



Left to right: David and Ann May, Pat Smith and Beryl Kaminsky.

The Thoreau Congregation was launched in 1994 with the help of several UUs in the area, including Ann May. It merged with First Church in 2013 to become the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston, Thoreau/Stafford Campus. It has met in several locations over the years, and last fall moved into a lovely five acre campus in Fort Bend county. On Saturday, November 9, they held a dedication service to mark this exciting milestone. To learn more about the congregation, please go to www.firstuu.org/thoreau-richmond-campus.



emerson UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST church the emersonian

DECEMBER 2019—MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

The Emerson Music Department presents

We Need a Little Christmas!
A holiday pops spectacular



December 15 at 11am/ Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church

FOCUS

In this holiday season, our focus for December is Signs and Wonders.

Where and when do you find signs and wonders in your life? What signs tell you that the holidays are here?

Each month our Emerson community focuses on a single idea, going deeper with one another. You can engage through:

- Sunday services—Second Sundays are fully multigenerational
- Age-appropriate Sunday school lessons around the themes
- Exploration Sunday—10 AM, Second Sundays—a time for contemplation and dialogue
- Social media—sharing articles, quotes, and podcasts shared via Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram
- Optional covenant group sessions

Signs & Wonder

"Waiting for that big miracle to happen can prevent us from recognizing the small ones that happen every day."

— Charles F. Glassman

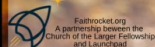


Photo Contest "Why I Love Emerson" Continues!

Share photos depicting the reasons you love Emerson or how you became connected to our community. Submit your photo, with a brief caption, to alejandra@emersonhouston.org by **Sunday, December 8**. Photos will be shared through Emerson's social media channels and throughout the church. Selected photos will be framed and displayed throughout Delaney Hall.



Beckonings

Newsletter deadlines being what they are, I'm writing this December *Beckonings* in mid-November. Thanksgiving is still almost three weeks away, so it seems a little premature to be anticipating "the holidays". The weather helps a little. We had our first real cold front this past week and another is predicted for two days from now. This one may bring our first freeze of the season. Time to think about covering plants, which for me will take precedence over putting up Christmas decorations. At least for a while. I like to take my holidays one a time, if I can. Let me savor Thanksgiving, first, please. Then I'll contemplate Hanukkah, Solstice and Christmas.

In the weeks ahead at Emerson there will be special activities and worship services which will give all of us the chance to celebrate the holidays. It's quite a potpourri of events really. So everyone should be able to find something at Emerson this holiday to stir the spirit and warm the soul. Our Emerson holiday celebrations will be further enriched by your active participation. (Please note the special Holiday insert for handy reference.)

But, remember, too, to take care of yourself. It's a time of year when it's very easy to expect too much of oneself, whether that expectation has to do with attending every special event and party, being the perfect holiday host, decorating to the max, or finding the absolutely perfect gifts for everyone on one's list. Our culture gives us any number of messages that reinforce unrealistic expectations by urging us to spend more than we can afford and to eat

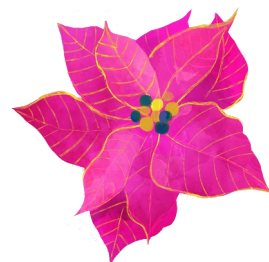
and drink more than we know is good for us. Plus, the culture also feeds us endless images of idealized holiday family togetherness. There's a lot of pressure for everything to be *absolutely wonderful!* Perhaps it's not surprising, then, that many people find the holidays not a source of joy and renewal but rather a time of depression and alienation because, truly, no reality can match the hyperbolic fantasy we see portrayed all around us.

It is especially important at this time of year to remember who one really is in one's core and the values one aspires to embody. Perhaps it also can help to remember that the door for entering the holiday season is Thanksgiving. The traditions of the season, whichever you celebrate, are made so much more profound when they rooted in a sense of gratitude. Reflecting on how much we already have been given helps keep us poised for remembrance and joy.

What's truly important about this holiday season is that it reawaken in us all humanity's timeless hope for a better world to come, for light that has the power to dispel the darkness and for 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.

See you in church - I hope!


Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange



December Share-the-Plate— 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. 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 small monetary gift and - "no questions asked". 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.



New Members! Prospective Members! Interested Visitors!

Did you not know that Louisa May Alcott was a Unitarian? Did you not know that Paul Newman was a UU? And Elliot Richardson? Who the heck was he? If you're surprised, maybe your friends will be also. Learn the basics of Unitarian Universalism and navigating Emerson in just two hours! Plus food! Meet other new UUs! Meet potential UUs! And get one (or more) freebies, if you pass the class! Don't miss this once in a while opportunity, presented by long-time UUs Beryl Kaminisky and Pat Smith. To reserve your place at the table and some food (with name and dietary restrictions):

RSVP to astat00@aol.com (00 is two zeros). Westwood Hall, 12:30 - 2:30 PM, Sunday, January 12, 2020.

