A check from the Benevolence Fund is a direct expression of how this church cares for its own. Other times money from the Benevolence Fund is given to members of the community, as an expression of our care for those beyond these walls. A small gift can make all the difference when someone is struggling to buy medicine, food, diapers or baby formula, or to pay the rent, the light bill or a car repair bill. People who receive assistance are also encouraged to take advantage of the network of social support organizations, but sometimes there is no substitute for an immediate - and "no questions asked" - small monetary gift. It can mean the difference between someone making it through a difficult stretch or slipping further behind. Please give generously so that Emerson can continue to have a positive impact on people's immediate well-being.



Sunday Morning Schedule

Summer Sunday Schedule

9:45 a.m. Professional Childcare Begins

10 a.m. Adult Ed • 11 a.m. Worship • 11:15 a.m. Children's Programming

Please join us on Sundays for Worship service.



December 3 - Rev. Samuel Schaal—Waiting

As the winter holidays approach, daylight diminishes, days are shorter and temperatures are (somewhat) cooler. It is a season of anticipation. So we wait for warmth, for light, for ... what?

December 10 - Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange and Adrian Rodriguez—Music Sunday

As we approach winter, come join the Emerson Choir and Intergenerational Orchestra as in their performance of "The Longest Nights" by Timothy Takach. The music and texts observe winter as a descent as we approach the new year. In the words of the composer "We dig deep, we nestle ourselves in...we have to endure, we have to stay strong through the turning of the year. Hibernation and metamorphosis come to mind... Will we be the same person on the other side? Or do we grow? Do we change?"

December 17 - Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange—Divine Love Made Visible

UPDATED

People really can "alter earth's axis toward love." Memories of a very special aunt and holidays resplendent with light.

December 24 - Rev. Samuel Schaal —Would He Come Here?

Christmas Eve Morning Intergenerational Worship at 11 a.m.

The story of the season speaks of the holy infant born in a forlorn land to a wandering couple amid the squalor of a barn. So divinity appears in the most uncommon places, even in our own lives.

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

Christmas Eve Evening at 5:30 p.m.

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.

December 31 - Bill Hammons—Darkness and Light

As the year draws to a close, it seems appropriate to pause and consider the interplay of darkness and light in our lives -- both literally and metaphorically. Let's bundle up and take a walk in the dark together.

Adult Religious Education

The Adult Religious Education program is held in Room 205/205 on Sunday mornings at 10:00 am.

December 3—Beth Hammer—Alternative Gift Ideas

Holiday gift giving can be overwhelming, and costly. Join us for a discussion on Alternative Gift Ideas, including ways to break away from the commercialism of the season, making the money you spend count, and many more.

December 10 - Gary Wederspahn—A Big Question Discussion: Death with Dignity

Mr. Wederspahn has been an active supporter of the Death-with-Dignity movement, since the 1980s, with the Hemlock Society. He is a board member of Final Exit Network (FEN), a leading national right-to-die organization that grew out of the Hemlock Society and he is a member of Compassion & Choices and Exit International. As a life-long advocate of civil and human rights internationally and in the United States, he strongly believes that the choice to die on one's own terms is a basic human right that must be respected and defended.

December 17 - Kenny Jones—Class and Classism II

What's a UU to do?

Wheel of Life

We lost two longtime and dear Emersonians in November. Jim Porter died peacefully November 4 with his wife Kay Kamas and family with him. We will celebrate his life in a memorial service **Friday December 8 at 11 a.m.** in the

Sanctuary. Becky Vance died November 28. She had been suffering with depression and anxiety after she and her husband Cletus Lee were flooded out of their home by Hurricane Harvey. Her life will be celebrated at a memorial service in the Sanctuary **Monday December 11 at 11 a.m.** (Rev. Becky welcomes stories and remembrances of Jim Porter and of Becky Vance as she prepares their respective memorial services. Please send them to her at revel10619@gmail.com)

We will miss the quiet presence of longtime church members Beverly and Bob Hanson who are traveling to the West Coast and then Chicago, and will then settle somewhere after their travels. We said goodbye to them in worship on November 5.

