

**Strategic Plan**  
**Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church**  
**February 2012 to February 2017**

This plan outlines the next 5 years in Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church's ongoing quest to achieve its mission and realize to the extent possible the desires, the hopes, the dreams, and the visions of our friends and members. The preparers of this plan recognize that meeting some of the goals will be a challenge. This plan is reevaluated, updated, and adjusted annually; a year from now there will be a February 2013 to February 2018 version of the strategic plan. Progress towards meeting the goals expressed in this plan is evaluated monthly during board meetings.

The goals in this strategic plan reflect the vision developed by the congregation during a workshop in October 2009 as well as Emerson's Statement of Ministry. A visioning workshop will be held approximately every four or five years to assess the desires of the congregation and provide a guidance framework for Emerson's strategic plan. The next visioning workshop is tentatively scheduled for the fall of 2014.

It is not the intent of this plan to exclude other achievements at Emerson, and this strategic plan is not meant to include every item that is expected to occur or to which Emerson will devote resources. Instead, it includes a few items that the congregation as a whole identified as important directions to pursue.

**Statement of Ministry (adopted on February 22, 2004):**

Believing that our ministries will flourish more abundantly within the beloved community, Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church offers a sanctuary of spiritual freedom where . . .

- we celebrate and encourage the diversity of heritage, culture, beliefs, and experience shaping our individual visions of truth;
- we translate our compassion into sharing, our longings for peace and justice into action;
- we challenge ourselves to live our Unitarian Universalist principles by bringing healing and hope to the larger community;
- we honor the transcendent mystery of creation by nurturing the planet and all who live upon it.

**Vision:**

At the visioning workshop in October of 2009, the congregation expressed the following wishes for Emerson's future (in no particular order):

- Emerson will be known throughout the West San Fernando Valley for its active support of peace, justice, and environmental stewardship.
- San Fernando Valley residents who are seeking a liberal faith community will have a clear understanding of what Emerson offers.
- Emerson's neighbors will be benefited by its presence.
- Emerson will be a growing congregation.
- Members and their children will continue to feel deeply connected to and supported by a beloved community. Their spiritual beliefs will be honored and their spiritual growth supported.
- Volunteering at Emerson will be a consistently rewarding experience.
- Pastoral needs will continue to be met.
- The congregation will be welcoming and diverse.

Emerson UUC already manifests some of these visions.

## Goals:

Building on our longstanding strengths in worship, music, and religious education, and addressing our present challenges in finance, site limitations, and community visibility, three main objectives for the strategic plan have been selected. These goals are

- 1) make Emerson a greater influence for good in the community (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- 2) increase paid staffing (STAFFING)
- 3) increase space/use of space (SPACE)

Additionally, in 2011 the Board decided to keep in mind that as a congregation, expanding opportunities for deepening our spirituality is a continual goal of Emerson and should be regularly considered as a goal as well (SPIRITUALITY.)

Growth of our membership numbers will be monitored closely, as it impacts the pace at which goals can be achieved. Efforts that encourage increased membership are to be given utmost priority in part so that the goals listed in this strategic plan can be achieved. The Board additionally believes that leadership at Emerson should be representative of the demographics of the entire congregation in order to best achieve the goals we have set down here.

The schedule for progress toward these goals is:

### *By February of 2013, Emerson:*

- Has developed options for expanded building space and surveyed the congregation about their preference and/or conducted a capital improvement study to identify immediate and long-term facility needs (SPACE)
- Has at least a half-time DRE (STAFFING)
- Has a part-time bookkeeper (STAFFING)
- Has held new educational outreach and advocacy events associated with the all-church community outreach project that was adopted in November 2010 (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- Has held at least one new event with/for outside groups outside of the all-church community outreach project (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- Has held at least two new Adult RE programs (SPIRITUALITY)
- Has held an inreach meeting (“Tryst with the Trustees”) specifically aimed at discussing how we have supported spiritual growth at Emerson over the last year through Adult RE, Small Group Ministry and other programs of the church (SPIRITUALITY)
- Has established a Memorial Garden on our present grounds (SPACE)
- Has examined the structure of our investment funds to determine if they could be better deployed in helping us expand (SPACE/STAFFING)
- Has begun functioning as a “teaching church” for our ministerial intern (SPIRITUALITY)
- Has conducted another social justice ministry selection process and either extended the all-church community outreach project adopted in 2010 or identified the next social justice project that will develop and expand our outreach to the wider community (COMMUNITY SERVICE)

