

# the emersonian



## EMERSON, WE HAVE A NEW AV SYSTEM!

By Jill Rose

A wonderful crew of installers from Ford AV has been hard at work getting our new system in place. We cannot imagine a more helpful, resourceful group of people than these who have been doing this job!

As of this writing, the system is not entirely hooked up and tested, but we expect it to be completely operational by Sunday, November 22. Technical details aside, we will have GREAT SOUND! We will be able to record again!

We will have sound directly to the "Cry Room" and other auxiliary rooms around the Sanctuary! We will have projection potential, a Blu-Ray connection and a WONDERFUL DROP-DOWN SCREEN!

Clearly, with all this new equipment, there will be a learning curve for the operators and the service planners. We don't expect to show-off all its bells and whistles--and images--immediately, but we know that soon, it will all be well-integrated into the life of the church.

In addition, right now there are too few of us operators to do justice to the system--

**JOIN US! WE ARE A FRIENDLY, SUPPORTIVE GROUP AND  
WE DON'T EVEN HAVE MEETINGS!**



### Holidays at Emerson! Please Join Us!

**12/6 Deck the Halls Potluck after 11 AM Service**

Share a potluck lunch and decorate the Sanctuary and The Gathering Place for the holidays. New this year: Emerson Craft Fair!

**12/13 Winter Reflections - 11:00 AM**

Holiday readings and music, lifting up the universal themes of the season.

**12/21 Solstice Service - 7:30 PM**

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

**12/24 Christmas Eve Service - 5:30 PM**

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

*Our beloved community of faith, reason, and affection welcomes all to grow  
in mind and spirit as we build a better world.*

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## Religious Education

I got to see my baby niece roll over! She's over a thousand miles away—I last visited when she was a newborn. And yet, there she was on my phone screen, squealing and rolling.

For all that pundits might claim technology to be evil and isolating, I see it as miraculous. Technology helps connection happen in ever-expanding ways, bridging distance and time zones, bringing together people who might never have met another with their interest or struggle.

When my children were babies we didn't know of Facebook or Twitter or Instagram or Snapchat, and twenty years ago the internet scarcely had pictures! Now, many of us use these tools daily to be in touch with our nearest and dearest, as well as folks we haven't seen in those twenty years, and folks we've yet to meet in person. The digital world is no less real; it's just less physical.

And sometimes screens and the physical world engage in fruitful ways. Thanks to the generosity of so many Emersonians, and the hard work of our AV improvements task force, our sanctuary is now graced by a large screen, allowing us to project not just hymn lyrics and the occasional pretty picture, but to incorporate video clips and remote guests into our worship services and special events!

In just a few weeks my sisters and I will gather our families around the warm glow of webcams, so we can shout MERRY CHRISTMAS and open presents with each other, the miles so much less limiting. (And yes, we still look forward to the next chance for hugs!) May your holidays be bright-

Katy Carpman  
Director of Religious Education



### December Schedule

December 6: Age-graded classes

December 13: Holiday Concert

December 20: Chalice Hour

December 24: Christmas Eve-5:30 pm

December 27: Holiday weekend

(No 10 AM program, all ages in service. Nursery is open.)

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## Welcome Our New Members!



Julie Faas



Ann and Leah Hidalgo



Wilhelm Schmidt

# 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

**December 6**

### *The Power of Light*

And so we enter the season of lights - the candles of the Hanukkah menorrah, the bonfires and yule logs of the Winter Solstice festivals, the star that shone in the East guiding the Magi on their way - and of course, the electric lights that sparkle from Christmas trees galore. Why do human beings at this time of year seem to need light so? How does light speak to our spirits? And what might it mean to say "we are the light of the world"?

**December 13**

### *Winter Reflections*

The Emerson performing arts organizations come together to offer an opportunity to reflect on the deeper meaning of the winter season: The importance of the darkness, valuing the coming light, the need for celebration, and a call for solidarity.