Sally Phillip's husband suffered a stroke last month. Our thoughts are with him and Sally who is his caregiver.

Our thoughts go out to Olga Sosa, whose mother was diagnosed with cancer.

Ian Sachs is in rehabilitation care following heart valve surgery. He appreciates calls or emails during his time of recuperation.

Ben Withers is recovering well after surgery for an Achilles heel repair.

And we commiserate with Beth Ortuño whose home was flooded by a leaking plumbing pipe.



Congregational Meetings—Save-the-Dates!

Congregational Meeting on Budget will be on **Sunday, December 10**, in the Sanctuary at **12:30 p.m.**

Annual Meeting is on **January 28, 2018** in the Sanctuary at **12:30 p.m.**

Your vote is needed at both meetings. Childcare provided.

Annual Reports are due January 2, 2018 by e-mail to alejandra@emersonhouston.org.

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 2018 cannot be deducted, for tax purposes, in 2017, even if it is backdated to 2017. However, checks that are mailed and postmarked in 2017 are deductible in 2017, even if not received until 2018.

Meet Our Newest Members!



Michael
Eckenfels



Michael and
Lane Devereux



Marla
McDaniel



Loretta and
Grace Muldrow



Ellen
Norton



Terry
Rooney

Scents of the Season

Christmas memories, for me, are all about the smells. The tang of pine wreaths and trees and garland, wet wool socks drying above the woodstove, and of course, the thousand glorious scents of holiday baking.

My mother would spend the month before Christmas baking dozens of varieties of cookies, storing them out of sight until she was ready to

assemble cookie trays for the delivery people, garbageman, Dad's clients, and lavish trays to bring along to holiday parties. *I've got limited column inches here, but I promise to include a few family cookie recipes on the Emerson blog!*

My children have taken part in a few of those Wisconsin holidays, and the ones in Houston have significantly fewer cookies. But here we have tamales, and you don't need two layers of socks!

Do you need to smell something delicious? Come to our Deck the Halls Potluck after the service on December 3rd – we'll share a meal *and* you can take home one of the cinnamon ornaments our young Emersonians have crafted.

This month in Sunday school we'll have our usual class schedule December 3rd and 10th, then have many opportunities to worship and create memories together!

Katy Carpman
Director of Religious Education

Sunday School This Month

December 3: Sunday School Classes

December 10: Sunday School Classes

December 17-31: No Classes—
Families attend holiday services together!

Our nursery will be closed 12/24 and 12/31 so childcare staff can spend time with their families.



Help a homeless youth be a little warmer this holiday season—

Provide new and gently used jackets (adult sizes), sleeping bags, and gift cards (Target, Academy) through December.

Donations distributed by Grace Place, a 501(c)3 organization in the Montrose area.

Emerson Activities

Stitchers

Every Wednesday, 11 a.m. in Delaney Hall.

Emerson Choir

No audition needed. Rehearsals on Wednesdays from 7-9 p.m. Contact [Adrian Rodriguez](#)

LGBT+Allies Emersonians Potluck Lunch

UPDATED

Sunday, December 17, in Room 209, at 12:30 p.m. [More information](#)

Sandwiches for SEARCH Thursday, December 14, at 10:30 a.m. in Westwood Hall. Contact: [Mary Ann Rusk](#)

Emerson Poetry Group Sunday, December 17, at 9:45 a.m., Room 204.

Ministry for Earth

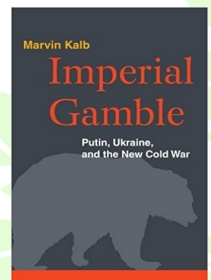
Ministry for Earth will not meet in December due to the holidays.

