

# the emersonian



## Carnival—November 1!

Noon to 1:30 PM

Pizza, games, and more

All proceeds support UNICEF's work  
around the world.

### Share-the-Plate



#### Urban farms for Houston, small businesses for refugees

By Ann May

This group partners with social and religious groups to provide land and tools to refugees who settle in Houston with few other skills besides farming. Refugees receive a year's training at a model farm, as well as additional business assistance to help sell their produce through farmers markets, farm stands, farm shares and restaurant sales. A portion of each success helps provide opportunities for future refugees, and our replicable model can easily be scaled to support hundreds of urban farms throughout the city and beyond. Through Plant It Forward Farms, refugees can become active and contributing citizens that help Houston realize its potential as a leader in sustainable living.

**The goal for November's collections is to purchase a tiller, to help the farmers prepare the gardens for winter crops.**

On Sunday, November 8, at 12:30 PM in Room 205. Kassy Rodriguez, Farm Share Manager will share what's happening at the farms this fall and how to buy a share of the produce. A tour of the farms is planned for November 15, and we hope to participate in a work day at one of the farms. To learn more about the farmers and farms, see [www.plant-it-forward.org](http://www.plant-it-forward.org) or stop by the Saturday morning Farmer's Market on Eastside, or see Ann May.



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



## Religious Education

At Rebuilding Together Houston, one of our volunteers made the mistake of moving a ladder without securing the paint pot. Whoops! In a moment, paint splashed all over the house, the ground, and nearby workers.

A few weeks ago in Chalice Hour, my own plans fell into chaos—a game laid out was too much temptation for little hands, and then one child started a trend when he realized he could fold his order of service into a paper airplane....

Life is never flawless.

In November many of us will join together with family for Thanksgiving holidays... maybe we'll mess up the potatoes with inattentive mashing, too much milk, scorching. One of our children will spill the cranberry sauce, possibly uttering a colorful epithet. Aunt Rosie will bring up politics, and who knows where *that* will go...

At this past year's General Assembly, the Rev. Sean Parker Dennison presented the Berry Street Essay *Failure is not optional*. The only way not to fail is to try nothing. So we need to be courageous people who try and try again, learning as we go, and finding grace within and in community as we fail. What whoopses have you made? How have you learned from them? And how do you find the courage to try again?

Faithfully,  
Katy Carpman  
Director of Religious Education

## November Schedule

November 1: Social Action Sunday  
November 8: Age-graded classes  
November 15: Age-graded classes  
November 22: Multigen. Service  
November 29: Holiday weekend  
(No 10 AM program, all ages in service. Nursery is open.)



Michele Corron



Dominique and Olga Sosa-Nelson



Creig Romero and  
David Roessler



Norma Atherton



Lydia and James  
Kelly



Cathy Johnson

# 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

**November 1**

### *The Real Bible*

This Sunday we will uncover the REAL Bible. Major hint – it's not the one that everyone keeps talking about. It is far too often true that religion today operates with two sets of books: one they show to the public; the other they keep secret. Guess which one is the “real” Bible. More importantly, our future depends upon all of us getting real about the source of our opinions and doctrines.

**November 8**

### *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, eh what?

**November 15**

### *Once You Can Fake Sincerity You've Got It Made*

Religion is supposed to be all about sincerity. After all, a religion that embraces deception seems like a bad idea. But what if faux sincerity is one of the oldest forms of deception that human beings use? Uh-oh. Yet, is there a way of discerning reliability that doesn't depend upon sincerity? We'd better hope so.

**November 22**

### *Choose to Bless the World*

A multigenerational service to launch our annual Guest at Your Table program.

We will share stories of hope from the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee's work around the world.

**November 29**

### *Taize Service for Unitarian Universalists*

The Taize Community (in Taize, France) has been an international contemplative community advocating for peace and justice since 1940. They have created a simple style of worship comprised of music and readings to encourage thoughtfulness and a peaceful mind. Our own April DeConick and Stephen Lipp have adapted this service for Unitarian Universalists. It's a good way to celebrate the Sunday after Thanksgiving - before we begin the December season.

## 10 AM Adult Religious Education

### **Owning Your Religious Past - Ken McLeod, facilitator**

Are you a “born again” UU? The majority of Unitarian Universalists come into our faith from other religious traditions. Often there have been several stops along the path into our congregations. *Owning Your Religious Past* provides an opportunity to examine our past religious experiences and integrate them into our current religious lives. The 4 workshops provide insight, understanding, and powerful tools through which we may explore and retrieve positive aspects of past religious connections.

