

the emersonian

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

By Betsy Gelb

Our annual meeting is January 17 in the Sanctuary, and 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 and bios:

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 Board of Trustees, all three-year terms

Ruth Alkons Wolinsky joined Emerson in 2012. She says: As an ex-Catholic from rural eastern Pennsylvania, Emerson was the first church she felt comfortable in after "shopping around". Ruth met her husband, Matt, at Pitt during undergrad, then followed him to North Carolina. He did graduate work in geology at Duke and she in environmental engineering at UNC - Chapel Hill. They moved to Minneapolis for 4+ years, Matt as a post-doc at the Univ. of Minnesota, and Ruth working as a consultant engineer. In January 2009 they moved to Houston where Matt took a job with Shell. Their daughter, Elena, was born in 2011, and Ruth has worked at home most of the time since. Besides a few part-time jobs, she has spent the past 4.5 years as a volunteer, as an officer for her local Engineers without Borders chapter, president of her HOA, and volunteering for events at her daughter's school. At Emerson, Ruth teaches RE, is a supporting player on the AV team, and chaired the 2015 Emerson Auction.

Mark Andersen, an Emerson member for about 10 years, says, "Emerson is the first church I ever formally joined, because it feels like home to me." He served on the Leap of Faith ad hoc committee and, after several years as an usher, served as Ushering Committee co-chair with his wife, Holly. He was on the organizing committee for the Southwest UU Conference when it was last held at Emerson. He retired recently from a career as a scientist, engineer, and technology journal editor in the oil industry and is currently working on several novels that he hopes Hollywood producers will tear themselves apart to film. Regardless of the eventual outcome, he's enjoying making stuff up for a change.

Nancy Lipp joined Emerson 10 years ago after a move from New Orleans with her husband, Stephen, six years after becoming a UU. While at Emerson she has chaired a covenant group, chaired the church's auction, and been a child and adult religious education teacher. She has also volunteered in the office and been active in the Leap of Faith project, in communication efforts, as a member of Woman's Alliance, and in the weekly Stitches group. An engineer by profession, Nancy now teaches physics at The Tenney School.

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

Religious Education



For the past year or so, I've worn a FitBit. It tracks my steps, flights of stairs, sleep efficiency, and times of high activity. Its app shows me how I'm doing, and allows me to track other fields like water intake and specific exercises.

But there's no spiritual growth feature--apparently that's beyond the capacity of this little wristband. I've experimented with other apps (SuperBetter is the current trial) and I'm always reading, but I need other people, for sharing ideas and keeping me on the right track.

Thank goodness for church --a great opportunity for the growth AND the connections.

How would you like to stretch your spirit in 2016?

Our 10 AM adult religious education program concentrates on living our UU values.

January: Wi\$dom Path—a UU Perspective on money and values with Clint Harris

February: UU Social Justice History with Jane Collins and Kenny Jones

March: Hands-on Social Justice sessions, a collaboration with our Social Action Council

April: UU Perspectives on Palestine, with Dana Ashrawi

May: UU Ethics

In February, we'll try out a 10 AM offering for parents—stay tuned for more news on that front!

Our religious education programs for children and youth start up again on January 3rd, continuing this year of UU Identity. Together our classes think deeply on our values and how we put them into practice every day.

As you plan your 2016, consider the many UU camps happening this summer, from Southwest conference camps for children, youth, and families in Kerrville, to opportunities for our youth to do service work or ponder seminary through the UU Service Committee and UUA youth office!

Looking forward, we'll begin a conversation for all of us— how can our community of faith best grow children who thrive and create change in our modern world?

Happy New Year!

Katy Carpman

Director of Religious Education

January Schedule

January 3: Chalice Hour

January 10: Age-Graded Classes

January 17: Social Action Sunday

January 24: Age-Graded Classes

January 31: Age-Graded Classes

10 AM Adult Religious Education

The Wi\$dom Path: Money, Spirit, and Life — Clint Harris, facilitator We begin with a discussion of money, ways in which it influences our lives and issues such as economic justice. Our next step will be to consider how the major religions approach money. The program will conclude by considering our financial behaviors and how we can consume and spend according to our values.

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. January 17, Room 204

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

January 3

Turnings

This annual service, which marks the births, deaths and other significant “turnings” in the lives of the Emerson community during the year past, has become a deeply significant ritual to many. It gives us a unique opportunity, in the context of our beloved congregation, to acknowledge the range and complexity of emotions we experience through all the many changes that are part of the cycle of life.

January 10

Hope is a Spiritual Posture

Hope is the antidote to despair - despair for the world, despair about our individual circumstances. We all have times when we question life's meaning or wonder whether our small efforts can ever really make a difference on the side of fairness and right. How do we cultivate hope and make it real? What distinguishes hope from naive optimism? How do we witness to hope in religious community? The newest members of the Lay Pastoral Ministry Team - purveyors of hope within our midst - will be commissioned during the service. Please be there to honor your fellow Emersonians who have volunteered for a “ministry of presence” to their fellow congregants.

