

emerson UNITARIAN  UNIVERSALIST church

# the emersonian

SEPTEMBER 2020 —MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## Service Auction “Be A Hero”



### Get Ready Emersonians!

The “Be A Hero” Service Auction has now been officially rescheduled for September 2020. The event will be held for approximately two weeks to allow time for bidding and will be held exclusively online. Links to the Auction Website, Bidding How-to, and much more, can be found at: [emersonhouston.org/auction2020](http://emersonhouston.org/auction2020)

### Items Needed! — LAST CALL

Of course we could not have an auction without items and events to bid on. If you have a Talent, Time, or Treasure to share please use the Donation Form available [online](#). The Auction “Goes Live” in September so we are asking for all forms to be returned by **August 31<sup>st</sup>** via email to [auction@emersonhouston.org](mailto:auction@emersonhouston.org).

### Volunteers Needed!

If you have background in web design, running auctions, or just simply have a few moments each week to contact Emersonians and the community at large to collect items for bidding WE NEED YOU. Contact [auction@emersonhouston.org](mailto:auction@emersonhouston.org) if you can help.



## Managing COVID-19 at Emerson

### By Katie Scott, Board President

Many Emersonians have asked the question, “when can we get back to normal?” The Board asks ourselves this question every month, some of us every week. Though it is painful, the Board has made the decision to keep the Emerson building closed through the remainder of 2020. This decision did not come lightly and we considered the advice of the UUA as well as best practices from congregations from multiple faiths. In the unlikely event that the COVID-19 situation improves before then, we will reconsider the decision.

Though our exact reopening timeline is still unknown, we are putting together a reopening taskforce to help us determine when and how we can reopen the building safely. This taskforce, composed of Board members, congregation members, and staff, will develop recommendations for various aspects of COVID-19 transmission risk reduction, including facilities modifications, hygiene practices, and building entrance requirements.

When we gather together again in-person, we want to ensure that all of our members, friends, and visitors feel safe in our environment. Until that time, we invite you to continue gathering virtually and in the spirit of Emerson.

## Hello, Everyone!

### By Michelle LaGrave, Interim Minister

As I write this, I am just a few days into my first week at Emerson. I am happy to finally be with you, not just on Zoom but also here in Houston. Micah, my spouse; Bella, my service dog; and the cats and I all arrived here late in June and are starting to get to know our way around Houston. I even got to meet one of you (Cynthia Miller), by chance, while out shopping!

*(Continued on page 2)*

## September’s Share the Plate— Justice Forward

In 2020, Harris County Drug Court Foundation became Justice Forward as they expanded their mission to work with all 18 Harris County Specialty Courts. Justice Forward is a collaborative effort to assist all Specialty Court clients become healthy and productive members of their communities. The clients they serve are veterans, those who struggle with substance abuse disorders, individuals with mental health issues, as well as juveniles involved in human trafficking and gang activity. Their innovative program provides funds for transitional housing, counseling, employment and education assistance and other essential services that contribute to lowering recidivism rates and increasing family reunification rates, and in the process delivering fiscal savings to Texas taxpayers. Read more at [www.justiceforwardhouston.org](http://www.justiceforwardhouston.org).

*(Continued from page 1—Rev. Michelle LaGrave)*

So, what's next, you might be wondering? Well, getting to meet all of you and learn all about your church is what comes first. I will attend a couple of worship services before being "interviewed" by Katie Scott, the Board President, during the August 30<sup>th</sup> service. I'll also be meeting with as many people and groups as possible over the next few weeks, asking lots of questions, reading a lot of documents, and observing how things work here. Then, during the service on September 13<sup>th</sup>, I will give the message and we will enter into a covenant together while also celebrating the start of the church year.

For those of you who have been around awhile, you will remember something of what interim ministry is like from your time with Rev. Sam, though I think you'll find having a senior or solo minister as an interim is quite a different experience than having an associate minister as an interim. For others, interim ministry will be a completely new experience. In any case, for all of us, interim ministry in the midst of a pandemic is going to be a new and different experience. So for some of this, we will simply need to figure it out together!

