

emerson UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST church
the emersonian

JULY 2021 —MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

We are so close...

The Board and the COVID-19 Taskforce are so happy to see our campus activities coming back online. Many of you have asked about our future plans so we wanted to share our timeline for campus reopening. Please note that this timeline is subject to change.

Summer: Church staff spending more time on campus. Small group activities will still be allowed on campus in designated areas.

September 12, 2021: Worship will resume in person. We will also have ways to attend virtually.

October 2021: Adult RE and other activities will resume.

We are excited to get back on campus, but we will need your help! We need volunteers for the following tasks leading up to our reopening:

- Technology Support (i.e. assisting with virtual programming)
- A/V Support for in-person programs
- Campus Clean Up
- Church Readiness (miscellaneous tasks needed to prepare for reopening)

Please fill out this form if you are able to help: <https://emersonhouston.org/reopen>

Adult Religious Education (ARE)

We are grateful to be able to join in community each Sunday to explore a diversity of topics during the online 10 AM sessions. Join us as you are able!

July 4: Energy Independence – How might a UU relate? Facilitated by Dori Wolfe

July 11: Impressions from General Assembly – A panel discussion led by Emersonians

July 18: "An Overview of Houston Area Water Systems and How to Reduce Risk of Damage" by Michael Bloom

July 25: Soul Matters – "Play" facilitated by Pat Smith and Lydia Chasen

The July virtual meeting of the Adult Religious Education committee will be on the second Tuesday, July 13, at 4 PM (<https://emersonhouston.org/ARETeam>). We'd love to hear your ideas! If you can't come to the meeting, submit your ideas into our [online Suggestion Box](#).

Emerson members attended 'For the People Act' rally for voting rights at Texas Capitol

June 20, 2021—From left to right: Deborah Wotring, Larry Kelly and Edna Kelly.



July Share the Plate— The Women's Home

The Women's Home mission is to build communities that strengthen women and support families as they reclaim their stability through a unique model of care called Whole Life®. By embracing the whole person, The Women's Home prepares women and their families to become empowered and productive forces in their communities. [Learn more.](#)

For information on how to give electronically for Emerson's Share-the-Plate, please visit this link: <https://emersonhouston.org/electronic-giving/>

Community, Caring, Integrity, Welcoming, Ministry.

Community, Caring, Integrity, Welcoming, Ministry. These are Emerson UU Church's Core Values as recently discerned by an open process led by the Transition Team. Here is the story of how they came about...

Beginning in April, we put out word that there would be an important church event coming up in early May, one that would be open to all, and that participants would have a choice of one of two dates, a Wednesday evening or a Saturday morning. I worked with the Transition Team to design a process that would, we hoped, lead to the creation of a set of up to five Core Values that would succinctly describe the value system that Emerson, as a liberal religious UU congregation, currently upholds and uplifts in its daily life.

To do so, small groups, each led by a facilitator from the Transition Team or myself, were given a prompt to think of a story about an everyday act that someone in the congregation did that they admired or that touched them in some way. Participants were encouraged to be as creative or imaginative as they wished in their storytelling. From these, the small groups discussed the values inherent in the stories they shared and heard. They distilled these values into a set of five then returned to the large group which then distilled all the small groups' sets of values into a set of values reflective of the whole.

The Wednesday evening's set of values were ministry, caring, belonging, courage, and welcoming. The Saturday morning's set of values were inclusivity, connectedness, lovingkindness, integrity, and justice. These values were easily matched in pairs by the Saturday group: ministry with justice, caring with lovingkindness, belonging with connectedness, courage with integrity, and welcoming with inclusivity. From there, the Saturday group requested that rather than taking on the final stage of the project themselves, the Transition Team and staff would more appropriately do so, as they had been present for the discussions held on both Wednesday Saturday.

And so, the Transition Team, Katy Carpman, who is the Director of Religious Education, and I, your Interim Minister, met together and had a long, in-depth discussion of Emerson and its values. Important questions were asked, such as: How much are these values the current, lived reality of Emerson? How much do these values speak to who Emerson is today? How much are these values aspirational? How much do these values speak to who Emerson would like to become, but is not yet? Are these individual values reflective of individual actions or are they group values reflective of the congregation as a whole?

Rev. Michelle LaGrave is on summer leave. You may contact [Katy Carpman](#) for any pastoral care needs.

The Transition Team/Staff group struggled the most with the belonging/connectedness pair and in the end decided that the original word that came out of most of the small groups (before they began the two large group discussions) was the most fitting, and that was "Community". Of caring and lovingkindness, the themes of helpfulness, compassion, empathy, and love came through most strongly and so "Caring" was chosen. Of courage and integrity, the underlying theme of courageous truth-telling felt a bit more aspirational while integrity felt more present, so "Integrity" was chosen. Of welcoming and inclusivity, the discussion focused on ways in which Emerson was very welcoming and ways in which Emerson is not yet as inclusive as it would like to be. They thought that by choosing "Welcoming" it would reflect both the current reality of congregational life as well as make room for the ways in which the congregation would like to grow. Of ministry and justice, it was thought that justice would fit well within the broader theme of ministry, and so "Ministry" was chosen.