Sunday Morning Schedule

9:45 AM Professional Childcare Begins
10 AM Adult Education • 11 AM Worship • 11:15 AM Children's Programming



Please join us on Sundays for Worship.

December 1—Gratitude UU Taizé Service with April DeConick and Stephen Lipp

Taizé is a contemplative ecumenical worship style that blends meditative song and silence. We will use familiar songs and readings from our hymnal to create a distinctive UU Taizé service. It's a good way to celebrate the Sunday after Thanksgiving - before we begin the December season.



December 8—Deck the Halls Worship Service

All ages collaborate to decorate our Sanctuary while exploring the signs and wonder of the holiday season. Let's all wear comfortable clothes (holiday sweaters optional.)

December 15—"We Need a Little Christmas" Holiday Pops Spectacular

As we approach winter, come join the Emerson Music Department and Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange in a Christmas pops performance!

Fala-lala-la-lal!

December 22—"Tis the Season with Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange and Katy Carpman

'Tis the season of signs and wonders, legends and stories, that bring us hope and joy as darkness approaches. The ancients searched the skies for portents and omens that told them light would come again. In this service for all ages we will sing carols and share stories. What sign or wonder tells *you* that it is time for the holidays? How do you know when the holidays have arrived? Bring a personal story to share.

December 24—Christmas Eve Service with Rev. Becky Edmiston-Lange and Adrian Rodriguez at 5:30 PM

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

December 29—One Precious Life: On the Threshold, Again? with Guest Minister Rev. Dan King

In this service, our Guest Minister, Rev. Dr. Dan King shares reflections on how the turning of the calendar calls us to reconsider our priorities for use of our precious time and other resources between career, family, and community.



Congregational Meetings— Save-the-Dates!

Congregational Meeting on Budget will be on **Sunday, December 15, in the Sanctuary at 12:30 PM**

Plan Ahead: Annual Meeting is on January 26, 2020 in the Sanctuary at 12:30 PM. Childcare provided for both meetings. Anyone who has been a member for at least ninety days has a vote.

*****Annual Reports are due January 7, 2020 by e-mail to alejandra@emersonhouston.org.*****

Please note: As you make your Year-End Contributions, the rule is that a contribution is effective when delivered. This means a check received in the church offering in January 2020 cannot be deducted for tax purposes in 2019, even if it is backdated to 2019. However, checks that are mailed and postmarked in 2019 are deductible in 2019, even if not received until 2020.

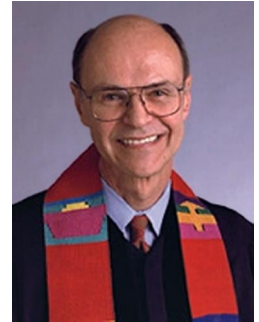
Wheel of Life



Those of us who remember Rita Loucks are deeply saddened to hear about her death earlier in September. Rita was a member at Emerson for decades. An informal memorial service was held for her by Emerson members in Westwood Hall on Sunday, November 24, 2019,

Our thoughts go out to Martin and Lisa Estill. We learned recently that Martin's mother is seriously ill.

We were saddened as well to learn of the death of Rev. Bob Schaibly in Portland, Oregon on November 11, 2019 of throat cancer. Rev. Schaibly was minister to the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston from 1982 to 2002 and respected and admired by many Emersonians. Bob also served UU congregations in Chicago and in Concord, New Hampshire prior to accepting the call to First Church, Houston. Bob was a champion for abolishing the death penalty, for abortion rights, for the right to die, and for marriage equality. Bob was also named a Dharma Teacher by the Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh.



Since 1991, Bob shared his life with Steven Storla. Bob and Steven chose to live in Portland after Bob retired from full-time ministry. The two men were married in 2015 on their 24th anniversary. After retirement, Bob was active as a member of the First Unitarian Church of Portland where he preached and led adult religious education classes. Bob was well beloved by his congregations and his colleagues. He touched countless lives in the Houston area, throughout the Unitarian Universalist community, and beyond. He is saddened at this death but he will be remembered with joy and gratitude for having known him. Our hearts go out to the Rev. Schaibly's husband Steven Storla, family, and friends.