### *By February of 2014, Emerson:*

- Has a plan for expanding building space (SPACE)
- Has full-time office staff including possibly a volunteer coordinator (STAFFING)
- Has a part-time sexton (STAFFING)

- Has held at least one new event with/for outside groups (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- Has held a new congregational visioning workshop to re-examine the goals of our 2009 workshop and determine goals for the future (SPIRITUALITY)
- Has created either an outdoor pavilion or other structure that will improve on the space currently occupied by the “old smaller play area” outside (SPACE)
- Has achieved goals associated with the all-church community outreach project selected in 2013 (COMMUNITY SERVICE)

*By February of 2015, Emerson (note that a new visioning workshop will have been held by now and new information obtained during that process may result in adjustments to the goals selected for 2015 and later):*

- Is working towards expanded building space (SPACE)
- Has a full-time DRE (STAFFING)
- Has held at least one new event with/for outside groups outside of the all-church community outreach project (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- Has assessed its experience as a teaching church from 2012-14 and examined how to build upon the lessons of that experience (SPIRITUALITY)
- Has conducted another social justice ministry selection process and either extended the all-church community outreach project adopted in 2012 or identified the next social justice project that will develop and expand our outreach to the wider community (COMMUNITY SERVICE)

*By February of 2016, Emerson:*

- Has expanded building space (SPACE)
- Has a part-time assistant minister (STAFFING)
- Has held at least one new event with/for outside groups outside of the all-church community outreach project (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- Has expanded our OWL program so that it serves the wider community (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- Has begun a longterm capital campaign to maintain and improve our property (SPACE)

*By February of 2017, Emerson:*

- Has identified and begun a partnership with a “sister” UU congregation somewhere outside the United States (COMMUNITY SERVICE/SPIRITUALITY)
- Has begun investigations to acquire the Senior Center property to the north of our site or to initiate some alternate site expansion (SPACE)
- Has begun planning for the logistics of holding two Sunday services (SPACE/SPIRITUALITY)

## **APPENDIX A**

### Outcomes of previous goals and goal adjustments

For the February 2010 to February 2016 Strategic Plan:

The first of these strategic plans was written for February of 2010 to February of 2016. The goals for the first year were:

*By February of 2011, Emerson:*

- Has adopted and become engaged in a social justice ministry based on broad-based input from the congregation (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- Has developed a publicity strategy and/or created an Awareness Ministry (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- Is taking steps to become a Green Sanctuary (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- Has held at least one new event with/for outside groups (COMMUNITY SERVICE)

Nearly all of these goals were accomplished. For example:

- In November of 2010, Emerson adopted an all-church community outreach project: "We Are What We Eat: Wielding our wallets and forks in ethical, just and healthful ways." This project includes elements that are meant to benefit the outside community.
- Will probably have developed a publicity strategy by then
- In July of 2010, Emerson began holding monthly events for the community (3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays), and in October of 2010, Emerson held an earthquake preparedness "fair" to which the community was invited.

There were no Emersonians interested in shepherding the congregation through the Green Sanctuary process. However, thanks to our new dishwasher, Emerson has begun using non-paper products at most church functions.

Emerson hired a new REC, accompanist, and choir director between February of 2010 and February of 2011. The REC hours were expanded, and while the choir is not singing as frequently as in 2009, the music program is thriving.

It is of great concern to the Board of Trustees that no growth occurred between Feb 2010 and Feb 2011. As a consequence, some of the goals requiring substantial growth in pledge income were moved further into the future in the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan.

The goals for the second year of the strategic planning process were:

*By February of 2012, Emerson:*

- Has held educational outreach and advocacy events associated with the all-church community outreach project that was adopted in November 2010 (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- Has held at least one new event with/for outside groups outside of the all-church community outreach project (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- Has reduced its utility usage (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- Has reduced its paper usage (COMMUNITY SERVICE)
- Has a part-time member/volunteer coordinator (STAFFING)
- Has repaired or replaced the wayside pulpit sign (SPACE)

Many of these goals were accomplished. Outreach and advocacy events have been held to coordinate with the all-church community outreach project (such as guest speakers, garden planning and educational groups). We continue to make Emerson available to new groups such as Busthevote and Get On the Bus. We have reduced our paper usage at least somewhat, although we are unsure how much we have reduced our utility usage. We are in the process of getting the wayside pulpit sign upgraded, which should be completed by February of March of this year. We were not able to hire anyone to handle volunteer coordination and have added that goal for the future.