**December 20**

### *The Anatomy of Hope*

Did you know that hope has a body, that its shape creates the possibility for a better outcome? It's time to buff up our hope physique and strengthen the sinews of our expectations for the world of which we dream.

**December 27**

### *Holiday Taize Service*

In this quiet period between the Winter Solstice and the New Year we will recall the blessings of the year past - and look to the year ahead. The simple and accessible music of Taize provides the perfect antidote to the business of the holiday season.

## 10 AM Adult Religious Education

**Who Made Jesus God?— Mike Condit** facilitator, please see page 6 for more description.

**Un-Conversation Discussions:** A weekly discussion of current topics chosen by those present. Join us for lively and thought-provoking conversation in Room 209!

**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. December 20 Room 204

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## Revels

As we write this, the two of us are still in shock over the barbarity in Paris and Beirut. There has been widespread and heartfelt support for the French, but, as some commentators have observed, the attack in Beirut generated no such outpouring from the western world. All the major news media covered extensively the twin suicide bombs in Lebanon, but, sadly, the western world seems to have become inured to violence in the Middle East. It is not hard for us to imagine that we here in the United States are much more like citizens of Paris than we are like citizens of Beirut.

We can't help but note that the distinction is yet another example of the relentless power of prejudice to work in unconscious ways on our assumptions, reactions and sense of outrage and fear. It is not unusual for 129 people to die in a day in Syria; but now that Paris has been attacked we hear repeated cries: "We must do something!"; "Keep the Syrians out of the United States."; "Put boots on the ground!" Certainly, there are savages and savagery aplenty and they cannot be allowed to have the upper hand. But what about the savage heart, existing in us all, that is the foundation of these atrocities? Will we let it have the upper hand? Those who imagine there is a military solution to this spiraling madness are mistaken. Paris is not Pearl Harbor and ISIL is not the Japanese Imperial Army. Leaders always want to do *something* but do they really believe, do we believe, that we can win a war of guns and bombs in which the asymmetrical advantage favors those who do not care about casualties - their own or others. Is "war" even the right word to describe what is really at stake? No one needs to worry about ISIL occupying the **city** of Paris. But we should fear ISIL's occupying the hearts and minds of **citizens** of Paris, or Beirut, or New York, or Houston.

The ancient Greek hero Hercules was given the task (one of twelve) of slaying Hydra, a many headed serpent monster who, when one head was cut off, would grow two in its place. Our military efforts in the Middle East and Afghanistan seem to have been more successful at creating enemies than slaying them. No one quite knows what makes sense – damned if we stay and

damned if we go. But perhaps there is an alternative view. One ancient Greek author, Pausanias, believed that Hydra was nothing more than a big water snake and that the tale was inflated to add to Hercules' heroic mystique.

Maybe we should ask ourselves if we too easily accept ISIL's preference to *think of itself* as a monstrous Hydra. They claim to be acting on the authority of Allah. But maybe they are not really Muslims. Maybe that claim is mere camouflage to hide a well nursed self-indulgent rage. Maybe they are better viewed as a criminal gang of ambitious testosterone fueled angry guys with well armored pickup trucks. Let's not give them more credit than they deserve. How about we refuse to let them occupy our minds and hearts with their tales of brutality? How about we choose to view them not as strong but as weak because they are held hostage by their own rage? Just because they call themselves "Muslims" does not mean that we have to agree.

The answer to our security is not in refusing to accept Syrian refugees, as the governors of too many states imagine. That posture confuses the victims of criminal violence with the thugs who perpetuate it and serves to preserve the hold on our minds such thugs command. The call to investigate Syrians already in the U.S. reminds us a bit too much of the Japanese internment camps the U.S. built in World War II. Like those camps, it is a bad answer to the wrong question. In this holiday season, let us focus on building up the new world we want and not become trapped in re-fighting old battles. What's at stake here is not "Western Civilization" vs. "Islam." The real battle is internal: what will occupy our minds and hearts? Will it be fear of strangers or the simple recognition that we are all: Americans; Syrians; Lebanese, Parisians... are in this together? Because the distance between Raqqa, Syria and Paris, France no longer matters we have no choice but to make this earth a home for us all. ISIL does not know how to do this – we must.