Adult Religious Education (ARE)

Learning is a gift, learning in community is a treasure! Join us with our PotpoUUri of Adult Religious Education offering each Sunday, 10 AM in Room 205-206, unless noted otherwise:

- December 1 – We gather in The Gathering Place (church lobby) for coffee and conversation.
- December 8 – When and where do you find signs and wonders in your life? What is your response to wonder? Let's share our experiences and ideas in this facilitated hour.
- December 15 – The Nicomachean Ethics – Applying Aristotle to Social Justice in the 21st century, presented by Mike Condit
- December 22 – The Nicomachean Ethics – continued, presented by Mike Condit
- December 29 – We gather in The Gathering Place (church lobby) for coffee and conversation.



Spirit in Practice – facilitated sessions December 8th and 22nd, with open meditation space on December 1st, 15th and 29th at 10 AM in Room 208. Questions about Spirit in Practice? Contact Marci at 713marci@gmail.com.

And Poetry Group on December 15th! (9:45 AM in Room 204)

Emerson Podcast Launched!

Rev. Becky's sermons are now available on Stitcher, Google Podcasts, TuneIn, iTunes and Spotify! Subscribe and listen to our podcasts! <http://emersonhouston.org/podcast>



Emerson Activities

Beginner's Meditation -

Every Monday from 7-8:15 PM in Room 208. We welcome people from all backgrounds and spiritual practices. For additional information, please contact Ann May.

ELL Classes- Saturday from 1-4 PM and Tuesday/Thursday evening classes from 6:30-8:30 PM.

Interested in volunteering? E-mail the program director for more information.

Stitchers - Every Wednesday, 11 AM in Delaney Hall.

Emerson Choir - Every Wednesday from 7-9 PM. For all who are interested in sharing music with our beloved community, please attend the laid-back rehearsals. No audition needed—singers with all levels of experience are welcome! Contact Adrian Rodriguez with any questions and to get involved!

Sandwiches for SEARCH - Second Thursday of the month at 10:30 AM in Westwood Hall. Contact: Barbara Hopkins

Emerson Poetry Group - Third Sundays of the month at 9:45 AM, Room 204.

Local Craft Fair

Emerson will hold its 4th Shop Local Craft Fair on **Sunday, December 8**, after the service. We look forward to seeing all the wonderful items! Crafters and artists: If you would like to reserve space at the fair, please contact Beth Hammer (bethandjohn@gmail.com) or Robin McElfresh (mcelfreshrobin@att.net).

Game Nights for Teens and Families!

Every 3rd Saturday of the month from 7 - 9 PM.
Contact Michael Bloom at mfbloom12@gmail.com

Give the gift of "Justice Vegetables" to your family!



It's easy to bring justice vegetables from Plant It Forward to your kitchen. For folks on the run, you can change your order on-line, pick up at Emerson on Sundays after church, either every week, or every other week. Heading out of town? Simple – just go on-line and hold your order. You will be eating locally grown produce while helping refugees settle into their new life. Start your order here! (<https://plant-it-forward.org/>)

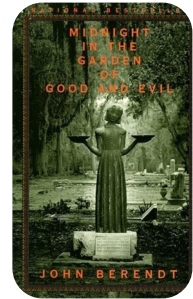
Planned Parenthood Roe V. Wade Luncheon

January 31, 2020

Marriott Marquis Hotel

Please join us to celebrate the 47th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision. We hope to have a large presence of Emerson members in attendance. Last year we had two tables. Let's make it three this year! Tickets are \$150. If interested, please contact Shelley Gottschalk at shelleyjg@gmail.com or call 713-899-2349.

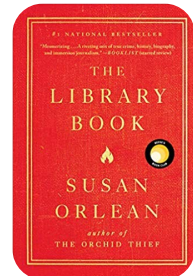
Book Clubs



MEN'S

Monday, December 16
6:30 PM at La Madeleine
(10001 Westheimer)

Book: *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Berendt
Contact: Cletus Lee



WOMEN'S

Wednesday, December 18
7:30 PM in the Library
Book: *The Library Book*
by Susan Orlean
Contact: Jill Rose

Emerson Bookstore

Stop by the bookstore to see the new titles in stock. While you're there, check out the great assortment of bumper stickers and hand-made cards.



Preparing for 2020: A Look at the Budget

By Katie Scott, Board President

As we enter into 2020, Emerson remains dedicated to our vision of becoming a place where anyone can find community and connection, no matter who they are. We will realize this vision by being true to our mission:

- We will create a beloved community where all are welcome and supported.
- We will support personal growth by encouraging exploration of the spirit and mind.
- We will take action to help build a better world.

