



LAKE CHAPALA UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER

September 2018

Upcoming LCUUF Sunday Services

Sept. 2: "What is Left Behind." Rev. Matt will talk about our personal legacies as well as our Fellowship's Legacy Project. Service Leader: is Heidi MacLennan. Among the many questions dying brings, is: what do we leave behind? What legacies will we leave? We'll explore ways to leave well, and leave behind well. After the service, our Legacy Team will talk about their work creating a legacy program for the Fellowship, so that we might be ready to receive gifts from wills and bequests.

Sept. 8: "Pouring Ourselves Out Into the World." Rev. Matt will present our Water Communion service. Cate Howell will be the Service Leader. Water communion is a ritual celebrated in most Unitarian Universalist congregations, to celebrate our coming together, like streams that merge together into great rivers flowing into the sea. We will reflect on our relationship with each other, and with the world.

Sept. 16: "Mexico's Independence Day." Judy King will present, and Karyn Carpenter will be the Service Leader. We will celebrate this special day honoring the Mexican revolution and Independence Day.

Sept. 23: "Life in the Balance: Reflections on the Fall Equinox." Rev. Matt will give the presentation and Linda Conklin will be the Service Leader. We will celebrate the Autumn Equinox, when light and darkness find their balance. It is a time of rejoicing, but also preparation for the dark, spare times ahead. We reflect on finding our balance in life, and on maintaining equilibrium even as we live in a world that seems to have wobbled wildly out of balance.

Sept. 30: "Creative Spirit in Mexico." Janice Kimball and Linda Conklin will give the presentation and Wayne Conklin will be Service Leader. Mexico is a land of brilliant colors, bright sunshine, and wonderful artisans. We visitors to Mexico are just as inspired by the colors, the landscapes, and the beautiful work by Mexico's people. We have several artists in our congregation that respond to the beauty around us, and we will hear from two of them today.



President's Message

The special congregational meeting that was held after the service of July 1, saw a consensus, positive view of continuing to have a part-time minister. The LCUUF Board has taken the matter under consideration and will move deliberately toward instituting a part-time minister as a continuing part of our Fellowship.

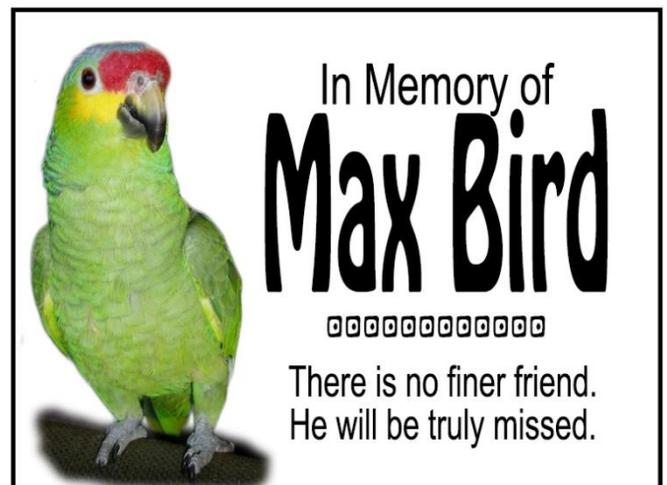
I am pleased to announce that our finances continue to be in good shape. Last month the Board formalized the Legacy Committee's recommendation of setting up a distinct and separate board (Lake Chapala Unitarian Universalist Fund, Inc.) to organize and operate a (US) non-profit company to manage funds donated to the Fellowship. The initial progress forward Board consists of Lew Crippen (President), Norman Woods (Vice-President), Susan Miller (Treasurer), Lorna Dean (Secretary) and Joan Ward (Director at Large). Carol Powell has agreed to be our Registered Agent in the US. Thanks to Carol, the Directors of the new organization and to the Legacy Team (most especially Lorna) for their work in getting us to this point. More information will become available as we

Gary Cleek presented a check to the San Juan Cosala Children's Choir for over \$2,000 pesos, representing 50% of the loose plate collections for the month of June. The Children's Choir will also be the recipient for our charitable giving for the months of July and August. Your offerings over and above pledges is much appreciated.

