

MOSAIC

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INTERFAITH MINISTRIES FOR GREATER HOUSTON

FALL/WINTER 2018

IM

INTERFAITH
MINISTRIES
FOR GREATER HOUSTON



REFUGEE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT GROUP SOARS... *CREATIVE CLASSES LIFT REFUGEES FROM ISOLATION*

Seen as one of the most unique groups in Houston, the Women's Empowerment Group was created by IM in 2016 when Refugee Services case managers realized that many Arabic-speaking, female refugees were becoming isolated and experiencing depression. With no money to purchase vehicles, they rarely left their homes and were afraid to take their children to the park by bus because they could not navigate the public transportation system in English.

Then along came a woman named Chloe Krane. Originally from England, Krane majored in Arabic and worked as a television producer in the Middle East for many years. There, she witnessed unspeakable suffering, yet she was not permitted to help anyone while on the job. When she settled in Houston in 2013, she found her opportunity and began volunteering with IM's Refugee Services department.

Her determination to help Arabic-speaking women assimilate into their new country led to the creation of the Women's Empowerment Group. Krane arranges for up to 35 women to be picked up by volunteer drivers and taken to nearby community centers to socialize in their native tongues and to learn valuable skills that can be developed into a trade. The women, often with their young children in tow, gather to learn how to cook, sew and make jewelry for hours at a time. Krane has no qualms about lugging loads of sewing machines by hand to the community centers, as she knows the happiness the activity brings to the ladies. This fall, she has managed to secure culturally-approved swimwear for her clients so they can begin swimming lessons in conjunction with the local YMCA.

Every time the women gather, Krane notices how their smiles continue to grow as they build a new community

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(Refugee women...)

for themselves and form lasting bonds. Some of the women have even become inspired to learn English, and they come to the group and teach new words and phrases to their peers.

“Language barriers and cultural restrictions can make it hard for refugee women to adjust to life in America, putting them at risk of isolation. This makes them extremely vulnerable,” Krane explained. “This program was started to help the women rebuild the community they left behind when they fled their home countries. They learn about the institutions and services available to them in Houston, in their native language – information that they’d struggle to access without the program. Growing their knowledge base and expanding their community enables the women to explore their full potential.”

The group, which operates every spring and fall, also sends guest speakers each week to discuss topics relevant to the needs of the women. All presentations are simultaneously translated. Topics include: nutrition, dental care, employment, civil rights, library services, crisis intervention for teen-agers, low-budget and free activities in Houston, domestic abuse and mental health.



IM works closely with Refugee Services’ case workers to identify the refugee women who would most benefit from the program and prioritize them. Volunteers are key to the success of the Women’s Empowerment Program. IM welcomes those who wish to become involved. This program offers a safe space for refugees to rebuild their sense of community with each other and, become actively involved in the wider Houston community.

Volunteer opportunities include child care and craft projects; organizing refreshments; socializing with the women and practicing conversational English; resume and employment support; family mentoring; translating; and teaching skill-based classes.

Those interested in volunteering can contact Krane at ckrane@imgh.org.



AFTER ONE YEAR UNDER IM’S UMBRELLA, VOLUNTEER HOUSTON CELEBRATES ITS SUCCESSES



IN APPROXIMATELY ONE YEAR, VH HAS:

- Registered **15,625** new volunteers
- Registered **230** new agencies
- Added **11,219** new volunteer opportunities
- Received responses to **16,993** volunteer opportunities
- Made an impact of **\$1.26 million** in volunteer hours in the community

It has been a very busy year for Volunteer Houston (VH) – strengthening and growing partnerships with area non-profits, Harris County and the City of Houston, as well as increasing its volunteer base.

VH re-launched itself to the Houston community with a spring event at Hartsfield Elementary School, kicked off by Jim “Mattress Mack” McIngvale and Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo, during which students completed projects for six area non-profit partners.

As part of its corporate volunteer program, VH completed two school yard builds for Hartsfield Elementary and four residential Hurricane Harvey recovery projects with Rebuilding Together Houston, SBP and Team Rubicon.

The VH team is growing under the new leadership of Director Eleanor Gates and new employees Gayla Garrison as project coordinator of Agency Relationships, and John Locke, volunteer coordinator.

