

A Message from Becky and Mark

Reconnecting with you all after our time out of the pulpit was such a pleasure. The sanctuary felt just like that, a warm and exciting place to gather together, sing together - worship together.

And so we begin again. A new church year stretches out before us. We think it's going to be an unusually dynamic and exciting year for us all. The process that the Board of Trustees has undertaken to create a covenant and sense of purpose, a long range plan, revamped communications... It's as if the Board has adopted the Nike slogan "JUST DO IT!"

And that spirit is not unique to the Board of Trustees. There's just a lot going on. The Growth Planning Committee is engaging the congregation in a process to create a long range plan that reflects our core values. The Worship Committee is having a retreat this Fall, the Communications Task Force will hold a retreat to further our skills for communicating our identity. The Committee on Ministry is working on clarifying the *ministry* of Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church. The Social Action Council's plan for grants to organizations outside of Emerson kicks in this year. The Stewardship Committee has renamed itself (it used to be the "Canvass" committee - perhaps reflecting either a painterly or yachting flavor?). Our Religious Education department has totally revamped our curriculum for children and youth. The Adult Education Committee has refined its sense of mission and is carrying it out with vigor. And, and, and...

Members and friends of Emerson, what we've got here is a dynamic progressive congregation. If we were a pot on the stove we would be a delicious stew, bubbling hard and sending delectable aromas all over the place. This faith that we nurture is not only a very good idea - it is a powerful reality, whenever and wherever we put it to work.

And it is clear - there is no end of work to be done. There is a whole lot of liberating that needs to go on! Too many people remain unaware that there is this marvelous congregation on Bering Drive that is just waiting to help them become unstuck from uncreative and unhelpful perspectives, attitudes and behaviors. And we are the people who bring the release from narrow creed, ungenerous thought and oppressive judgment. This is not to say that we have these recipes down pat. We, too, need to practice and we, too, will undoubtedly err. But our job is not to be perfect (and as for those who are seeking perfection, well they just will have to find themselves some other congregation.)

No, we don't need perfection. What we do need is you, someone who has grasped their freedom and will not let it go. What we do need is you, someone who is unwilling to repeat what you are told when it just doesn't make sense. What we do need is you, someone willing to listen and learn from the widest possible range of sources. What we do need is you, someone who has not given up on what it means to be a human being - vibrant, compassionate and thoughtful. What we do need is you, someone who believes that all of life is a vast sacred project and that all (and we do mean "all") human beings have an important role to play.

Come to think of it, it's not just Emerson that needs you. It seems quite clear that Houston could use some more of you scheming free religious types. So strap on your aprons people - this congregation is cooking!

Becky and Mark

Social Action Council Special Collections

-**Every Sunday**—Bring non-perishable food for the Houston Food Bank. Parents, take your child grocery shopping so they can learn about helping others. Place your items in the Food Pantry drawers in Westwood Hall.

-**September 14**—Food Sunday Special Collection for Interfaith Ministries' Food for Seniors and Meals on Wheels. Make your check to Emerson Church and note IM in the memo line. Place your check or cash in the white envelope in the pew rack. Or, mail a check to Emerson, with IM noted in the memo line, at any time.

-**September 21**—Special Collection for Children at Risk's Project LEAD (Leaders Educating and Advocating for a Difference), which fosters academic achievement, increases college awareness, and encourages students from lower socio-economic areas to become more active, socially aware community leaders. Make your check to Emerson Church and note Children at Risk in the memo line. Place your check or cash in the white envelope in the pew rack. Or, mail a check to Emerson, with Children at Risk noted in the memo line, at any time.

Please thank the following folks for donating blood during our recent drive for MD Anderson. The mobile blood unit will return **Sunday, November, 2**. Kevin Crotty, Anne Goodman, Scott Hanson, Frances Jones, Sharon McBride, Phil Richardson, Mary Ann Stanley, Theodore Weisgal and John Williams, you are appreciated!