The piece that will remain constant, even with all that is going on in the world right now, is the congregation's need to focus on five fundamental tasks which are critical to successfully navigating the transition period. They are framed as Focus Points and are as follows:

- **HERITAGE**— Reviewing how the congregation has been shaped and formed.
- **LEADERSHIP**— Reviewing the member needs and its ways of organizing and developing new and effective leadership
- **MISSION**— Defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction
- **CONNECTIONS**— Discovering all the relationships a faith community builds outside of itself
- **FUTURE**— Developing congregational and pastoral profiles

To facilitate the congregation doing this work is the job of a Transition Team. They are a group of individuals who have been appointed by the Board. Your team is comprised of Lisa Rockett, Annie New, Carol Trout, Jill Rose, Greg Hunt, and Mark Holt. I have already met with them and feel like things are off to a great start!

By the way, you may have noticed my frequent use of the words "you" and "your" rather than "we" and "our" in the way I talk about the church and what is happening here. These are meant to be a verbal reminder that the church is your church, not mine, and its dreams (mission/vision) come from you and belong to you, not me. I am here, for a short time only, to facilitate your becoming a stronger and healthier church (that doesn't mean you're an unhealthy church, far from it, just that all churches, like all families, can be healthier), to help you prepare for your next settled ministry, and to support you in making your dreams come true.

All the best,

Rev. Michelle

## Religious Education



*Covid-19 has required flexibility as we navigate our daily lives in ever-changing ways.*

*So we begin the new church year focusing this month on IMAGINATION.*

- What has been the role of imagination in the life you lead?
- What is a desired future you imagine, which seems impossible today?

Each month our Emerson community focuses on a single idea, going deeper with one another. You can engage through Sunday worship, on social media, an Exploration session 10 AM on September 20, and optional covenant group sessions.

Parents, check your email for a message about Fall possibilities for children, youth, and families – what might we imagine together?

In faith,

Katy Carpman, Director of Religious Education

## More UU Friendly Texas Legislators

When the Rev. Chuck Freeman preached at Emerson August 23, we learned that individuals can for the first time work through a UU organization to elect candidates for the state legislature. Churches cannot support candidates, but the Texas UU Justice Ministry can do so; they are a 503 (c) 4 organization, as well as a 501 (c) 3 and represent 35 Texas congregations, including ours. For more information, look at their website:

[TXUUJM.org](http://TXUUJM.org).

## Wheel of Life



We're happy to share that **Bradley Smith** has updated his birth certificate, completing the legal part of his transition!

It is with deep sadness that we announce the death of beloved Emerson member, **Holly Gilliland**. Holly died on the morning of August 6 at home with her husband Mark (Andersen) holding her hand. She died at peace and without pain. Holly and Mark have been devoted members of Emerson for fourteen years. We will miss Holly greatly. She was 66 years old. Mark welcomes your emails and cards, but prefers not to receive phone calls right now. There are no plans for a memorial

service at this time. Let us all keep Mark in our thoughts and prayers. If you wish to make a donation in Holly's honor, Mark suggests ANSWER Nepal (<https://answernepal.org>).

We are saddened to report the death of Emerson charter member and the University of Houston's College of Architecture's namesake, **Gerald D. Hines**, who died on August 24th at the age of 95. Hines was arguably the most famous real estate developer in Houston, if not the world, having developed such signature projects as the Galleria and the Pennzoil Building. Hines' \$7 million donation to the UH's College of Architecture was "among his proudest accomplishments."

## Sunday Morning Worship

Please join us on Sunday for worship at 11 AM  
<https://emersonhouston.org/SundayService>

### September 6—Creative Imagination

Labor Day marks the end of summer — at least it does so on the calendar. As another calendar page turns, we'll pause to reflect on the creative power of our imagination.

**September 13, 20 and 27**—Sunday Service with Rev. Michelle

## Adult Religious Education (ARE)

We look forward to the new church year exploring a diversity of topics during the 10:00 sessions each Sunday via Zoom. Join us as you are able!