In faith and affection,  
Becky and Mark Edmiston-Lange

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## In Memory of Mina McDuffie: August 18, 1933 - August 15, 2015



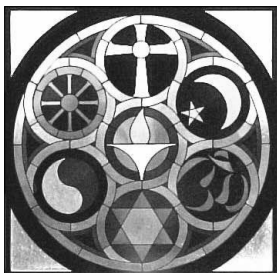
On Saturday, October 24, we celebrated the life of beloved Emerson member, Mina McDuffie. Mina and Tom were introduced to Emerson in the seventies by friends who insisted the McDuffies were Unitarian Universalists; they just didn't know it. They started attending in earnest in the 90s and finally joined in 2001 - and for Mina it was a spiritual homecoming. She developed abiding friendships at Emerson and she and Tom became integral parts of our community. Mina and Tom served together on our Lay Pastoral Ministry Team, bringing companionship and comfort - and sometimes ribald humor - to housebound members. They were in charge of the Picture Directory one year. But perhaps the most important aspect of Emerson for Mina was the Stitchers, our Wednesday morning needlecraft and sewing group, where the friendships forged were by far more important than the actual projects completed.

Mina was born in Doerun, Georgia, a small southern town. She played basketball in high school and studied art at Valdosta State College. She met Tom, her flying ace, while working at Spence Field in Moultrie, Georgia. Tom and Mina were married almost

61 years, with two daughters, Mary Van Grindle and Hilary Bynum, four grandsons and one great grandson. Aside from her family (and Emerson), Mina had three great loves: reading, sewing, and anything to do with England. She was a library volunteer for over 35 years; her beautiful sewing projects were without peer. Mina and Tom took their first trip to England in 1980 and Mina became convinced that she had actually been born in England and spirited away to America by gypsies. They would return 13 times.

Unrepentantly, outspoken in her progressive political opinions, Mina nonetheless personified Southern gentility and charm. And she was the soul of compassion. She had a phenomenal memory for names and conversations - could recognize a person she had met only once years before when she saw that person again in an entirely different location. And once she met you, you were pretty much forever within her circle of care and concern. She is and will be sorely missed.

### *Wheel of Life*



- ◇ We are glad that Florrie Snively is recovering so quickly from her hip replacement surgery and hope she continues to progress well.
- ◇ We were sad to say goodbye to Mary Ann Stanley, but wish her well in her new home in the Woodlands close to her daughter.
- ◇ We hope that Annieda deVilliers' broken rib will soon be on the mend. And we note with pride and pleasure that son Ruan deVilliers is now an Eagle Scout!

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# Recurring December Activities - You Are Invited

**Choir Rehearsal:** Wednesdays, 7-9 PM in the sanctuary. All experience levels welcome, no auditions!

Contact: Music Director, Adrian Rodriguez, [adrian.euuc@gmail.com](mailto:adrian.euuc@gmail.com).

**Emerson Intergeneration Orchestra:** Sundays, 9-10 AM in Westwood Hall. All musicians and ages welcome. Contact: Orchestra Director, Bill Tackett, [tackett.bill@gmail.com](mailto:tackett.bill@gmail.com).

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

**Women's Evening Book Group:** Wednesday, December 9, 7:30 PM in the Library. *In Falling Snow* by Mary-Rose MacColl . Contact: Jill Rose, [jillorose@gmail.com](mailto:jillorose@gmail.com).

**Sandwiches for SEARCH:** Thursday, December 10, at 10:30 AM in Westwood Hall. Contact: Barbara Hopkins, [bbhopkins@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bbhopkins@sbcglobal.net).

**Men's Book Group:** Wednesday, December 16, 6:30 PM at Luby's, 2730 Fondren. The book of the month *The President's Club: Inside the World's Most Exclusive Fraternity* by Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy. Contact: Dave Bergt, [dbergt@comcast.net](mailto:dbergt@comcast.net).