I am pleased to announce that Matt has returned and we look forward to his return, his guidance and most of all the resumption of his bi-monthly sermons. Wendy Carrel attended the Aug 5 service. Wendy is a Senior Care Advisor for Wellness Shepherd and is a Palliative Care Advocate and End-of-Life Planner. She was most complementary as to the service and our congregation. She wrote us up in her blog, "Wellness Shepherd" which you may find at <https://wellnessshepherd.com/2018/08/12/the-death-positive-movement-is-alive-amongst-retiree-ex-pats-at-lake-chapala-mexico/>

I developed that service under the guidance of Matt and his sermon writing class. I just began with a 300 word essay about my cat, Charlie. The sermon just arose organically from that point. This was a very positive experience for me. For those interested, Matt plans to offer this class again next year.

Linda and Wayne Conklin are repatriating to the United States. This leaves a hole in our leadership and in our congregation. In addition to needing to fill a vacancy on the board, there are several committees that will be understaffed in the upcoming year. Please consider serving the Fellowship in some official capacity in the future.



R.I.P. MAX BIRD Our Fellowship lost a beloved member last month. Max Bird was the friend and companion of Francisco Uruza and Janice Kimball and was also the Director of Public Relations of Aztec Studios. He will be greatly missed.



Message from Rev. Matt

I've had two months away from Lakeside, and spent most of that time in Hendersonville, North Carolina, where Liz and I have a small house.

Rather than checking out the local UU church, I decided to explore. I discovered an amazing Buddhist retreat center less than a mile from the house. In addition to hosting week-long and weekend meditation retreats, the center also is the home for a small Buddhist sangha, or congregation. I began to attend Sunday meetings as a visitor, new to the area. There were many things that fascinated me about this sangha. It was led by two abbots, both sporting shaved heads and wearing orange-hued robes. One of the abbots drew from her African-American church roots as she led the community. Her dharma talks had just a hint of a Baptist preaching style in them. She also organized a small choir, which sang Buddhist chants with a bit of a Gospel swing. She began experimenting with a kind of meditation practice modeled on the Christian "Lectio Divina" practice, but instead of using Christian scripture, she drew from the Dhammapada (the teachings of the Buddha) as the text.

When I visit other religious communities, I pay attention to how they welcome and integrate newcomers. Clearly this was a work in progress for this sangha. On some visits I was greeted by a designated greeter, on others I was, well, kind of invisible.

I am an introvert, and so tend to have a love/hate relationship with UU coffee hour and its chit-chat. However, without such a time to chat at the sangha, I had little opportunity to get to know the members and

learn about them. It was also hard to figure out how to become more involved (if I had planned to do that). Clearly there were lay people in leadership, and these people were deeply committed to the sangha (one such woman showed up one day with her head shorn of her long hair). I just didn't get a sense of how one made the first steps to plug in.

At Lake Chapala UU Fellowship how do we do in welcoming and integrating people in our Fellowship? I know we do well in some aspects, and perhaps could work on other aspects. But which aspects? My eyes were opened by visiting this Buddhist congregation. How might we open our eyes on our own congregation? Perhaps the best way is to talk with those with recent experience — our visitors and newcomers. They have the most insight into how they were welcomed and invited into greater involvement. I'll certainly be talking with our newer people. I encourage you to do so as well, and then help us out. You might help formally as an assistant greeter one Sunday, or by working with our Welcoming Committee. Or more informally, simply by saying hello to anyone you don't know well, and taking time to befriend them. It is said that a visitor needs to make six friends in their first six months in order to decide to commit to long term involvement. Many of us remember the first friends we made as visitors — even decades later. Will you be a friend to others you don't know yet?