- **September 6:** "Awe and Wonder" What are we doing to nurture wonder? From a reading by Rev. Dr. LoraKim Joyner, facilitated by Dori Wolfe
- **September 13:** Black Women and Feminism, presented by Lisa Rockett
- **September 20:** Sparking Your Imagination, a facilitated discussion from Faith Rockett, led by Beryl Kaminsky
- **September 27:** Existentialism and Religion, Part I, led by Michael Condit

*The September virtual meeting of Adult Religious Education committee will be on Thursday, September 17 at 7 PM. We'd love to hear your ideas! If you can't come to the meeting, submit your ideas into our [online Suggestion Box](#).*

Poetry Group will meet virtually on September 20 at 3 PM (contact Larry Kelly ([lvkelly@swbell.net](mailto:lvkelly@swbell.net))) and Ministry for Earth will meet virtually on a day/time TBD (contact Ann May, [abmay11@gmail.com](mailto:abmay11@gmail.com))

## Emerson Embraces UU the Vote

UU congregations all across America are participating in the UUA's campaign to UU the Vote. Emersonians have responded enthusiastically and in numbers to projects co-ordinated by Emerson's seven-member UU the Vote team. Using voter lists from Reclaim Our Vote, we have sent out 700 postcards to Texans encouraging Vote by Mail and Early Voting. In September our team will organize phone bank(s) and in October a final postcard campaign in the lead-up to November. We have also developed a Voter Toolkit where Emersonians can check crucial dates, access a voter's guide of candidate interviews, look for polling locations, and get contact information for their elected representatives. For more details, go to our webpage under Social Action/UU the Vote or click on: <https://emersonhouston.org/social-action/uu-the-vote/>

## Ministry for Earth

- Learn about the **City of Houston's Climate Action Plan** in virtual presentations August 24-28 <http://www.greenhoustontx.gov/index.html>
- "**Living the Change**" to a sustainable lifestyle. Weekly Discussion Group, Thursday, September 3 - Thursday, November 19, 6 PM, online. Join as you are able. Hosted by Interfaith Environmental Network. Please [register here](#).
- **Autumn Equinox** online gathering. Tuesday, September 22 at 7:30 PM. for details see <https://emersonhouston.org/social-action/ministry-for-earth/>

## Two ways to keep in touch....

The weekly E-Blast gives timely information about what is coming right up. Our monthly newsletters are always a source of in-depth insights and interesting articles concerning our beloved community.



**But have you wondered what has become of your monthly printed newsletter?**

**No, it's not the USPS!** To reduce our impact on the world's resources, we now mail printed newsletters only to people for whom we have no email address. The link to the current newsletter is ALWAYS in the weekly E-blast--another great reason to open the E-blast--and is also on our website. So click the link to know MORE about what is going on at Church!



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## Sunday Morning Online Worship—Please Join Us!

Join us every Sunday at 11 AM online: <https://emersonhouston.org/SundayService>. For instructions on how to join, visit: <https://emersonhouston.org/about-worship/welcome-to-zoom/>



***Emerson Church and facilities are closed through the end of the year, at which time the Board will reassess the need for this measure. Only Board members, the Treasurer and staff will have access to the building during this time.***

## Adding eGiving to Your Giving Choices!

For those who no longer write checks or carry cash, you can now give to Emerson electronically with credit, debit or banking information: Online at [emersonhouston.org/give](http://emersonhouston.org/give), with a mobile app, or by text. Schedule recurring donations so they arrive when you are out of town. Choose to pay on your pledge or give to Share the Plate or special funds as they arise. If you are happy with your current method of giving, no need to change.

### Stay Connected!



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[twitter.com/emersonhouston](https://twitter.com/emersonhouston)  
[meetup.com/emersonseekers](https://www.meetup.com/emersonseekers)

### PR News

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

**Next Newsletter deadline is:  
Tuesday, September 15**