

# THIS WEEK AT EMERSON – JULY 24, 2014

Emerson UU Chapel A welcoming congregation of the UUA

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**Sunday – July 27, 2014**

**17815 Wild Horse Creek Road**

**10:00 AM**

**Worship Service**

**“Welcome Home” – Lauren Lyerla, Speaker**

What makes a house a home? What makes a place a spiritual home?

These questions have become more relevant than ever, as we live in a highly mobile society.

Emerson Chapel has experienced this itself, having just moved from a 24-year home to our new location.

Is all of this change a distraction from our spiritual path, or is it part of the path?

What happens when we resist change, and what happens when we embrace it?

Lauren Lyerla has been a member of Emerson Chapel since 2005.

This is the sixth sermon she has given at Emerson.



**Join us for a “Linger Longer” after the service.**

**We are asking everyone to bring foods that do not require utensils  
and to *linger a bit longer* for fellowship after service.**

**The last Sunday of most months we will have a potluck of this type.**

## [Our Minister's Message](#)

In any congregation, it's easy to forget that we are part of a larger association of covenanted congregations. We are mutually responsible for each other and in a sacred relationship. In the last two weeks, we have had the opportunity to connect more concretely to that reality.

Last week, one of our ministers, the Rev. Jennifer Slade, committed suicide. I cannot imagine the suffering this has opened up in her congregation, which she had served for only two years. Their relationship was just starting. Many of you have reached out to the church with caring words. Thank you.

This past Sunday, something pretty scary happened at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of New Orleans (First UUNO). Operation Save America, a fundamentalist anti-abortion organization that is known for descending upon abortion clinics and making life a living hell for anyone coming or going, chose to disrupt their Sunday morning. Several members of OSA showed up at First UUNO as if there to attend worship, and during the service stood up and began verbally accosting the worshippers and pushing anti-abortion pamphlets into their hands.

Many Unitarian Universalists are active in the reproductive justice movement, me included. We have a very open and flexible approach to the issue of abortion. For us, life is more filled with both/ands than either/ors. Abortion is a both/and. There are some things in life that are mysteries which have not been revealed, nor can they be revealed in fullness. One of those mysteries is the mystery of life and death. Another mystery is the mystery of the human heart. It is not for us to judge how a woman feels when she learns she is pregnant, and the choices she makes about a pregnancy. That is a mystery of the human heart and a mystery of life and death, and we respect those mysteries by creating an open space for every woman to make her own decision, trusting in her as a person of inherent worth and dignity to make the decision that is best for her and her family.

Many of us are deeply troubled by the increasing government intrusion into women's personal lives. The government does not belong there. Nor does anyone else, except her loved ones and her health care professionals. This is why many Unitarian Universalists are so involved in standing up for women's reproductive justice. We are standing, often very publicly, in support of the mystery of life and the mystery of the human heart.

This is why OSA decided to target the First Unitarian Universalist Church of New Orleans.

I don't think they were prepared for what followed. That Sunday, First UUNO was commissioning the College of Social Justice youth leaders who had been gathering all week. The youth leaders immediately circled in and began singing. Rev. De Vandiver, a New Orleans-based Community Minister who was leading worship that morning, asked the protesters to please respect the worship space and if they couldn't, to relocate to the front steps of the church. As she spoke, church leaders began to carefully guide the protesters towards the front door. Some protesters respected her request and remained silently behind. At the same time, Rev. Jim VanderWeele of Community Church Unitarian Universalist called the police who gathered a block away in case things got violent. The Director of Religious Education did a sweep of all points of entry, ensured they were locked, and discerned that OSA had indeed surrounded the church. OSA had identified the rooms where the children met for Religious Education and were pressing disturbing pictures against the windows. The children were moved to an interior room, with a note left on their classroom doors to inform parents of where they had been moved to. Back in the sanctuary, Rev. Vandiver preached about how fundamentalism offers only one path of truth, whereas liberal religion recognizes a diversity of paths, and that this offers us a significant way to engage the challenges of our world. After the service, Rev. Vandiver called Planned Parenthood and within ten minutes escorts arrived at the church to help parishioners return safely to their vehicles.

First, let me say that I'm extremely disturbed that this has happened. This protest was a violation of our sacred space, and when I say "our" I mean it. We Unitarian Universalists are in sacred covenantal relationships of mutuality. When one congregation is violated in this way, we are all violated.