**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. November 15, Room 204

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## Revels

As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter - or may have heard Mike Condit announce on Sunday - the Board has approved three months of sabbatical for us this coming spring. It will start just after Easter, March 27, 2016 and encompass the three months of April, May and June 2016. This together with our usual 6 week summer vacation/study leave means we will be returning to Emerson August 15, 2016.

First, we are tremendously grateful for the Board's wholehearted approval. Indeed the Board has been nudging us to do this for some time. Even though we have been at Emerson for over sixteen years and our agreement with the church affords us a month of sabbatical for every year served, we have only taken three months of sabbatical during our tenure here and that was back in 2007. We are ready and eager for a period of spiritual renewal and concentrated study and we are more than confident that Emerson will be in good hands during our absence. We and the Board are planning carefully to ensure that the church will continue to run smoothly and that the Sunday morning experience will be one of high quality.

Second, we would like to share a little bit about our plans with you now - with more to come later. As you know, we feel that one of the most pressing issues currently facing humankind is the challenge posed by climate change; and; while we appreciate that political and technological solutions need to be found, it seems to us that unless there is a concomitant moral shift in the way that human beings think about and relate to the earth, necessary political and technological changes will not/cannot be sustained. But how is that moral shift to occur?

Many Emersonians may already have a profound connection to the earth, but for many others in the developed world, the earth is seen primarily as an "it" to be used, even exploited, purely to serve human needs and desires. Unfortunately this view of the earth is often informed by religious beliefs (although, thankfully, that is beginning to change.) We might think that if people only woke up to the facts, fear of what is to come would motivate changes in behavior. But fear, sadly, does not have a good track record as a reliable stimulus for lasting change. And, further, human beings have a tremendous capacity for denial, particularly when there is social support for that denial.

In light of this dilemma, there are two interrelated questions that we want to address during our sabbatical: (1) how the notion of localized "sacred space" might be globalized such that people understand the entire planet as sacred space and (2) how a moral relationship with the earth could be engendered which would compel action to address climate change. In addition, and not unrelatedly, the two of us want and need to do things that nurture and strengthen our own spiritual connection to the earth.

We will be addressing these questions in two primary ways. First, through extensive reading and reflection in the areas of biophilia, relevant neurological research and evolutionary theory, and the spirituality of nature. And second, in an experiential way, by visiting/revisiting a few places in the U.S. which either have been considered "sacred" by some peoples or which we have found to be nurturing of our spirituality or which we have long yearned to visit. We will also be visiting a couple of eco-theological/environmental organizations. Our decisions about where to go were also influenced in part by our desire to reconnect with family and friends whom we have not seen often enough in these past sixteen years as well as our available resources. Obviously, the number of places we might potentially visit is unlimited, but we can't afford to go away for the entire time, so some of the sabbatical we will be spending right here in Houston. After all, as pioneering environmentalist John Muir said, the whole of nature can be encountered in one's own backyard.

We hope you will stay tuned for more specifics in future columns; but most of all for now, please know how grateful we are for this anticipated time away and how confident we are that all will be well in our absence.

In faith, reason and affection,  
Becky and Mark

## Spiritual Partners Program

By Ken McLeod

For the past 2 years, Emerson's Committee on Ministry has been working to develop a viable program for longer 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 6 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 6 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.

## Recurring November 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, November 11, 7:30 PM in the Library. *Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* by Debbie Irving. Contact: Jill Rose, [jillrose@gmail.com](mailto:jillrose@gmail.com).

**Sandwiches for SEARCH:** Thursday, November 12, at 10:30 AM in Westwood Hall. Contact: Barbara Hopkins, [bbhopkins@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bbhopkins@sbcglobal.net).

**Men's Book Group:** Wednesday, November 18, 6:30 PM at Luby's, 2730 Fondren. The book of the month *My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for His Family's Past* by Ariel Sabar. Contact: Dave Bergt, [dbergt@comcast.net](mailto:dbergt@comcast.net).

**Daytime Book Group:** Thursday, November 19, 10 AM in the Library. This month's book is *Inferno* by Dan Brown. Contact: Dave Bergt, [dbergt@comcast.net](mailto:dbergt@comcast.net).

# Save These Dates in November...

## Waste Collection

**Saturday, November 14, 9 AM-1:00 PM.** Recycle old electronic equipment at Emerson. Celebrate **America Recycles Day** by bringing old computers, modems, video game players, fax machines, plus all the associated cables. Delete your personal info from the hard drives. No CRT TVs or monitors. Detailed list of accepted items at <http://www.emersonhouston.org/ministry-for-earth.html>. Hosted by Recycle4U and Ministry for Earth.

