

the emersonian

Revels

The time swiftly approaches! It is hard to believe that this is our last newsletter column before our sabbatical begins! In fact, it is hard to believe that we really are going to have a sabbatical!

We are so immensely grateful to the Board of Trustees and to the congregation for this time to renew, recharge, and refresh our minds and spirits. As you may already know - we've said it before - we have only taken three months of sabbatical in our 16 ½ years of serving Emerson even though technically we are allowed a month for every year of service. That, of course, is no one's fault. It just has been hard to find stretches of time when we felt we wanted to be away or that it was propitious for a sabbatical. But now, with the church in such a positive, enthusiastic place, with a great staff on board and fine leadership in place, we have acknowledged that the church will proceed just fine without us for awhile - **and** - that we do need this time with its different rhythms and foci apart from the day-to-day demands of ministry. We work six-day weeks and - quite frankly - we are a little tired!

As we've written before in previous newsletter columns, we will be investigating the intersection of landscape, spirituality and environmental morality, through extensive reading and travel to some parts of the U.S. that have fed our souls in the past or which we have long hungered to see. We'll be taking trips to the Everglades, the Grand Canyon and Sedona, Yosemite, the New York state area (where we hopefully will get to spend some time at the Cary Institute and Genesis Farm), returning home to Houston between trips. We'll be staying with friends and family members whom we haven't seen in quite awhile in some of these places. Not only does that help make things affordable but being able

to spend time with these folks will be an added spiritual bonus. We fully expect to come back to work rested and excited to share with you all what we have experienced and learned.

We want to assure you that the church will be in excellent hands while we are gone. We have arranged what we think is a fine slate of Sunday services in our absence. Some of the services will be led by ministerial colleagues from elsewhere; some by respected Emerson members; and five Sundays in July by Randy Partain. Randy is a candidate for U.U. ministry and Emerson is his sponsoring congregation, so it is fitting that we offer him this experience. The business of the church will be in the excellent hands

of our staff and lay leadership. And pastoral concerns will be covered by our newly enlarged Lay Pastoral Ministry Team with assistance from area colleagues if need be. However, because we will not be away from Houston for the entire time, and because the staff will always know how to reach us, we most likely will be able to respond to any emergencies that arise or if,

sadly, any deaths of our members were to occur.

Sabbatical starts after Easter Sunday, the last Sunday in March. We will be back in the office and the pulpit in mid-August. We have every confidence that everything will proceed smoothly during the interim - but, we do hope you miss us at least a little bit! As much as we are looking forward to this break, we know we will miss you all and all the wonderful activities at Emerson. You are a most beloved part of our lives.

If you have any concerns, we hope you will share them with us before we go. And, please know how very, very grateful we are for this gift of time to rest, read, reflect, experience and explore.

In faith and affection,
Becky and Mark



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



Image CC Fritz Spitzkohl

Students and teachers alike wait impatiently for Spring Break, happening in this month of March.

Some of us will go on trips and try something new. Others look forward to a staycation, sleeping in and catching up on reading and errands. For all, it's a time to break free of our routines and expectations.

Here at Emerson, we embrace this time out of time with special Sunday programs, learning together and working as a community. March 27th, of course, is Easter, and we'll have fun and our traditional egg hunt. Added to the sweet mix will be a time to send off our ministers on their sabbatical, another break!

Before you know it, summer will be upon us—if you're looking for camps for the family or children and youth,

consider a Unitarian Universalist camp! UbarU has great offerings in June and July, while The Point (formerly known as SWUUSI) comes together July 24-29.

March Schedule

March 6: Age-Graded Classes

March 13: Social Action Sunday

March 20: Chalice Hour

March 27: Easter Fun

Katy Carpman
Director of Religious Education

RE Innovation Conversation— Saturday, March 5th, 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

Parents, grandparents, and all those interested in the future - how might we retool our religious education program to grow the Unitarian Universalists who will play a role in changing the world for the better? Childcare provided. Please RSVP to Katy at katy.euuc@gmail.com.

10 AM Adult Religious Education

Beyond Sundays: Living our Values— “I want to help...really, I do...but the issues are too complicated, the problems too big, how can I, just me, make a difference? If you sometimes feel this way, and we all do, perhaps there are some answers. A few concrete things you can do; tiny changes in the things you do every day: eating, shopping, transporting, and living. How can we support each other's efforts? Join us in March for discussions on living our values on a daily basis. Often, when we think of Deeds not Creeds, we think of big events such as marches, demonstrations, or service events like Re-Building Together Houston, etc. What daily deeds do we do, can we do, to live our values? Please join us for a round table exploration on weaving our Sunday values into our everyday lives. Room 205/206

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. March 20, 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

March 6

The Sacred Ground We Walk Upon

Normally we don't think too much about the dirt beneath our feet. Normally, we try to keep dirt out of sight and out of mind - and outside our homes. But as every good gardener knows the ground we walk upon is teeming with life. Ultimately, everything comes from it, and everything returns to it. Dirt is an amazing substance. And the way we have treated dirt in the past has had a profound effect on the course of history. And how we treat dirt now will profoundly effect the future of our civilization.