VH is now poised for expanding programs in 2019.

For more information, visit www.volunteershouston.org.



FROM THE CEO:

At this time of year, I always count my blessings. Thanksgiving is a holiday when Americans across our great land rest from their busy lives, relax with family, and give thanks. It is easy to forget how blessed we are sometimes.

Many of our neighbors struggle from day to day, not knowing where their next meal is coming from. Some elderly neighbors live alone, perhaps with only a dog or cat for company, and no family nearby. Meals on Wheels is a blessing to them. For more than 40 years, IM has delivered meals and made friendly visits to homebound seniors across our community. Today, we are serving more than 4,000 seniors across the Greater Houston/Galveston county area.

On Thanksgiving morning, thousands of volunteers will gather at First Presbyterian Church on Main Street to pick up and deliver meals to seniors living in every direction. Each senior will receive a hot turkey dinner with all the trimmings, delivered with a smile. Our volunteer may be the

only visitor they receive that day. Each volunteer will be a blessing. There is still time to help by registering to volunteer or making a donation at www.imgh.org/thanksgiving.

As the year comes to a close, we are continuing the Faith in Our City series, which pairs a monthly lunch and learn session highlighting a particular religion with a house of worship tour. Our featured faith for December will be Roman Catholicism, with a lunch and learn on Dec. 11 at the Hines Center for Spirituality and Prayer, and the house of worship tour on Dec. 16 at the Chapel of St. Basil on the campus of University of St. Thomas. Learn more about different faiths and the blessings they bestow by signing up at www.imgh.org/faith-in-our-city.

As I count my blessings, I pause to think of those in need – vulnerable seniors, refugees fleeing violence and persecution, and so many in our midst who need a helping hand. Your support of Interfaith Ministries is a blessing to so many.

Thank you.

Martin B. Cominsky
President & CEO



FOR ALL HUMANITY LUNCHEON RAISES FUNDS, HOPE FOR REFUGEES

IM's For All Humanity Luncheon on Nov. 13 at the Westin Memorial City hotel raises much-needed funds for refugees who have made Houston their new home. IM's Refugee Services department legally resettles refugees from around the world who are fleeing violence or persecution. In partnership with the U.S. State Department and Episcopal Migration Ministries, IM welcomes these neighbors and equips them with the tools they need to succeed. More than 90 percent of our refugees are self-sufficient within six months of arrival.

This year's luncheon honoree is IM supporter and volunteer Suzanne Itani. The daughter of a Mississippi civil rights advocate, Itani inherited a passion for social inclusion and economic access. She supports diverse philanthropic

Some of Itani's efforts include faith-based programs in conjunction with the Islamic community, such as establishing learning programs and ESL for refugees at Masjid El Farouq.

Yet, her influence and philanthropy reach beyond the Muslim community through programs that help refugees navigate their new surroundings within the American community at large. Joint ventures involving the integration of refugees include those with Interfaith Community, Amaanah Refugee Services, The Kaizen Center, Samurai Karate and the Monarcas soccer team, among others.

In 2017, Itani took her advocacy a step further by creating Taiba. Taiba creates a dynamic support network, emphasizing mutual respect and community, and fosters the confidence and sense of

connectivity necessary to advance inclusion in society.

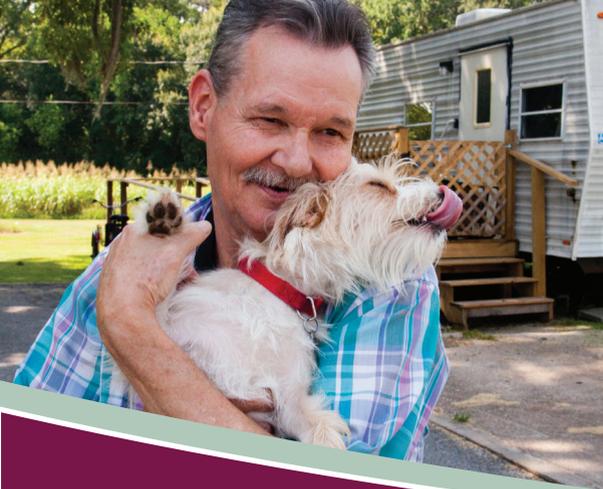
Itani believes that every person has value, and she is invested in making sure the most vulnerable members of our community receive the tools they need to succeed.