## 10 AM ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### WHO MADE JESUS GOD? Facilitator: Mike Condit

#### December 6

Most Christians believe that Jesus is God. This is such a central Christian doctrine that it is usually not studied or questioned in Christian churches. But Christians have not always believed that Jesus was divine. How and why did this thinking develop, and what problems has it caused along the way? This will be the first of two sessions in which the history of how Jesus became God is examined. This week will focus on the first 100 years following Jesus' death.

#### December 13

The historical examination of how Jesus came to be regarded as God will continue by looking at how the most important orthodox doctrines in Christianity were developed. These are the Trinity (the definition of God) and doctrines dealing with Christology (the nature of Jesus, or how Jesus can be both divine and human). These doctrines solidified the belief that Jesus was God. The current implications for Christianity will also be discussed.

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## Nominees for the Election to be held at the 2016 Congregational Meeting

*By Betsy Gelb*

Our annual meeting in January of 2016 will include the election of three new members of the Board of Trustees, three new members of the Nominations Committee, two new members of the Committee on Ministry, and one for the Outreach Committee. The 2015 Nominations Committee is delighted to list our nominees below:

For the Board of Trustees: Ruth Alkons-Wolinsky, Mark Andersen, Nancy Lipp

For the Nominations Committee: John Hammer, Kenny Jones, Kris Taylor

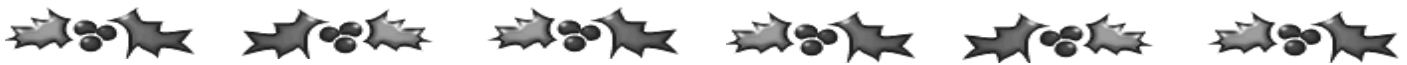
For the Committee on Ministry: Phillip Baxley, Bob Hanson

For the Outreach Committee: Karen George, currently serving a one-year term but now being re-nominated to continue as a committee member.

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 (I'd suggest hard copy, addressed to the committee and mailed to or dropped off at the church) at least 35 days before the annual meeting. That meeting is scheduled January 17, 2016, at 12:15 PM 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 nominating committee consisted of Barb Adams, Sarah Boyd, Linda Condit, Betsy Gelb, Carole Huelbig, Florrie Snively, and Eric Watson.



### **Texas Chili Cook-off Fundraiser to Support Emerson's UUNO English Class**

*By Deborah Wotring Landis*

The Emerson UUNO English Class Leadership Team is hosting a Chili Cook-Off fundraiser in the middle of February in Westwood Hall at Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church. This is your chance to dust off your finest Texas chili and/or dessert recipes to obtain top bragging rights amongst your fellow Emersonians and other distinguished guests. If you are not a competitive spirit, then worry not because there will be plenty of tasty chili and sweets to sample. Be prepared to take notes and vote for your favorite entries! Come on out and spend some quality time with your Emerson family and help support a key social action initiative of our church.

The fundraising portion of this event will be based on per-person charitable donations at the door, so please show up with an empty belly and a charitable heart. All proceeds from this event will be used in support of Emerson's English classes for the two semesters in 2016. Stay tuned for more information in the newsletter, or feel free to contact Thomas Horvath at 501-213-5807 or Deborah Landis at 713-504-0819.

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## Spiritual Partners Program

*By Ken McLeod*

For the past two years, Emerson's Committee on Ministry has been working to develop a viable program for long term UUs and those newer to our faith for mutual spiritual growth.

The stated purpose of the program is: *To help people encounter their deeper, more authentic selves in order to become a more positive member of the community. This is best accomplished in dialogue.*

This program will create a catalogue of these longer term UUs who have volunteered to participate. Each catalogue entry will represent the individual's responses to a number of questions related to their spiritual journey to date along with a little information about their background and a photo. Couples may choose to partner with another couple.