HAPPY MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY!



WELCOMING AND MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

On October 14th we will be having a Prospective New Member Ceremony for individuals who have expressed an interest in joining our fellowship. Additionally, we will have an informative orientation approx. one week prior to the ceremony. If you want to be included, please contact Val Marcum: E-mail is lvmarcum@yahoo.com or phone 765 2442.

Our Welcoming and Membership Committee still needs an additional committee member. We are hoping someone will be interested enough to join us at our next meeting on September 7th. We have a luncheon for socializing, followed by our meeting. For additional information please contact Marty Weston, martymex916@gmail.com or phone her at 765 2357.

Help make our members and visitors feel welcome. Assistant Greeters are very important for this reason and they definitely enhance attendance at our Fellowship. Please consider giving back to your Fellowship by volunteering one Sunday for 30 minutes either in September or October. The sign-up sheet is on the rectangular table.

Marty Weston, Chairman



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|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 17 Heidi MacLennan | 26 Lori Fjelstad |
| 20 Maynard Merits | 30 Nancy Jordan-Zanot |



SHARE THE BASKET

The Share the Basket recipient for the months of September, October and November, 2018 is Tepehua Center AC.

One-half of the weekly offerings which are not designated as pledge money, will go to this organization.



CIRCLE SUPPERS

Our fall Circle Suppers will be held in October, November, and December, 2018. Please sign up at the Welcome Table and indicate if you would like to be a guest or a host (and how many, besides yourself, you can host.) Assignments will be e-mailed and posted on the bulletin board the end of December.

If you are a snowbird who will be returning in the fall, and would like to attend, please e-mail Kathy Koches at kkoches@gmail.com to be added to the list.



HUMANIST DISCUSSION GROUP

The Humanist Discussion Group will meet on Monday September 24th at 3 pm at the Fellowship. The world-wide threat to journalists is the topic for the Sept. meeting. Safety of journalists is the ability for journalists and media professionals to receive, produce and share information without facing physical or moral threats. Journalists can face violence and intimidation for exercising their fundamental right to freedom of expression. The range of threats they are confronted with include murder, kidnapping, hostage-taking, offline and online harassment, intimidation, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention and torture. Women journalists also face specific dangers and are especially vulnerable to sexual assault, "whether in the form of a targeted sexual violation, often in reprisal for their work, mob-related sexual violence aimed against journalists covering public events, or the sexual abuse of journalists in detention or captivity. Many of these crimes are not reported as a result of powerful cultural and professional stigmas. "Increasingly, journalists, and particularly women journalists, are facing abuse and harassment online, such as hate speech, cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking, docking, trolling, public shaming and intimidation and threats. Information on our topic and readings for it will be sent out prior to the meeting. For those who want the readings and are not already on the list, contact bobkoches@gmail.com.



Please send announcements for June's services to Donna Burroughs at: donna.burroughs@gmail.com



Fellowship Meal

September 16 the fellowship is celebrating Mexico's Independence Day. After a special presentation by Judy King, we will be going to Viva Mexico in San Juan Cosala for their Independence Day Luncheon. They are hosting a Mexican Buffet - no menu orders - at an estimated cost is \$150. It is VITAL we have an adequate head count so please let Karyn Carpenter (newfhugger_wander@mac.com) know if you can make it or have to cancel. We are scheduled to be there right at noon and seats will be released to others at that time. This event will take the place of our traditional end of the month luncheon.



SUNDAY SERVICE COMMITTEE

The Sunday Service Coordinator for September and October is Linda Conklin. Information regarding services can be found on the LCUUF website under "What's Happening."



The UU Choir will soon be starting rehearsals. A signup sheet is on the welcome table. All are welcome. Whether a new member or returning member, please sign up so we can plan accordingly. This year we have a challenge of no piano for the first half of the year. We will be singing a lot of rounds and acapella pieces. See Bob Koches for info.