Luncheon co-chairs are Tehmina Masud and Nancy Qawasmeh.

Tickets start at \$200 and tables at \$2,500. For information, please contact **Brandi Ledet** at **713-533-4925** or **bledet@imgh.org**.

Suzanne Itani





TERRIER MARY LOU GIVES MEALS ON WHEELS CLIENT A FAMILY

Working as a heavy equipment mechanic at Fort Bragg in the 1970s, Richard Wright, 62, developed a double hernia in his stomach, which required immediate surgery and a colostomy bag. Years later, he was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease that primarily affects his legs. As a result, he relies on a walker for mobility and takes the bus when he needs to get around.

For the last five years, Wright has lived in a trailer park in Humble and boasts that he is a proud Meals on Wheels client. “I love it,” he says of the program. “I get a hot meal every day and it’s always on time.”

During Hurricane Harvey in 2017, Richard’s trailer was flooded and he was forced to live in a nearby elementary school until the water subsided. At the school, his beloved Dachshund named Rocky contracted the Parvovirus and died.

With his home in tatters and his best friend gone, Wright has worked hard to rebuild his life in a FEMA trailer. He adopted a Terrier puppy named Mary Lou and enrolled her in the aniMeals program, which delivers dry dog food, treats and toys once a month.

“We have slept next to each other from the day I got her,” Wright said, adding that “Lou Lou” rides on the seat of his walker when he takes daily strolls down his street. “You know, being by myself, she’s my family. She’s all I’ve got.”

Taking advantage of aniMeals’ partnership with the local Emancipet program, Wright recently had Mary Lou spayed at no charge to help reduce the homeless pet population in his neighborhood. Through a partnership with the Texas Veterinary Medical Foundation, Mary Lou received vaccines as well.

aniMeals’ volunteer Heather Mann said the program means the world to Meals on Wheels seniors with pets. “That’s their best friend. For some of them, that’s the reason they get out of bed in the morning because they know they have to be there for their dog or their cat.”

In addition to the nutritious meals brought to Wright and Mary Lou, Richard’s volunteer driver looks after him as well. Knowing he is a bit unsteady on his feet and uses a walker, her church group built a ramp to his trailer’s door so he could enter with ease.

“I’m blessed,” he says about being a Meals on Wheels and aniMeals client. “I’m lucky to be alive.”

Meals on Wheels serves roughly 4,000 seniors, disabled and veteran clients in the Greater Houston area, and aniMeals on Wheels serves 1,200 pets with 10,000 pounds of pet food every month.

IM NEEDS 2,000 VOLUNTEERS TO DELIVER THANKSGIVING MEALS TO SENIORS

Thanksgiving is just around the corner, and IM is looking to recruit approximately 2,000 volunteers to help deliver turkey dinners with all the trimmings to its 4,000 Meals on Wheels clients – many of whom will be spending the holiday alone. The distribution will mark IM’s largest event of the year.

To make sure all Meals on Wheels’ seniors, veterans and disabled clients have a Happy Thanksgiving and a friendly visit, IM is calling for people – both individuals and teams of friends and families – to deliver meals to clients on Thanksgiving morning, **Nov. 22**.

HURRICANE HARVEY SURVIVOR CREDITS MEALS ON WHEELS FOR QUALITY OF LIFE

"Houston is my everything," said Meals on Wheels client Donna Garcia. She grew up in this city, raised her three sons here, and now at age 62, she is blessed to have six grandchildren who live nearby.

But life has not always been easy for the 62-year-old. She is diabetic and struggles with other health issues such as dizziness, knee problems, and severe back pain – all which keep her from being able to shop or cook for herself.

And then came Hurricane Harvey in 2017. Garcia was living in a rental home on the east side of town when the storm struck. The water in her neighborhood was so high it covered cars and trucks – and then began pouring into her home. A young man came by with an inflatable swimming pool and asked Garcia and her eldest son if they needed help.