March 13

A Pakistani Author and an American Preacher...

Description: This worship service will feature a dialogue about the perceptions and misperceptions that abound when it comes to how Muslims are viewed in America. The author Saadia Faruqi will take part as we answer questions we have posed each other about the realities of Muslim life in America. She will also be on hand to sign copies of her book *Brick Walls*, after the service.

March 20

Restoring the Promised Land

The theme, "the promised land", has deep roots in Western culture. It is the place we seek where life is not a struggle and our hopes can come true. America itself has often been thought of as "the promised land" and our nation's building that land has long included a reliance on technological savvy and innovation. But today we realize that same technology puts the land itself in peril. Can we have it both ways? Do we have to choose between say, air conditioners and the environment? During our sabbatical we will be looking at ways this central cultural narrative about the land can be reformed to serve us, and the earth, well.

March 27

Sing and Speak Refreshed Worlds!

On this Easter Sunday, in the week of Passover, in the season of Spring, we gather to celebrate liberation, resurrection and renewal and to recommit our lives to their measure. The Choir will present stirring music for the season and *all* our voices shall be glad!

Wheel of Life



- ◇ Congratulations to Kimberly Coolidge, Rummel Creek Elementary Teacher of the Year.
- ◇ Our thoughts are with Patrick Grealy, as he recovers from surgery.
- ◇ And we're excited to note that our own Kenneth Jones has been named a Unitarian Universalist Service Committee Justice Innovator!
- ◇ Congratulations to Beverly and Bub Joyce on the birth of another great-grandchild, Evelyn, born on January 20, 2016. And, of course, she is beautiful.

Update on the Renewable Congregations Campaign

By: Ann May

Emerson's newly launched [Renewable Congregations Campaign](#) urges people of all faiths to reduce their carbon footprints by shifting to 100% renewable energy. The campaign is already on the national radar of UUA's president, its United Nations office, Climate Action Teams, and Ministry for Earth. Now we want to encourage individuals to consider their household situation. Soon Emersonians who are making a climate difference will have an opportunity to sign our "green book" in the Gathering Place. For more, talk with Ann May or Dan Rigney in The Gathering Place on Sunday. We will have a computer set up to show you how to see options for purchasing your energy – and how prices have come way down on renewable energy.

As a result of the UUA's Commit2Respond campaign, members of Emerson have started working with other local organizations, such as the local 350.org group, and advocates at other congregations (UU and other denominations). On February 14, Dan Rigney attended a 350.org training hosted by First UU Climate Action Team led by Sandy Spears. Slowly but surely, the Houston climate community (including the UU churches) is coming together, busting the silos that separate us. Next 350.org event is Tuesday, March 8th at 7:00 PM at 4108 University. Melanie Scruggs from Texas Campaign for the Environment will speak on waste, production consumption cycles and climate change. Steve Krebs from Solarize Houston will speak about his plans to promote cheaper roof top solar here in Houston. Join us!



March Share-the-Plate

By: Edna Kelly



Throughout the month of March 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 to maintain their facility and to supplement the minister's salary.

March Recurrent 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, March 16, 7:30 PM in the Library. *The Issa Valley* by Czeslaw Milosz. Contact: Jill Rose, jillorose@gmail.com.

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

Men's Book Group: Wednesday, March 16, 6:30 PM at Luby's, 2730 Fondren. The book of the month *The Wright Brothers* by David McCullough. Contact: Dave Bergt, dbergt@comcast.net.

Daytime Book Group: Thursday, March 17, 10 AM in the Library. This month's book is *The Fall of the Ottomans*, by Eugene Rogan. Contact: Dave Bergt, dbergt@comcast.net.

Circle Dinners: Saturday, March 19, 7:00 PM, please contact Mary Ann Rusk, at mafrusk@comcast.net.

Emerson Service Auction—Save the Date!

April 23, 2016

5:30 PM to 9:00 PM



March Events and Activities

Spring Campus Cleanup – Save the Date!