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT DOUG MATTOON

Doug is now one of our snowbird members, but he lived in Lakeside for a number of years before deciding Guadalajara was more to his taste. A year and a half ago, he was feeling in need of VA Medical services, so he moved to El Paso where he got a stent implanted. Now he is in the process of moving to Los Angeles. He visits us as often as possible, and we all wish it could be more. I asked Doug what were the most memorable times in his life, and he replied, “There were many, take your pick!”, so I did.

In 1952 when he was seven, he, his mother, and stepfather moved to San Cristobel (on the south shore of Lake Chapala). His older sister stayed in the U.S. with their father. He didn’t know why he had left his friends and life behind but soon made new friends, learned Spanish, and had fun when he could get away from life on their chicken ranch. At eleven, he was sent to Guadalajara to school and thought he was in heaven, far away from his stepfather and farm chores. At 13 and 14, he spent his summer vacations on a freighter traveling up and down the Mexican coast. He was using the name Javier then and most people, including himself, thought he was Mexican. When Doug was 15 the chicken ranch went under and the family returned to California. There he discovered he was just another gringo, although an odd ball one, and also discovered what bullying was.

Back in the U.S. he was drafted into the army in 1965. At Fort Bliss, he met other gay soldiers and came out, but these friends soon were discharged and he was left feeling isolated. He told the chaplain

he was gay and that he wanted out of the army. The chaplain didn’t believe him, so in the summer of 1967 he went AWOL. He contacted a friend who lived in Tijuana, sold his car, and lived in a hotel for a month. Soon he discovered this was not tenable so he turned himself in. He was sentenced to three months in the stockade, served 45 days and then was discharged – finally!

He says his three strongest personality traits are impetuosity, stubbornness, and being a seeker of change. These, along with other aspects of his life, led him to conclude, in his late twenties, that he was transgender. These three dominant traits formed a “perfect storm” that drove him to this conclusion. Within a year he had begun hormone therapy and soon had gender reassignment surgery. He married his formerly gay partner in 1977, but as Doug told me “I still had wild oats to sow and the marriage was short”. They went their separate ways and Doug lived as a woman before he realized he was “no woman” which he found a horrifying thought, “All that for nothing?” He took another ten years to act on that realization and by 1998 he was once again male, using the name he was given at birth. The effects of surgery, estrogen therapy, and electrolysis, like his old tattoos, are now faded, but here to stay. Although he now realizes it was something he had to do, he beat himself up for many years wondering how he could have been so stupid as to think he was a woman. Strangely it wasn’t until he had a female identity that he knew he was a man.

His adventurous life was almost as curious. In 1986 he was living in Phoenix and one weekend, seeking relief from the heat, he went north to the mountains around Prescott. There, in a bar, he met a disabled veteran who was living in a camper and who asked him to go along on a trek he was planning. Doug never said “no” to a road trip, so he quit his job in Phoenix, parked his truck in a friend’s yard and they were off for the next few months. In Sturgis, South Dakota they ran into the annual nation-wide meeting of bikers and in a flash, like in Proust’s “madeleine moment”, he was transported back to high school

and riding his motorcycle which was such fun. They continued the trip but now “he had a purpose”. Back in Prescott they parted ways, he sold his truck and bought a used HD Sportster and began his biker phase, which, he says, was the best time of his life.

Now retired from a career in food services, he enjoys his leisure time reading, watching sports, playing fantasy football, cooking, eating, and drinking, preferably in the company of good friends. He has nothing on his bucket list as he says he has done most everything he wanted to do at the time and could happily die tomorrow. But not today! His advice to the younger generation: “Never seek a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Almost all problems are temporary”. Submitted by Jan Manning



The LCUUF Newsletter

is produced to provide LCUUF news to members and friends. Deadline for contributions to the October newsletter is September 20th to be sent to: Editor: Kathy Koches at: kkoches@gmail.com