Community, Caring, Integrity, Welcoming, and Ministry. These Core Values reflect who Emerson is now as well as who Emerson would like to become. These Core Values express both truth and aspiration, the everyday mundane and the holy dream. These core values are Emerson's sacred story; your sacred story. You will see them reflected in board and staff and committee and team meetings, in worship, and in the daily life of the congregation. We will live with them and play with them and explore them all next year. In other words, we will "try them on" and see how they fit and if they continue to feel true. If not, they can always be revised or adapted until they feel "just right". And, yes, Emerson's purpose statement, "Our beloved community of faith, reason, and affection welcomes all to grow in mind and spirit as we build a better world" remains intact. A church's core values are meant to inform and complement its mission/purpose.

I close with a note of gratitude for the work of the Transition Team and all of you. Thank you for bringing your time and your energy, your thoughtfulness and your full hearts, as you engaged and continue to engage with this process. The more and better able Emerson is to reflect and discern who it is, what it does well, where it needs to grow, and who it would like to become, the better able you will be to find and call the right settled minister for you.

With Care,

Rev. Michelle



Wheel of Life

Larry Huelbig and Carol Trout are pleased to announce their engagement to be married. The wedding, which is not yet scheduled, will be a small family affair. The married couple will reside at 311 Cove Creek Lane, Houston, Texas 77042 .

From the Board of Trustees

In striving to build a beloved community and in being a welcoming congregation, the board and all members of Emerson can sometimes make mistakes which can hurt those in our own community - our family. We recently made a mistake while deliberating about Memorial Assistance Ministries (MAM) which hurt a board member and his wife, who then left the church.

The Board views this event as both a moment to acknowledge our mistakes and as a moment to “fail forward” and learn from what happened. The Board believes that we failed to trust that our own family members were experts in their own lived experiences. When our family members said that the pending decision would hurt them, we failed to halt the process. We clung to normative procedures and rules rather than pausing to really listen and consider their voices, their concerns.

The Board has started to reflect on how we interacted with this couple, and others in our family who are marginalized. The Board encourages all members of Emerson to reflect on how you interact with people in our family who are marginalized.

The Board is actively identifying things we can do to build a beloved community and be a more welcoming congregation. More will be forthcoming, but some initial ideas for consideration include:

- Don't proceed with actions that knowingly cause anguish to another member.
- Trust that each person, no matter how different from us, is the authority of their lived experience. Actively listen and absorb their stories. Try to put yourself in their shoes. Consider how your experience of church activities and decisions differs from the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, indigenous, Black, Latinx, or other marginalized populations.
- Prioritize favorable outcomes rather than rigorous procedures and processes.
- Expand your knowledge and awareness of the inequalities in our society and in our church. Read and study*. Talk with members and be okay with making some mistakes in these interactions, so long as we learn and grow from them.

* Reading Suggestions:

[White Supremacy Culture](#)

[Unitarian Universalist Association, Welcoming Congregations Program](#)

[The Person You Mean to Be](#) by Dolly Chugh

Sunday Morning Worship

Please join us on Sunday for worship at 11 AM

<https://emersonhouston.org/SundayService>

July 4 - A Nation Conceived in Liberty with Bill Hammons

Please join our Independence Day worship service as Bill Hammons, a member of Emerson's worship team, takes us on an unconventional journey through 245 years of U.S. history.

July 11 - All Are Called But Not Everyone Listens with Rev. John Pepper

Rev. John Pepper writes, “Calling is a term many use to refer to their specific vocations and preachers often claim it for their ministries. I believe we are all Called to help out and make the world a better place. Please join me as I explore the concept and need to respond to your Calling.”

July 18 - Bear Witness: Save Lives with Pulpit Guest CB, founder of Justice and Peace Consulting.

July 25 - Sunday Service with Emerson member, Mike Condit.

Emerson Events

Stitchers - The Emerson Stitchers meet virtually every Wednesday at 11 AM. Bring your needlework, beginning or advanced, and stitch with friends, new and old. <http://emersonhouston.org/StitchersGroup>

Beginner's Meditation Group - Meets in person on the first Monday of the month at 7 PM in Westwood Hall. Email [Marci](#) for more information.

The **Third Monday Book Club** meets regularly the third Monday of every month. The group discusses both fiction and non fiction with a penchant for mystery and history. We limit our membership to 10. If you would like to participate, please contact [Cletus Lee](#) to be added to a waiting list.

A list of the upcoming books can be found on line at <https://bit.ly/3aOoqb3>

Choir Gatherings - 7-8 PM Wednesday nights. Contact [Adrian Rodriguez](#) for details.

Open Book Group - meets on the third Thursday of each month at 7 PM. The group is open to people of all gender identities who are interested in reading and discussing a variety of books and who are interested in our informal style of meeting. Next Meeting: Thursday, July 15 | Fill out this [pre-registration form](#) for more information.

Friday Social Hour - Don't be shut-in. Come to social hour with fellow Emersonians on Fridays at 7:30 PM. If interested, contact Mary Ann Rusk (mafrusk@comcast.net) or Pat Thomsen (patthom75@att.net) for an invitation. *Emerson members only.*

Virtual Open House - Learn what membership means at Emerson. This also presents an opportunity to learn more about growing in mind and spirit while deepening your sense of belonging to this beloved community. If you are considering joining Emerson, please stay tuned for the next Open House Date via our eblast. [Sign up here!](#)

Mike Hilgart's Covenant Group - Third Sunday of the month - Contact: [Mike](#).

Ministry for Earth (MFE) meets every 4th Sunday of the month. Visit Emerson's [MFE page](#) for more information.



Rev. Michelle LaGrave, Interim Minister
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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/>



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, 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.

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PR News

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

**Next Newsletter deadline is:
Tuesday, July 20**