UPDATED

Book Clubs

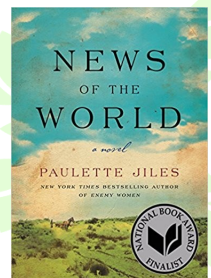
MEN'S

Monday, December 18, 6:30 p.m. at La Madeleine (10001 Westheimer Rd.)
Book: *Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War* by Marvin Kalb
Contact: [Gabe Gelb](#)



WOMEN'S

Wednesday, December 20, 7:30 p.m. in the Library.
Book: *News of the World* by Paulette Jiles
Contact: [Jill Rose](#)



DAYTIME

The Daytime Book Group will not have a book discussion in December.
Contact: [Dave Bergt](#)

Transitional Thoughts

If truth be told, many of us besides Elvis want to sing “Blue Christmas” during the holidays. The season is “supposed to be” festive and fun

as family and friends gather for (too much) food and (too many) gifts. The reality is different.

Many of us struggle in this season. This year we’re also dealing with the aftermath of Harvey flooding. So this year is likely to be more stressful for most of us, whether or not we flooded. Here are a few tips on coping during this season:

- **Be gentle with yourself.** Be aware of your feelings. If you are sad or grieving, that’s normal. You don’t have to be happy just because it’s the holidays.
- **Forget perfection.** The holidays don’t have to be like a Norman Rockwell painting. Families often don’t fit stereotypes.
- **Reach out to others.** If you feel lonely, contact friends. If you are having a particularly difficult time and are persistently sad, anxious, or have trouble meeting the daily demands of your life, seek professional help. Please know that Becky and I are ready to listen and reflect with you, as is our Lay Pastoral Ministry Team.
- **Say no.** If you’re overwhelmed, give yourself some time and space. You don’t have to make all the parties.
- **Take care of yourself.** Don’t overindulge in food or drink. Get a reasonable amount of exercise. Get plenty of sleep.
- **Use (or start) a spiritual practice.** This is a good season to set aside time for quiet, meditation, prayer, reflective reading, mindful walking, or just sitting in silence. Take a good, long, deep breath. If you’d like to chat about spiritual practices, let me know.

In the Good News of our Free Faith,



Rev. Samuel Schaal, Transitional Assistant Minister



Holidays at Emerson!

Please Join Us! All Are Welcome!

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|---|---|------------|
| 12/3 | Worship Service with Rev. Sam Schaal | 11:00 a.m. |
| Join us for this winter holiday worship service! | | |
| 12/3 | Deck the Halls Potluck | 12:15 p.m. |
| Share a potluck lunch following the service, then help decorate Emerson for the holidays! | | |
| 12/3 | Third Shop Local Craft Fair | 12:15 p.m. |
| Find unique items for yourself and gift giving! | | |
| 12/10 | Music Sunday | 11:00 a.m. |
| As we approach winter, come join the Emerson Choir and Intergenerational Orchestra as in their performance of "The Longest Nights" by Timothy Takach. | | |
| 12/17 | Worship Service with Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange | 11:00 a.m. |
| Join us for this holiday worship service! | | |
| 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 Morning Service with Rev. Sam Schaal | 11:00 a.m. |
| Join us for this Christmas Eve Morning Intergenerational Worship! | | |
| 12/24 | Christmas Eve Service with Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange | 5:30 p.m. |
| Fill your night with candles and carols, and bask in the soft, sweet things of the season. | | |
| 12/31 | Worship Service with Bill Hammons | 11:00 a.m. |
| Join us for this end-of-the-year worship service! | | |
| 1/7 | Turnings | 11:00 a.m. |
| Join us for this annual service, which marks the births, deaths, and other significant "turnings" in the lives of the Emerson community during the year past. | | |

*Childcare is available for starred event, with reservations at least two days in advance to alejan-dra@emersonhouston.org, or (713) 782-8250. No childcare on December 24th or December 31st.

Becky Edmiston-Lange, Senior Minister
1900 Bering Drive Houston, TX, 77057
713-782-8250
emersonhouston.org



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 p.m. **Next Class: December 17**

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

Stay Connected!



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PR News

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

Next Newsletter deadline is:
Tuesday, December 12