Emerson Committee Meetings				
Committee	Day	Time	Location	Committee Chair
Adult Ed.	2nd Sun.	12:30 PM	Room 206	Ken Salzman
A/V	2nd Wed.	7 PM	Library	Craig King
Building & Grounds	Wednesday	9 AM	on campus	Tom McDuffie
Building Usage	3rd Thurs.	7:30 PM	Volunteer Room	Gay Lambirth
Caring	Meetings held on as need basis			
Communications/PR	3rd Sun.	12:45 PM	WWH Room 202	Pat Grealy
Community Life	Meetings held on as need basis			
Coordinating Council	1st Sat.	9 AM	Library	Brad Gammell
Denominational Affrs.	Meetings held on as need basis			
Finance	3rd Sun.	8:30 AM	Library	Roger Mills.
Growth Planning	2nd Sun.	12:30 PM	Room 205	Larry Huelbig
Investment	3rd Wed	?	Library	Dick Mullineaux
Library	3rd Mon.	10 AM	Library	Art Pedersen
Membership	2nd Wed	7:15 PM	Room 204	Karen Tidholm.
Music	Meetings held on as need basis			
Personnel	1st Sun.	12:30 PM	Library	David May
Religious Ed.	1st Wed.	7 PM	Library	Cristi Walters
Social Action Council	1st Sun.	12:30 PM	Room 204	Barb Adams
Stewardship	4th Thurs.	6:30 PM	Library	Billye Smith
Worship	usually 1st Wed.	7 PM	Office foyer	Carolyn Truesdell

Teaching RE for Fun and Profit OR
Why I Teach RE When I Don't Even Have a Child in the Program!

Where's the fun in teaching RE? It's everywhere. Do you enjoy crafts? Teaching RE will give you plenty of chances to be crafty. Drawn to the stage? Many of our curricula include dramatic play which gives you the big break you've always wanted-the chance to direct! Enjoy reading great stories, learning about Unitarian Universalism, engaging with other cultures, discussing ethics, current events, and social issues? Teaching RE will provide you with all the cultural and intellectual stimulation you could hope for.

And who will be your colleagues in all these fun activities? One or two other adults with similar interests will be your co-teachers. But the real reason you'll get up early several Sundays in a row will be the chance to interact with the wonderful young people at Emerson. Back when my daughter was in the RE program, I enjoyed teaching students close to her age; I thought it gave me a greater understanding of how she and her friends thought about the world. When she got older, though, I had the opportunity to teach a much younger class, and I got so much enjoyment out of their exuberance and their ability to learn at lightning speed. I've been working my way through the grades. It has been such a joy to experience Emerson's RE program.

So that's the fun. And the profit? Well, I was just kidding about that. Your checking account will not expand as a result of volunteering in the RE program. But your heart and mind will. I recommend it highly, for young adults, young parents, empty-nesters, grandparents, and never-been-a-parents. No matter how busy you are, you will not regret one minute you spend in our RE program. Call Jo Ann now to see if she can find a spot for you!

- Valerie Blair

New Members—2008

Richard Andrews	Sid George	Alicia Menanteau
Rob and Jeff Alfieri-Arndt	Allison & David Hamilton	Jill and Jon Palmer
Dana Bays	Amanda & Scott Hanson	Sally Phillips
James Barton	Amy and Clinton Hopper	Rosalind Raia
David Bergt	Jennifer Jackson	Carl Ruiz & Robert Andrus
Wilodyean Blakeman	Ignazio La China & Simone Woodage	Susan Stringer
Scott Connor	Rosalind Mandler	Michaela & Johathan Watson
Andrea and Adam Courtin	David Matthes	Don Whittaker
Nikki Flannery	Robin McElfresh	Sharon Young

Circle Dinners in Homes on Saturday, September 20

Would you like a chance to have a good conversation over dinner with a group of fellow church members and friends? If the answer is yes, join our Circle Dinner groups Saturday evening, September 20. We meet in homes in different parts of our city and everyone brings a part of the meal. It is an opportunity to become better acquainted with the people you see briefly on Sunday morning. Call Gwen Essinger to get assigned to a host home.

Emerson Connections

Connections is a new group effort undertaken by the Membership Committee. The group is headed by Nancy Lipp. Its purpose is to form a better sense of community and openness at Emerson. Nancy has a few ideas she wants to share and would like to hear what others think would encourage more connectedness at Emerson. There will be a meeting on the third Sunday after lunch, at 1:00 p.m. in Room 204. The great thing about this group is that the time commitment is small; and the rewards are huge. If you do not feel connected to Emerson, or you think this is an important issue, please consider joining us in forming this new group.

FISHING FOR FLAMINGO

Reuters reports that poor Venezuelans are catching endangered flamingos for food.

- Caracas, Venezuela, March 23, 2004

The last flamingo

Hangs in the sky,
a pink bauble.