The two men used the pool to pull Garcia through the floodwaters to dry land. From there, SWAT vehicles and dump trucks transported her, along with other flood victims, to a local high school for shelter. Unfortunately, she had to have four toes amputated as a result of an infection she contracted from the flood waters. When she was finally able to return home, everything had been destroyed.

"Everything we lost was material things, but you still think of all the things that were very personal and important to you," Garcia said. Among those precious items were her late father's ashes.

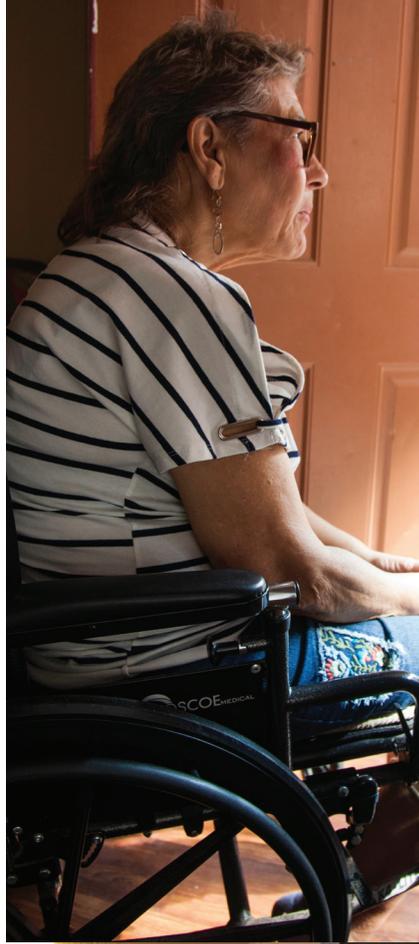
Today, Garcia is living in a simple apartment she shares with her son. And just as the kindness of strangers helped them survive the storm, such kindness carries on through IM's Meals on Wheels program, which delivers a hot meal to Garcia every weekday.

"The meals are good," Garcia said. "It's all great and it all gets eaten." Some of the food even helps build special memories, such as the little cartons of milk she and her 11-year-old grandson use to make pancakes on the weekends.

Garcia is one of approximately 4,000 seniors, disabled, and veteran clients in the Greater Houston area who receive Meals on Wheels. And, just as important as the food is for her body, the service feeds her spirit.

She talks especially fondly of one of her drivers, Ms. Norma. "If I didn't answer my gate, she'd call and make sure I was okay. She was very sweet, very lovable. She had her daughter with her sometimes, and they always gave me a little hug and kiss when they left," Garcia said.

"I love Meals on Wheels. They're life-savers, they really are," she said. "I feel like I could call them for anything, even if it wasn't pertaining to food. It's very touching that people are really there to help."



Register to volunteer online by visiting www.imgh.org/thanksgiving. Then, bring two cooler bags to First Presbyterian Church, 5300 S. Main St., or to Carbide Park, 4102 Main St. in La Marque, at 9 a.m. At those locations, pick up pre-packaged meals – both hot and cold – and make deliveries via pre-planned routes. Cooler bags can be purchased at both locations, if needed. IM promises that volunteers will be back home by noon to enjoy their own Thanksgiving meals with the satisfaction of a good deed done.

Or, simply donate to the cause by visiting www.imgh.org/thanksgiving.

For more information, please visit the website or contact **Brandi Ledet** at:

713-533-4925 or bledet@imgh.org.

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT FAITHS CREATES UNITY, PEACE

Certain troubling events this past year, such as the vandalizing of the Rothko Chapel in Montrose in May, and offensive fliers left at the Congregation Shaar Hashalom in Clear Lake in July, affirm the need to encourage respect for differences in the most diverse metropolitan region in the country.

In response, IM has pledged to continue its efforts to unite people of different faiths in understanding and respect. One of those efforts is The Dialogue Project, which launched in August, offering opportunities to learn about Houston's many faith communities to discover their common ground and to further understanding and connections among all people.

Part of The Dialogue Project is a program called Faith in Our City. It offers the public tours of a variety of houses of worship as well as Lunch & Learn opportunities.

The Dialogue Project also includes a program called Dinner Dialogues, which offers people of diverse faith traditions or of no faith the chance to comfortably gather in a person's private home, in a house of worship or at IM and learn about others' beliefs in a meaningful and respectful setting. Typically, gatherings are limited to eight to 12 people and are open to the public.