People newer to our faith (called Seekers in this program) will be allowed to choose a Spiritual Partner based on what they read in the catalogue entries.

Then the two will be exposed to some orientation and training, some suggested readings, perhaps a meeting midway, and so forth. They commit to work together for six months, renewable for a maximum of 6 more months, but no longer. (This is not to be a lifetime commitment.) The frequency and the nature of these interactions between the Partner and the Seeker during that six month period will be left largely up to the partners. Some will meet frequently, others less often. Some will have more telephonic or electronic contact while others will always choose face to face contact. The point is, each pairing will be unique. Each member of the pair will learn from interaction with the other in this nonhierarchical partnership.

It is the goal of the Committee on Ministry to roll this program out in early 2016. If you are interested or have questions, feel free to contact Ken McLeod, chair ([cabaretken@aol.com](mailto:cabaretken@aol.com); 713-628-1776) or any member of the Committee on Ministry. (Greg Hunt, Bub Joyce, Clara Kosloff, Robin McElfresh, and Cynthia Miller.)



*Beginning Level English Class with Teacher Clara Kosloff and classroom volunteer Norma Atherton*



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## December Share-the-Plate Collections

Members and friends sustain the operating expenses of the church with their pledges, enabling us to give away our Sunday offering. Throughout the month of December our Sunday plate offerings will benefit fellow Unitarian Universalists in Transylvania by supporting the Francis Balazs Scholars Program and Emerson's partner church, St. Nicholas.

The Francis Balazs Scholars Program enables one Unitarian minister from Transylvania to attend Starr King School for the Ministry (a UU seminary in Berkeley, CA) for one year. While there, the scholar carries a full academic load and visits approximately 30 congregations during the year on the weekends and over winter break. These talented, enthusiastic scholars gain fresh ideas and new ministry techniques, which they adapt for use in their home churches in Transylvania.

Emerson Church has a long standing relationship with the St. Nicolas Unitarian Church in Transylvania, helping the congregation with many projects. Emerson has benefitted in return through this connection to one of the birthplaces of Unitarian thought in Europe. This month's offerings will help St. Nicholas repair the church roof and supplement the minister's salary.

**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 2016 cannot be deducted, for tax purposes, in 2015, even if it is backdated to 2015. However, checks that are mailed and postmarked in 2015 are deductible in 2015, even if not received until 2016



# Save These Dates in December...

## Deck the Halls!

December 6th, following the worship service and classes, we'll have a potluck lunch and then take some time to decorate our sanctuary and Gathering Place for the holiday season. And new this year, crafting Emersonians will have items for sale. Our children will sell a craft, with those proceeds funding their own social action initiatives. What dish will you bring? Sign up [online](#) or in the Gathering Place.



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## Congregational Meetings coming up

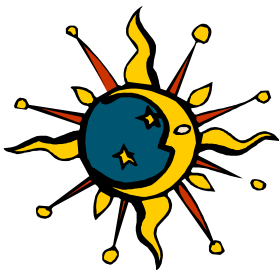
Congregational Meeting on Budget December 13, in the Sanctuary at 12:30 PM.

Annual Meeting January 17, 2016 in the Sanctuary at 12:15 PM. Your vote is needed at both meetings.

\*\*\*Annual Reports are due January 5, 2016 by e-mail to [mary@emersonhouston.org](mailto:mary@emersonhouston.org).\*\*\*

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## Winter Solstice Celebration December 21 at 7:30 PM in the Sanctuary



Once again, the earth turns in her orbit, shortening the days and lengthening the nights. During this time of darkness, we gather again to reflect on what gifts come to us in times of darkness. What lies waiting for you? Come, join us for a family-friendly evening of music, readings, and candlelight as we honor the darkness of winter and celebrate the return and warmth of the life-giving sun. We are delighted to welcome back Emerson musicians including Mim and Ed Freiter and Beth Hill. 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 call back the sun, 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 sweets, Wassail, and maybe even a little dancing. Please consider bringing some goodies or helping to set up the refreshment table. To arrange childcare for younger children, please call the church office 713-782-8250 by Friday, December 18.