Tangled in a net,
snatched by a kite,

The last flamingo

Falls into a pot,
fills a belly.

The hungry see
only red meat.

The last flamingo

No longer will stalk
the edge of water,

No longer will stand
on one leg resting.

The last flamingo

Now will fly
only in memory—

Tomorrow, the kites
will come down empty.

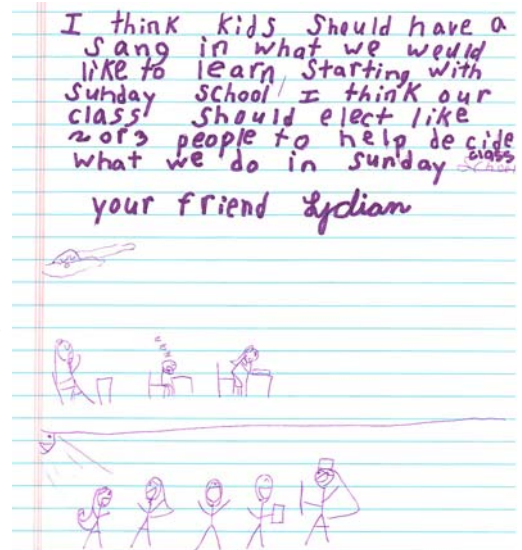
- by Gary Rosin

OUR NEW RE CURRICULA FOR 2008-09

Lydian Green's letter, shown to the right, has been noted! Students, like Lydian, will get a chance to critique their new curricula which includes the following:

The second and third grades will be sampling lessons combined from "Free to Believe", "Spirit of Adventure", and "Moral Tales," (from UU's new Tapestry of Faith.). One activity idea is a "Take Apart Party" (dismantling a computer, for example). Can you, in your mind's eye, see a skit with an Emerson fourth or fifth grader playing the parts of Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan at the Scopes trial? That comes with Kate Covey's curriculum, "Traditions with a Wink".

The sixth and seventh grades will be studying the perennial favorite, "Neighboring Faiths." Eighth graders, developing their own credo for the Coming of Age program, will use "The Questing Year" as a basis for their discussions. LRY will use "Heresy Apparent" and "Paradigms Lost" by Jeff Liebmann, the author of "Thinking the Web" that was so popular last year. By the time students finish LRY, they should have a clear Unitarian-Universalist identity and be able to express to friends of other denominations "what we do in our church and how we form our beliefs."



ADULT RE LAUNCHES

NEW INTERACTIVE SERIES SEPTEMBER 14

Tapestry of Faith is a new series of programs and resources developed by the UUA for all ages. The content was created to help Unitarian Universalists develop their faith, not just in breadth but in depth, by nurturing the Unitarian Universalist identity, spiritual growth, a transforming faith, and vital communities of justice and love. Many congregations will be integrating this exciting new curriculum into their education programs.

Here at Emerson Adult Religious Education, these sessions, which we have customized and are calling *Living our Faith*, will become a recurring part of our Sunday morning schedule once a month beginning September 14 and followed on October 5 and November 2 with subsequent dates to be announced.

Living our Faith affirms the religious diversity in our congregation while seeking unity in our communal quest for meaning and wholeness. The sessions will offer a forum for learning, sharing, and growth that can enrich our faith journeys.

The Sunday morning Adult RE sessions that make up the *Living our Faith* series are predicated on three fundamental ideas:

- The "free and responsible search for truth and meaning" that we affirm in our Unitarian Universalist principles is a spiritual quest.
- This quest is more effectively and evocatively carried out if we have some guidance and practice that helps us attend to and value the depth of experiences in our lives.

There is nothing in our lives that cannot serve as a tool for our faith enrichment.

One thing that makes our movement unique is that we encourage each individual to find his or her best-suited personal path. *Living Our Faith* will use individual reflection and one-on-one and small group conversations to help us develop our understanding of the way we live our faith each day.

The sessions will help us integrate individual and communal experiences of what we find most meaningful in our lives. Folks on one path will get a bit of the flavor of the trip they might have taken, getting to vicariously experience a different kind of exploration than the route they're traveling. This mutual give-and-take, is in the context of *conversation*, not *conversion*. We will get to share one another's explorations and gain new insights into our own. For example, our first *Living our Faith* session in September will draw on a model developed by the Zen Mountain Monastery in Mount Tremper, New York, for the training of its students.

Come join us on **September 14.**