Information about The Dialogue Project can be found at the IM website, www.imgh.org, or by contacting **Bethany Boucher** at **713-533-4990** or bboucher@imgh.org.



The Brigitte & Bashar Kalai Plaza of Respect will soon be a reality. Construction on the ambitious project began in July with demolition of the existing verandah extending north from IM's Albert & Ethel Herzstein Building at 3303 Main St. As fall arrived, concrete and steel work was well underway. Concrete is being smoothed on the surface of the Plaza and the grand

TILE BY TILE, THE PLAZA OF RESPECT IS BECOMING A REALITY

staircase leading up to it from Main Street. Steel beams are being erected to frame the Peace Portal, the gateway to this special space.

IM is very grateful to our lead sponsors, Brigitte and Bashar Kalai; Patti and Richard Everett, for whom the Plaza Forum will be named; the Clark and Charlene Thompson Foundation, for whom the Pillar of Light honoring Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza will be named; and Shell Oil Company for sponsoring the Banner of Respect that will grace the perimeter of the building.

The completed Plaza will feature three Pillars of Light honoring the interfaith work of Archbishop Fiorenza, Rabbi Samuel Karff, and the Rev. William A. Lawson. Guests will be enjoy a three-dimensional audio visual experience of the three faith leaders, as well as learn about the many faiths represented in Houston from an app on their phones.

Naming opportunities are still available on the Plaza. For more information, please contact **Maria Magee** at **713-533-4924** or mmagee@imgh.org.

MEALS ON WHEELS GALVESTON COUNTY CELEBRATES FIRST BIRTHDAY

IM recently celebrated the first birthday of Meals on Wheels Galveston County (MOWGC). IM assumed responsibility in October 2017 for the clients of the Galveston County Parks & Recreation Senior Services. MOWGC is currently serving 365 clients – nearly double the amount at the time of inception. Currently, 48 clients remain on the waiting list, which is an 84 percent decrease from this time last year.

"Meals on Wheels Galveston County is changing the lives of homebound elderly clients in our communities with each meal we deliver," said Leann Criswell, MOWGC program manager. "With the help and support of generous volunteers and donors, we won't stop until every senior in Galveston County who needs our help is provided for."

MOWGC has 17 volunteer drivers and many aniMeals volunteers.

During the past year, MOWC has hosted two aniMeals pet wellness fairs, a local Operation IMPact that provided emergency food prior to Hurricane Season, and a local Thanksgiving meal delivery.



MEALS on WHEELS
GALVESTON COUNTY

FUNDING OUR MISSION...



IM thanks TXU Energy for a generous cash donation and its willingness to donate box fans to our senior Meals on Wheels clients who won't have AC this summer.



We are doubly grateful to Walmart for making a \$50,000 donation to Meals on Wheels, and a surprise \$5,000 gift to Refugee Services!



(left to right) IM President and CEO Martin B. Cominsky with Houston Methodist CEO Dr. Marc Boom. Employees from the hospital system spent three days volunteering at Meals on Wheels, both in Houston and Galveston County, as part of their United Way Days of Caring. Houston Methodist is a partner in our Hospital to Home "Home Plate" project, in which we deliver meals on a short-term basis to their recently discharged patients.



Thank you to Kroger for their generous gift of \$65,000 to sponsor a Meals on Wheels truck and to be the presenting sponsor of our 2018 Meals on Wheels Thanksgiving Project! This gift will help us feed approximately 4,000 homebound seniors across the Greater Houston area!



Thank you to the Charity Guild of Catholic Women for a generous grant that enabled us to provide school supplies for 100 refugee children!



Thank you to Bank of America for its support of our Meals on Wheels program!



We're so excited to become a PetSmart Charities grantee! Grant funds will go directly toward helping more pets in need through providing veterinary care and preventative medications!