But unfortunately, I'm not surprised. I have been active in the reproductive justice movement in the United States for the last nine years. The anti-abortion movement has become increasingly radicalized, willing to use violence to achieve its goals, from intimidating women as they enter clinics to murdering the doctors that serve them. I've stood outside the entrance to Hope Clinic in Granite City IL, allowing anti-abortion protesters to hurl insults at me hoping to deflect some of their venom away from the patients on their way in. They hate clergy who are pro-choice. We drive them crazy because we use the same scriptures they do and pray to the same God. They take pictures of us and our vehicle license plates and post them online. We get hate letters in the mail. It's very intimidating. But heh, we aren't the ones trying to get an abortion. So if just by standing there in a clergy collar, holding a sign that proclaims a love bigger than their hate, we drive the protesters a little crazy? Crazy enough to direct their venom at us? May it make one woman's day just a bit easier.

But we don't take chances either. We always register with the clinic so they know we're there, and escorts always take us back to our cars.

This summer, anti-abortionists got a big pass from the Supreme Court to escalate the level of bullying they can legally get away with. They no longer have to respect the buffer zone that used to keep them away from the entrances of abortion clinics. This gives anti-abortion protesters the right to get up close and personal. Just like the protesters who took their place at First UUNO, they can shout their judgments and push their pamphlets into the eyes and hands of women who just need a break, who need some respect and some space to access the health care that they have decided is best for them and their families.

I am incredibly relieved that there was no physical violence or bloodshed at First UUNO.

But let's reflect a bit about how First UUNO responded. First, they responded with respect. No one yelled back at the protesters. No one pushed back. The response was non-violent. This did not mean that the good people at First UUNO simply took it on the chin. They claimed their sacred space back from those filling it with hateful words and pictures by responding with music. They claimed it by establishing the expectations for those who wished to occupy it. They then enforced the expectation by gently and respectfully removing those who refused to meet the expectations they had set. They also didn't take any chances. Doors were locked. Kids were relocated. Police were called. Planned Parenthood was contacted for help. The ministers, the youth leaders, the Director of Religious Education, and all the good people attending that morning lived into their faith in every action that was taken that morning. They witnessed to our values of respect and diversity every step of the way. We can learn a lot from them.

Actually, we have to learn from them because what happened to First UUNO could happen in any of our churches. I'm not saying we should expect it. Most of our churches will never face this kind of sacred violation, thank the spirit, but that doesn't mean it can't happen. In fact, given the increasing legal challenges to reproductive justice, and the fact that many Unitarian Universalist leaders are publicly active in the women's reproductive justice movement, we need to be ready. Radical anti-abortionists don't play fair.

Rev. De Vandiver called it right. These are religious terrorists. These are strong words, but let's call a spade a spade. By standing up for freedom, for respect, for the true complexity and diversity of life, we could be made targets. This means we have to have safety procedures in place and practice using them. It also means becoming skilled in non-violent passive resistance when others would violate us for the purpose of furthering their political goals. We can turn that violation on its head and proclaim our values, healing values that we believe will usher in true justice and peace.

OSA crossed a big line on Sunday and I think it could turn around and bite them. Americans have a deep respect for religious freedom and for the sanctity of religious houses of worship. No matter what you may think about what goes on inside any specific house of worship, violating sacred space is a big deal. Sunday's violation is a direct mirror of the kind of violation that religious fundamentalist terrorists would like to enact legally in this country against all women.

New Orleans Unitarian Universalists are now planning a media outreach to respond to what has happened to them, to use this awful experience as a tool to continue changing the hearts of this nation, to show that religious people have diverse ways of being pro-child and pro-family, and that religious liberalism might just be where we see the clearest embodiment of what it means to be, dare I say, pro-life in its truest sense.

I am so thankful to the New Orleans Unitarian Universalists for their proud witness. We are in covenantal community with them and they stood for us that morning as well. May we be worthy of their witness.

Yours in faith, Rev. Krista Taves.

Rev. Taves is on vacation from Thursday July 24 to Wednesday July 30th. If you have a pastoral care emergency, please contact Pastoral Care Team Lead Karyl Howard at [pastoralcare@emersonuuchapel.org](mailto:pastoralcare@emersonuuchapel.org) or President Nancy Belt at [president@emersonuuchapel.org](mailto:president@emersonuuchapel.org). Rev. Taves will be back in the office on Thursday July 31<sup>st</sup>.

Rev. Krista Taves is available for regular pastoral care on Wednesdays, Thursday, and Sunday afternoon. She is available for emergency pastoral care 24/7.