Saturday, March 12, 9 AM to 1:00 PM. Bring your clippers, weed-digger-outers, rakes, and help brighten up our beautiful property. The action starts at 9 AM but come anytime through noon. We have the tools and snacks. Bring a hat, sunscreen, your reusable water bottle and your energy!

The Honor of Your Presence is requested at the Wedding of Alex Flores and Derrick Elliott.

Alex and Derrick are new members of the congregation but they have already had an enormous impact. Derrick is a tenor in our choir, lending his wonderful voice to our music program. Alex can frequently be found at the greeter table by the front door, making sure that members and visitors alike are met with a smiling welcome. The wedding is Saturday, March 12, 2016, at 5:30 PM in the Sanctuary at Emerson. A potluck reception will follow in Westwood Hall. Please RSVP to bring your favorite dish or help with setup/cleanup at: www.SignUpGenius.com/go/20F0E49ABA62DA0FC1-wedding



Celebrating the Vernal Equinox



Celebrate Spring! Saturday, March 19. Potluck supper 6:30 PM in Westwood Hall. Service at 7:30 PM, outside if weather permits. As children of the earth, we are subject to its annual cycles of light and life. Let's gather to celebrate the equinox, to acknowledge the cycles of change in the natural world, and to celebrate our place in the universe and in nature. You're invited to contribute a springtime poem, reading, story, or music to our informal service as well as food to share for our potluck supper.

Circle Dinners

Circle Dinners will be on Saturday, March 19, at 6:30 PM. If you are already on the circle dinner list, you will be called soon by one of the hostess/host. If you are not on this VIP list but would like to attend, please contact Mary Ann Rusk at mafrusk@comcast.net for more information or to be added to the list. This is a wonderful place to be with fellow Emersonians for a great evening of food and conversations. Join us!

Ministry for Earth Meeting

Sunday, March 27, 9:45 to 10:45 AM in the Library to plan the year's programs. Come at 9:30 AM for coffee and bagels. We'll meet regularly on 4th Sundays. Our Renewable Congregations Program is gaining traction; come learn how you can help.



Rebuilding Together Houston

Remember these dates for next Rebuilding!

Work Day #1 - April 23

Work Day #2 - April 30

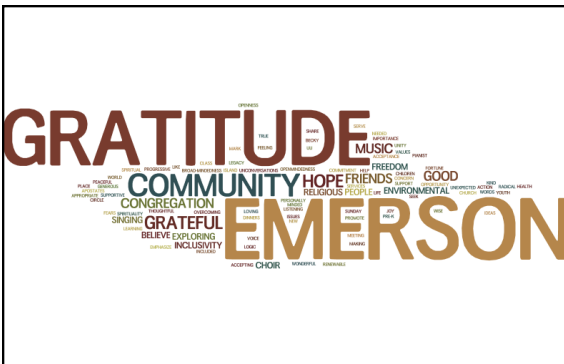
Rain Date - May 7

Happenings

Craft Day
Come Help Us Make Butterfly Huugs
for Freedom Place
Saturday, March 12, 9:00 - 12:00 PM

What is Freedom Place? Freedom Place is a care and recovery center for female victims of domestic child sex trafficking. It was the first long-term, comprehensive care facility of its kind in Texas and is one of only five such facilities in the United States. When a girl arrives at Freedom Place, a team of on-site medical, mental health, and education professionals begin a comprehensive evaluation and prepare a personalized plan of care for each girl. Girls spend approximately one year in the recovery program and the hope is for each of these girls to emerge like a bright, beautiful butterfly!

How does Emerson Help? Emerson has been involved from the very beginning at Freedom Place .. painting the center, putting together beds, creating a therapy room, volunteering as teachers, and installing a butterfly garden. One of our favorite projects is the Butterfly Huugs...



We asked the members and friends to share their gratitude for our church and congregation. Here's a visual representation of the results!

(For more info, check out our [blog](#).)



a butterfly-shaped wrap that each girl is given upon graduation. Now it is time to make more wraps and we need your help! Please come and join us for a fun, educational morning. Even if you have never sewn a stitch or crocheted a row, we are going to teach you the basics and make these beautiful wraps for the girls!

We already have the fleece fabric, but if you can bring any of the following items, it would be greatly appreciated:

- skeins of yarn (single color)
- crochet hooks
- cutting mats
- scissors
- rotary cutters

Breakfast will be provided. For more information, please see Beth Hammer or Jane Zachritz in The Gathering Place.

Welcome Our New Members





Becky and Mark Edmiston-Lange, Co-Ministers

1900 Bering Drive Houston, TX, 77057

713-782-8250

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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, March 15, by noon. Email submission to pr@emersonhouston.org.

New to UU? Want to Know More?

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: March 13

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

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