## Circle Dinners

Circle dinners will be on Saturday, November 21, 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](mailto: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!

## Holiday Fair

On December 6, think outside the mall and visit Emerson's first **Buy Local Holiday Sale Event**, held in conjunction with the Deck the Halls potluck, and Hanging of the Greens event. We invite all bakers, woodworkers, jewelry makers, quilters and candle makers, to come display and sell your wares. The sale will be set up in Westwood Hall after church. Members of Emerson, and friends will be selling handmade items. We would love to see the fruits of your wonderful imaginations! The Religious Education Students will be selling some items to raise money for an Outreach project of their choosing. Proceeds from the Holiday Mart will go to a social action initiative at Emerson. If you are a crafter or hobbyist who would like to participate in the sale please contact Beth - [bethandjohnh@gmail.com](mailto:bethandjohnh@gmail.com), or Cynthia - [Cynthia@themillerhome.net](mailto:Cynthia@themillerhome.net).



## Holidays at Emerson Please Join us! All are welcome!

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

We share a potluck lunch, then decorate the Sanctuary and The Gathering Place for the holidays!

### **12/13 Holiday Performing Arts Production                    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.

## Wheel of Life



- ◊ Our best wishes for a speedy recovery to Mary Ann Stanley after her recent surgery.
- ◊ Our thoughts and prayers are also with Robin McElfresh whose brother suffers from the debilitating effects of Parkinson's disease; with Norma Atherton whose sister recently suffered a head injury from a fall; and with the Dixon family whose nephew is battling bone cancer.
- ◊ We continue to hold Jim Porter and John Aucock in our hearts in their ongoing struggles with serious illness.
- ◊ We are glad to hear that Polly Delaney suffered nothing more than a bruise from her recent fall.

## To the Congregation of Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church:

We are pleased to announce an exciting opportunity for our Co-Ministers next year, one that we believe will result in an enrichment and continuing development of our worship and education programs. Mark and Becky will be starting a three month sabbatical after Easter Sunday (March 27) and then expanding it with their normal summer vacation/study leave. Their return date will be August 15 in time for the new Church year.

Their sabbatical proposal has been approved by the Board of Trustees and will focus on the intersection between spirituality and landscape with attention to the idea of “sacred” space and the sacramentality of nature. This will address two interrelated questions: (1) How the notion of localized “sacred space” could be globalized such that people understand the entire planet as sacred space and (2) how a moral relationship with the earth could be engendered which would compel action to address climate change. They have planned several specific site visits and educational opportunities within the United States.

It should be noted that their Letter of Agreement provides for the accumulation of one month of sabbatical leave credit for each full year of service. They have only taken three months of sabbatical leave during their sixteen years at Emerson.

Plans are already underway to cover their duties while they are gone. We are quite confident that our worship services and other programs will not be disrupted. We are looking forward to discovering their new insights through their sermons next fall. The plan is to also incorporate some of the worship themes into Youth and Adult Education. We feel that this sabbatical will expand the scope and meaningfulness of Emerson.

Respectfully,

Richard Lofton - President, Board of Trustees, Mike Condit – Vice President, Board of Trustees  
Kris Taylor – Immediate Past President, Board of Trustees

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## A Campaign for Congregations and Households: Shrink your energy footprint: Switch to Renewable Energy!

By Ann May

### Three options:

- Reduce consumption
- Switch to Renewable Energy

The rates continue to go down. You can compare plans online:

[www.vaultelectricity.com](http://www.vaultelectricity.com),  
[www.chooseenergy.com](http://www.chooseenergy.com),  
<http://electricityscout.com/texas/houston/>

- Buy offsets for carbon you can't eliminate immediately

Offsets represent the reduction of CO<sup>2</sup> in one location (like a wind farm) to offset the CO<sup>2</sup> produced in another, like your home or car. For example, a wind farm in west Texas can offset the CO<sup>2</sup> produced by a coal-fired power plant. The use of offsets does not absolve us (even if you go to Becky and Mark's

absolution party) from moving towards a low carbon future. However, offsets represent a way that we can “do the right thing” –think of it like a premium you pay for Fair Trade products.



The Emerson board has voted to switch to renewable energy as soon as our current contract expires. In the meantime, RECs have been purchased and donated to Emerson, to help offset the CO<sup>2</sup> we emit. Thus we can call ourselves a **Renewable Congregation**.

Look for the [Renewable Congregations](#) link on the Emerson website under Social Action. Send this link to people you know at other congregations so that they can join us.

**You have the power!**



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, November 17, 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: November 8**

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

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

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