If you have a pastoral care emergency, please leave a voice mail at 417-343-8657, 636-256-7393 and [pastoralcare@emersonuuchapel.org](mailto:pastoralcare@emersonuuchapel.org). Someone should be in touch with you shortly. A pastoral care emergency includes death, the proximity of death, or a life-threatening emergency. If Rev. Krista Taves is on her weekend, vacation or study leave, please contact either the Office Administrator ([office@emersonuuchapel.org](mailto:office@emersonuuchapel.org)), Pastoral Care Team Leader Karyl Howard ([pastoralcare@emersonuuchapel.org](mailto:pastoralcare@emersonuuchapel.org)) or President of the Board Nancy Belt ([president@emersonuuchapel.org](mailto:president@emersonuuchapel.org)).



[Building Community, Meeting Needs](#)

[Brainstorming session on August 2<sup>nd</sup> at 5 PM](#)

As our Emerson community continues making the transition to our new worship space, many have asked how we can use our resources to build community, set up and use this space efficiently, and serve the larger mission of our church, which is to transform ourselves, our community, and our world.

These questions are important and have led to research about what lessons we might learn from renting congregations that have faced similar questions.

One answer that we have begun to explore in depth is the concept of **neighborhood teams**, which a UU congregation in Washington State has successfully used to build community, meet church worship needs, and carry out their mission.

In short, a neighborhood team is a subsection of a congregation that is organized in order to offer a way for relationships to be formed and strengthened through activities such as social events, social-justice activities, and service to the Emerson community. For example, these teams may be a way to organize resources to help with Sunday-morning setup, which, as many of you now know, consists of a series of demands that simply cannot be met by a handful of people each week.

This model has proven very successful within several UU congregations, so a decision has been made to explore what the development of neighborhood teams could mean for Emerson.

**The next brainstorming session about these teams will take place on Saturday, August 2, at 5 p.m.**, at a to-be-determined location that will be announced through our regular media. In between now and then, if you have thoughts, questions, or concerns to offer about the consideration of this congregational model, please e-mail them to [board@emersonuuchapel.org](mailto:board@emersonuuchapel.org). You can also speak to Nancy Fish, Nancy Belt, Jake Lyonfields, or Barb Brown about your ideas.

These conversations will be open to everyone, and everyone is encouraged to participate by attending related meetings and/or offering their thoughts formally and informally.

Thank you for your time,

Nancy Belt, Nancy Fish, Barb Brown, Jake Lyonfields



**Contact Jan Seyer or Jake Lyonfields** if you can participate: **Saturday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>**: Metro UU's are holding another workday in the Kensington neighborhood. It will be a 4-hour session beginning at 7:00 a.m. and ending promptly at 11:00 a.m. We will be trying to continue the cleanup efforts in Zone 1, but need people willing to use their own chainsaws to cut the heavier foliage that we were unable to cut the last time. We also need volunteers to bundle the branches. If we have enough participants, we will do some more work on the other Zones as well. This will be a more informal work session with everyone bringing their own lunch and work stoppage at 11:00 due to the heat. If you are planning to attend and if you have a chainsaw you are willing to bring and use, let us know.



**REMINDER:** If your pledge payments are coming directly from your bank, please be sure the mailing address is changed to:

**Emerson UU Chapel, 16233 Westwoods Business Park, Ellisville, MO 63021**

**Thank you!!**

[Easiest Fund raising ever!! Grocery gift cards and GL Scrip are on sale Every Sunday](#)

See how ALL your shopping can benefit Emerson. Gift cards are available from Dierberg's and Shop & Save. Spend what you normally spend each month and give 5% to Emerson.

## This Week's Calendar of Events

SUN, July 27

10:00 AM – Worship - 17815 Wild Horse Creek Road

WED, July 30

6:30 PM – Religious Education Team Mtg – 16233 Westwoods Business Park

### Looking Ahead:

Sunday, August 17 – Religious Education Resumes

Sunday, September 7 – Water Communion

September 7, 14, 21

Pathways to Membership during Religious Ed Hour

### How/Where/When to find us:

Sunday Morning

17815 Wild Horse Creek Road, Chesterfield, MO 63005  
(Barat Academy)

### Mailing & Meeting Address:

16233 Westwoods Business Park Drive, Ellisville, MO 63021

The office is staffed

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday from 9 AM to 2 PM; Friday from 9 to Noon

Phone: 636-256-7393

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