January 17

Beyond Racism II

Last year at this time, we were mourning the deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice and others - deaths which had exposed a deep well of anger and pain in our nation's soul. Sadly, the intervening year has seen more of the same. None of us like this state of affairs, but sometimes we have little clarity about next steps. However, there are things we can do to address the deep seated dynamics of inequality and suspicion. There will be a time for congregational sharing.

January 24

Preparing Our Children for the World They Inherit

We face many large questions about the future of society: More suspicion and isolation or more confidence and connection? Fears of scarcity or enjoyment of abundance? More affection or more force? While what we decide now will shape that future - we must also equip our children so that they not only can make a living - but also make a life. The challenges they will face are in some ways unprecedented and so the skills we can give them as Unitarian Universalists must be crafted to have dramatic impacts upon their well-being.

January 31

You Gotta Have Faith?

George Michael, Limp Bizkit, and Europe all sang about it. But what does faith mean? UU's often equate it with an unreasoned belief for which there is no evidence, as in “blind faith” (which, btw, in caps, is the name - for those of us old enough to remember - a premier band, yes?). But maybe the word needs to be redeemed. Let's not let others define it for us! (This sermon was originally scheduled for November 8 but was preempted by a response to the defeat of HERO.)

Revels

Three people looked out over the Grand Canyon - an artist, a pastor and a cowboy - and each cried out in exclamation. The artist opined, "Ah, what a beautiful scene to paint!" The minister exclaimed, "What a wonderful example of God's handiwork!" And the cowboy lamented, "What a terrible place to lose a cow!"

So, okay, you've probably heard it before, but it does provide us an entry to talk some more about our sabbatical plans because one of the places we will visit is the Grand Canyon. If you remember from our column two months ago, the focus of our sabbatical is on the intersection of landscape, spirituality and morality with an eye to figuring out how to motivate people to "save the planet." (Check out the November Emersonian for more on the timing and rationale for our sabbatical.) We will be exploring these topics through extensive reading and through travel to "sacred" places which will both further our exploration and allow us to renew our own spiritual connection to the earth.

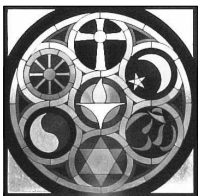
Why the Grand Canyon? Several reasons really. Mark has never been there and Becky only once, almost 40 years ago and, while deemed one of the world's most magnificent scenic landscapes, it has also been sacred space to numbers of First Nations, ranging from White Mountain Apache to the Pueblo of Zuni. It has also figured prominently in the conservation and environmental protection movements. Further, it's close to Sedona, also a sacred landscape for earlier peoples, and which today attracts people from all over the world because - supposedly - there are "vortexes" in that area where the earth's energy is imagined to be inordinately powerful. We're not so sure what to make of that; but Sedona is a place of rare beauty, ancient sites, lots of opportunities for spiritual exploration and encounters with many people who think they are onto something.

But the Grand Canyon is not our first stop. That will be the Everglades. Everglades National Park has been described as the first national park established to preserve a vital ecosystem rather than a place of obvious grandeur and beauty. Maybe so, but long time friends of ours, a couple, find it the most beautiful area on earth. One of them has been exploring its endless marshes, dense mangrove forests, and labyrinthine channels for nearly 50 years, going places the Park Rangers rarely or never go. Some of those rangers even have been known to seek his expertise. Both of our friends are dedicated environmentalists and to them, the Everglades are most decidedly "sacred ground," as it was to the Seminoles and the Miccosukees and, no doubt, to the Tequesta, before them. We look forward to picking our friends' brains about how and why they came to love the "River of Grass", the prospects for its - and the planet's - future as well as reconnecting with these beloved old friends.

So that's two decidedly different landscapes to explore during our time away, time for which we are exceedingly grateful. Stay tuned for more.

In faith and affection,
Becky and Mark Edmiston-Lange

Wheel of Life



- ◇ Our thoughts and prayers with Margie Elliott's mother, Fern Dauphin Chaffin, age 96, died on November 24 in Palestine, Texas.
- ◇ Emerson members, Jen and Chris Paschke, along with kids Owen and Ryan, are off to Australia again for a two year work assignment for Chris. They are living in Perth and expect to be back in Houston the summer of 2017.
- ◇ Our thoughts are with John Aucock and family as John begins a new form of chemotherapy.
- ◇ We are glad to hear that Gabe Gelb is back at home and recovering well from his recent surgery.

Recurring January 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.