Want to help? We need ushers, candle lighters, and readers; we ask you to attend a short walk-through and mic practice on Dec 17 at 12:15 PM. Contact Ann May at [abmay11@gmail.com](mailto:abmay11@gmail.com) or call/text 713-502-7528 if you are interested.



## Socktober Success

*By Barbara Adams*

The first annual Socktober to benefit Interfaith Ministries was an outstanding success. Thanks to your generosity, and the support of our RE students, we have donated 180 pairs of socks to help Meals on Wheels recipients stay warm this winter.

# News

## Emerson's UUNO English Class Project Receives Grant Funding and Celebrates Another Successful Semester

By Deborah Wotring Landis and Ann May

The Emerson English Class Project has just completed its third successful 12 week semester. With our three full time volunteer teachers, Norbert Welk, Clara Kosloff and Geraldine Shawa, as well as our church and community volunteers, we taught over 50 students this semester. Our typical class attendance was 25 students with an all time high of 36 students attending class on October 17<sup>th</sup>. The attendance for the children who were cared for by our paid childcare staff during the Saturday classes ranged from 8 to 17.



*Beginning Level English Class with teacher Norbert Welk and classroom volunteer Dennis Kirby*



*Level 2 English Class with teacher Geraldine Shawa and classroom volunteers Kate Marshall, Sarah Boyd, Dan Rigney, and Elizabeth Lindheim*

Our next semester will begin with registration for new students on January 9<sup>th</sup> and the first day of class will be January 16<sup>th</sup>. Look for flyers in The Gathering Place in a couple of weeks to take to your neighbors and friends who you think could benefit from our English classes. In addition to our three full time volunteer teachers, many thanks to the following 33 volunteers who helped to make this semester possible and helped to build a better world: Leticia Anderson, Ann May, David May, Sarah Boyd, Dennis Kirby, John Minear, Mariann Kaye, Norma Atherton, Michelle Corron, Adelaide Horvath, Uno Wahren, Alisha Loftin, Lisa Wharen, Tina Obut, Kate Marshall, Elisabeth Lindheim, Mikki Dorsey, Ayub Alganmi, Dan Rigney, Diana Maciel, Destiny Alberts, Jessica

Morales, Beth Ortuno, Mischa Enos, Donald Smith, Jane Zachritz, Mark Holt, Silvia Jason, Mark Jason, Matther Jason, Shannon Butler, Jill Rose, Mike Hilgart and Deborah Wotring Landis.

The English class leadership team is pleased to announce that the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program's Fund for Social Responsibility has awarded a grant to the Emerson English Class Project in the amount of \$6,600.00 for the two semesters of 2016. Also, awarded was \$2,000.00 in Technical Assistance for organizational development and sustainability. The remaining funds in the amount of \$4,676.00 needed for 2016 will have to be raised through donations from Emersonians and friends. Contact Deborah Landis for additional information at 713-504-0819 or [dlandis570@aol.com](mailto:dlandis570@aol.com).



Becky and Mark Edmiston-Lange, Co-Ministers

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## New to UU? Want to Know More?

### PR News

Please send all submissions for the newsletter, E-blast, Order of Service, and website to [pr@emersonhouston.org](mailto:pr@emersonhouston.org).

Our Newsletter submission deadline is Tuesday, December 15, by noon.

Email submission to [pr@emersonhouston.org](mailto:pr@emersonhouston.org).

**Join Emerson Sunday** - Ready to join? The Membership Committee and Co-Minister Becky welcome you to a conversation about Emerson and to sign the membership book if you desire. Meet in the Library at 12:30 PM.

**Next Class: December 13**

*Child care is provided. Please RSVP with the office at [mary@emersonhouston.org](mailto:mary@emersonhouston.org) at least five days before the event.*

[www.emersonhouston.org](http://www.emersonhouston.org)

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