Our vision and mission are lofty and take a lot of resources to accomplish. What we are able to do is determined by what we are able to raise through our pledge campaign. If we are unable to reach our goal for the 2020 campaign, we will see major impacts in the operations and programs of the church. **As of November 19, 2019, we are \$166,597 behind our 2020 goal of \$625,790.** In the face of a potential shortfall, the Board has been put in the painful position of making decisions about how to make up for the anticipated lack of resources. After careful and prayerful deliberation, the Board has decided that, if we are unable to make up the difference by the Annual Budget Meeting, the following programs will be impacted:

Congregational events: Church wide events will be reliant primarily on volunteer contributions not only of time, but also resources.

Children and Youth Religious Education: The RE program activities will be limited and there will be fewer events available for children.

Music: There will be program wide impacts on the music program affecting both worship and external programs.

UUA Annual Fund Contribution: Emerson will only be able to contribute 21% of our fair share to the UUA.

Social Action: Social action activities will become even more dependent on volunteer contributions and will be limited in scope.

Reserve Fund: There will be limited funds available for capital expenditures, such as gutter replacements or other emergency facility expenses.

Custodial Services: Emerson will have limited custodial services and we will see limitations in the quality of campus care.

Staffing: Becky has offered to forego any additional compensation to ensure fair compensation for the rest of Emerson staff.

I encourage all of you to consider what these reductions will mean for Emerson and for you personally. I ask that if you have not already pledged to please do so and, if you have already pledged, to consider increasing your pledge to ensure the health of Emerson and its programs. Please reach out to the Stewardship Committee to make your pledge at stewardship@emersonhouston.org or visit our webpage at <http://emersonhouston.org/make-a-pledge/>. If Emerson is going to be true to its vision and mission, we need the contributions of every single one of us.

Winter Solstice Celebration

Saturday, December 21 at 7:30 PM in the Emerson Sanctuary

Join this celebration for all ages, a family-friendly evening of music, readings, and candlelight. Our service includes lighting a circle of candles around the Sanctuary as music moves us from the dark silence of the quiet earth to a hopeful call for the return of the sun. Please linger after the service for refreshments and maybe even a little impromptu dancing. We invite you to bring a plate of goodies to share. To arrange childcare for

younger children, please call the church office at (713) 782-8250 by Wednesday.



Annual UU Network Luncheon

Spreading Our UU Voice

January 18, 2020

10 AM to 2 PM at Emerson/ Westwood Hall

The Unitarian Universalist Network will be holding the 2020 Network Luncheon. It is open to congregational ministers, officers and board members, congregational administrators and UU members in general. Please mark your calendars and RSVP at UUhouston.org/registration.

Religious Education

I'll admit it – if you ask me about signs of the holiday season, my first thoughts are grumpy. The too-soon decorating. The endless to-do lists and obligations.

Ah, but the signs and wonders... that refocus makes a difference.

- The cold snap reminding us that the universe contains seasons
- Delectable food pics in magazines, pushing me out of my day to day
- The excited faces of our youngest Emersonians...

What's on your list?

Sunday School This Month

Dec. 1: All ages attend Taizé service

Dec. 8: All ages attend Deck the Hall service

Dec. 15: Sunday School Classes

December 22-29: No Classes—
Families attend holiday services together!

*Nursery care available each Sunday, but
not Christmas Eve.*



At church we're going to take our time to breathe into wonders. Set aside those to-do lists and Scrooge nature for a couple of hours. And hey, traffic isn't bad on a Sunday, as long as you choose a route a few blocks away from the malls.



Katy Carpman

Director of Religious Education
katy.euuc@gmail.com

Our Mitten Tree

Make the winter a little warmer for a homeless teen. Bring in new or gently used:

- Gloves/mittens
- Hats/Scarves
- Jackets
- Sleeping Bags



All donations go to Montrose Grace Place, a Houston-based organization providing twice-weekly dinners plus toiletries, clean clothes, and community resources to homeless youth.

<https://www.montrosegaceplace.org/>

Do you prefer to give a monetary gift? Talk to Katy!



WISHING YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

May the season of joy fill your home with love and light.
Greetings from Becky, Karen, Katy, Ale, Adrian and Shan.



Becky Edmiston-Lange, Senior Minister

1900 Bering Drive Houston, TX, 77057

713-782-8250

emersonhouston.org

facebook.com/emersonhouston

twitter.com/emersonhouston



Come Learn What Membership Means at Emerson.

Open House - 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 8**

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

Stay Connected!



emersonhouston.org

facebook.com/emersonhouston

twitter.com/emersonhouston

meetup.com/emersonseekers

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 10 (Holiday Deadline)**



Digital version of this newsletter is available on our website, emersonhouston.org, under "News & Calendar."