Emerson Intergeneration Orchestra: Sundays, 9-10 AM in Westwood Hall. All musicians and ages welcome. Contact: Orchestra Director, Bill Tackett, 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, January 20, 7:30 PM in the Library. *The Witches: Salem, 1692* by Stacy Schiff. Contact: Jill Rose, jillrose@gmail.com.

Sandwiches for SEARCH: Thursday, January 14, at 10:30 AM in Westwood Hall. Contact: Barbara Hopkins, bbhopkins@sbcglobal.net.

Men's Book Group: Wednesday, January 20, 6:30 PM at Luby's, 2730 Fondren. The book of the month *The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Olympics* by Daniel James Brown. Contact: Dave Bergt, dbergt@comcast.net.

Daytime Book Group: Thursday, January 21, 10 AM in the Library. This month's book is *Dead Wake*, by Eric Larson. Contact: Dave Bergt, dbergt@comcast.net.

Emerson English Classes for Adults—Please help volunteer

by Deborah Wotring Landis

Emerson's English Classes for 2016 will begin registration for its 14-week spring semester from 2:00 to 4:00 PM on Saturday January 9th. We need volunteers to assist with testing the new students that day. The first full class will begin Saturday January 16 from 1:00 to 3:00 PM. This semester we are adding a full class on Thursday nights from 6:30 to 8:30 PM. Due to the grant money we received from the UUA Funding Program, we are able to provide free childcare for our students for both Saturday afternoon and Thursday night classes. We are the only English class program in the Houston area that provides free childcare for our students.

The English classes leadership team is currently recruiting teachers for the Thursday night class and we welcome new full time teachers for the Saturday class as well. If we have additional teachers we can add more class levels. Substitute teachers and classroom volunteers are also needed for both Saturday and Thursdays. If you need further information or want to sign up to volunteer contact Deborah Landis at 713-504-0819 or dlandis570@aol.com.

Special Thanks To Our English Classes Leaders

Special thanks to **Leticia Anderson** for her leadership with this project. Leticia is our Head Volunteer Coordinator. Since Leticia is a professional interpreter outside of her church life, we have greatly benefited by having her work with the students and interpret for this project. Her leadership has been crucial for the success of this program. Also, the leadership of **Ann May** and **David May**, who are Assistant Program Coordinators, has been one of the keys to keeping the program alive and keeping it growing. Both Ann and David helped prepare the U.U. Funding Program grant application. They also spend many hours behind the scenes working with volunteers and the leadership team. Many thanks to Ann and David May.

For the Committee on Ministry, both three-year terms

Phillip Baxley says, “My wife and I were members of Emerson Church in the 1980s, and our daughters attended the RE program. We rejoined the church three years ago, and participate actively in the Orchestra. I recently retired from Shell Oil, after 32 years as an engineer, business executive, and board member. Nancy and I have four children, and have lived in Houston 37 years.”

Robert (Bob) Hanson describes himself as “66, born and raised in Chicago, IL, area. 1971 graduate from Illinois Institute of Technology with BS in Mathematics. As a result of a low draw in the draft lottery, spent three years in the US Army (SC, OK, GA, NC). Attracted to Houston for IT position with Pullman Kellogg (now KBR) in 1975, then worked for Sonat Offshore Drilling (now Transocean). Retired in 2015 after 17 years with VALIC, an AIG subsidiary providing retirement services. Married Beverly Edwards, third generation Unitarian, in March 1976 at Emerson Unitarian Church. Raised two children with support from Emerson Religious Education, Jeffrey (Oakland, CA) and Barbara (Chicago, IL). Have grandchildren ages 3 and 1 in Oakland. Thank goodness for Skype!”

For the Nominating Committee, all two-year terms

John Hammer writes: I began attending Emerson around six years ago with my wife, Beth, and children, William and Molly. I have served as Religious Education Committee chair and am still active in RE and the Coming of Age program. I have served on the AV committee and participate in the performing arts including the Emerson Players and musical performances.

Kenneth Jones says: I am a father of three, struggling husband of 35 years, middle school educator, former community organizer, social, economic and political activist and all-round Legend in My Own Mind! I have been a Unitarian Universalist for the past 25 years. I have been a member of Emerson for the past 10 years. I have served as a teacher in the youth RE program for several years, participated as a mentor in the Coming of Age program, served on the Youth RE Committee and chaired it for a brief stint. I have facilitated the Our Whole Lives program for youth and twice facilitated the Building Your Own Theology adult RE offering. Currently I serve as a member of the Adult RE Committee and as a member of the Social Action Council.

Most recently I have served the congregation as its representative for the UU Voice for Justice of Greater Houston and serve that organization as a member of its Steering Committee. In addition, I am one of two congregational representatives for the Texas UU Justice Ministry serving on its advisory board. I am in the process of applying to become a member of the inaugural class of Justice Building Innovators of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (JUUSC), a role in which I hope to elevate Emerson UU Church as leader in social justice work in our city, state, nation, and beyond.