- Alan B. Slifka Foundation
- Alicia & Andy O'Neil
- Alliance of Community Assistance Ministries
- Allyson & Elliot Gershenson
- Andrew Delaney Foundation
- Andrew S. Harper
- Anonymous
- Applied Applications/ Scott McMillian
- Asian American Youth Giving Circle
- Austin County Investments
- Barry & Rosalyn Margolis
- Bimla & Swatantra Jain
- Brigitte & Bashar Kalai
- Bruce Dixie Smith
- Bruce Dixie Smith
- Centerpoint Energy
- Chevron
- Deborah Ann & Stephen Whitman
- Deborah McBride
- Donald Lee Moore
- Dr. Sippi & Ajay Khurana
- Drayton McLane
- Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church
- Energy Transfer Partners
- EOG Resources/ Charles Crisp
- Estate of Dorothy Hines
- ExxonMobil Foundation
- Frees Foundation
- Frost Bank
- Galveston Island Permanent Endowment
- Geico Philanthropic Foundation
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- Haza Foods, LLC
- Houston Junior Forum, Inc.
- Houston Methodist
- Intercontinental Exchange
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- James C. Porter
- Janice Sanders
- Jim McIngvale
- John C. Boehm
- John P. McGovern Foundation
- Karen Johnson
- Kate MacDougall
- Lillian Kaiser Lewis Foundation
- Lily & Charles Foster
- Linda & Fred Marshall
- Linda S. Norris
- Meals on Wheels America
- Meredith J. Long
- Murphy Oil Corporation
- Mustang CAT
- Naaz Khumawala Charitable Fund
- Naushad Kermally
- Neal McKim
- Palmer Foundation
- Paula Sutton
- Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill
- Richard Stodder Charitable Foundation
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- Shell Oil Company
- Shifa USA
- Sloan Family Charitable Foundation
- St. John the Divine Episcopal Church
- St. Luke's United Methodist Church
- St. Paul's Methodist Foundation
- St. Philip Presbyterian Church
- Stage
- Subaru
- Susan & David Morris Fund
- Susie Hu Ting
- Syed A Raza, M.D.
- Taiba USA
- Tam International
- Terry Marriott
- Texas Buddhist Association
- The Alkek and Williams Foundation
- The Eleanor and Frank Freed Foundation
- The Kroger Co. Foundation
- United Healthcare
- Vijay Pallod
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- Wayne Duddlesten Foundation
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Shaukat Zakaria
IM Board Chair



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come from
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2018 END-OF-YEAR CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS:

IM could not carry out its work without community support! We are grateful to all our donors for their generosity. There are several ways you can make a gift to IM in 2018. All gifts received or postmarked on or before Dec. 31, 2018 may be eligible for a 2018 tax deduction.

- Give online at www.imgh.org.
- Mail your check, made payable to "Interfaith Ministries", to: **Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston, Attn: Development Department, 3303 Main St., Houston, TX 77002.**
- Donate by credit card over the phone by calling **Maria Magee** at **713-533-4924**.
- Make a gift of stock, or charitable distribution from your IRA. If you are 70 ½ or older, an IRA charitable rollover can lower your income and taxes, even if you do not itemize deductions.
- Consider leaving a legacy to IM through a deferred gift, such as a bequest, gift of life insurance, or a charitable trust. For more information, contact **Maria Magee** at **713-533-4924** or mmagee@imgh.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Nov. 13:

For All Humanity Luncheon at The Westin Memorial City Hotel, 945 Gessner Road, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Nov. 13:

Faith in Our City Lunch & Learn on Judaism, Hines Center of Spirituality and Prayer, 500 Fannin St. Ste. 100, noon to 1 p.m.

Nov. 15:

House of Worship Tour on Judaism, Congregation Emanu El, 1500 Sunset Blvd., 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Nov. 22:

Meals on Wheels Thanksgiving Volunteer Event: First Presbyterian Church, 5300 S. Main St. in Houston, and Carbide Park, 4102 Main St. in La Marque, beginning at 9 a.m.

Dec. 11:

Faith in Our City Lunch & Learn on Roman Catholicism, Hines Center of Spirituality and Prayer, 500 Fannin St. Ste. 100, noon to 1 p.m.

Dec. 16:

House of Worship Tour on Roman Catholicism, Chapel of St. Basil, 1018 W. Alabama St., 1 to 2:45 p.m.

For more information on all upcoming events please contact

Maria Carrillo at mcarrillo@imgh.org.