Kris Taylor reports that she and the Millennium came to Emerson at about the same time. Since then, she’s been busy greeting newcomers (and just about anybody who walks in the door on Sunday morning), selling and schmoozing at the bookstore, and serving on the auction, stewardship, district conference planning committees and the Committee on Ministry, which she co-chaired in 2012. She is just completing a three-year term on the Board of Trustees and served as Board president in 2014. Away from Bering Drive, she is a freelance writer, editor and public relations counselor (no alarm clock, no commute, and no dry cleaning bills!), teaches classes in public relations at the University of Houston and serves as the volunteer coordinator for the Houston Grand Opera Guild boutique. She reads voraciously, stitches avidly, gardens hopefully and lives with a very entertaining rescue dog, Max – a dorkie both by DNA and general temperament.

For the Outreach Committee, a three-year term

Karen George writes: I’ve been a member at Emerson for over 20 years – first attending because of the Religious Education program for my two daughters (now 27 and 23!) I’ve participated at various times in the RE program, the intergenerational orchestra and a few committees. I have very much enjoyed serving on Emerson’s Outreach Committee this past year and look forward to continuing this work. My primary community involvement has been through organizations focusing on women’s issues. I’m a past board member and board chair of Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, past board member and current advisory board member of The Women’s Resource and I’m currently on the Board and President-Elect of The Women’s Home. I am also very involved in many capacities at Rice University. Professionally, I’m a CPA and have worked many years for Ralph S. O’Connor & Associates.

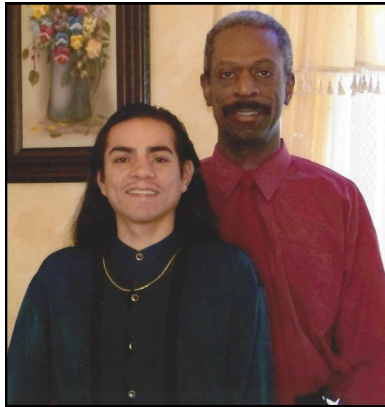
Welcome our New Members



Matthew A. Griffes



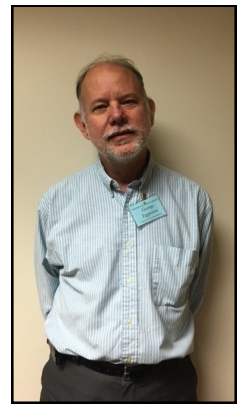
Maggie Reeder



Alejandro Flores
& Derrick Elliott



Sean Mulronny



George Eggleston



Emersonian in the News

Monday, December 7: Flanked by Houston Mayor Annise Parker and other city officials, long time Emersonian Jim Porter beams at the official groundbreaking for the Eastern Glades phase of the Memorial Park revitalization project. As chair of the Memorial Park Conservancy from 2012 to 2015, Jim was instrumental in the development and approval of the Memorial Park Master Plan which, through a balance of conservation and recreation, will enhance and protect the park for current Houstonians and for generations to come. The Eastern Glades section will include picnicking accommodations, large walkways, gardens and a large viewing pond, as well as provide irrigation for other areas of the park.

Good things come to those who are willing to wait!!!

Those who funded and implemented the upgrade of our AV system deserve our unending thanks. The list of people who have contributed is endless. It includes those who pledged their support at the auction and those individuals and families who then gave even more financial support that allowed us to purchase a high quality system. We are equally indebted to those who developed an

implementation scheme that used the funds wisely and to those who have devoted their time and talents to install and fine tune an AV system that we all can be proud of. Many Many Thanks from a grateful congregation!!!!

January Share the Plate

TXUJIM promotes a strong UU values-based, and often unheard, voice to our elected representatives across our state that impacts public policy. The ministry's many accomplishments, alone are worthy of your generous financial support. These are, however, not the primary reason you should support this ministry.



This ministry allows each of us to join together with other UUs and people of good conscience across our community to affect positive change in the very communities where we live and work. Supporting TXUJIM supports US, Emersonians, as we work to impart UU values into issues for which we are passionate. Such issues can be as grand as reversing the effects of climate change to ensuring our citizens have reproductive justice to combating human trafficking to ensuring a livable wage to restaurant workers to other on-the-street, nuts and bolts level issues such as adequate lighting, accessible sidewalks, and adequate bike paths in our communities to more socially responsible means of dealing with DWI offenders.

Could we be doing this work without TXUJIM? Yes. The more pertinent question is this: Will our local efforts be significantly strengthened by our participation with a statewide collective of UU congregations and an executive director from whom we can benefit from their broad experience? That answer is clearly an unqualified YES!

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.

Our Newsletter submission deadline is Tuesday, January 19, by noon. Email submission to 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: January 10

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

www.emersonhouston.org

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