



LAKE CHAPALA UU FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER 2019

Upcoming LCUUF Sunday Services

Dec. 1 – “It’s a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” - We will look at how Rev. Fred Rogers has provided ministry to many of our children over decades. Fred Rogers addresses the social, emotional, and spiritual questions of all children, of all beliefs, and has given us a great gift. Trudy Crippen is the speaker and Joan Ward is the service leader.

December 8 - “Judaism and Unitarian Universalism: Is There a Way Forward Together?” - Since the time of the rise of Reform Judaism in America, there has been speculation and even attempts to merge Reform Judaism and Unitarianism to some degree or another. In large part this idea has not gained currency and does not appear to be being seriously considered by any parties. The talk will examine the many points the two faiths have in common and the areas where there are sharp divisions. Lew Crippen is the speaker and Fred Harland is the Service Leader.

Dec 15 - "Stories We Tell Ourselves" - We often believe old stories that we tell ourselves -- stories that are often harsh and judgmental, victim stories, stories that are no longer true, and may never have been true. These are called 'thin stories' in the practice of Narrative Therapy. Instead of continuing to tell these stories, we seek to replace them with hopeful, helpful, and more honest 'thick stories'. These we seek to thicken with more detail and historical evidence. What are the thin and thick stories in our lives? How might we change negative stories into positive ones? Speaker is Rev. Matt Alspaugh and Service Leader, Catherine Luria.

Dec. 22 – “Christmas Bells and Christmas Thoughts” - On Sunday, December 22nd, the LCUUF will welcome back our first visiting minister, Rev. Dr. Marsha Fowler. Dr. Fowler is both a minister and a nurse and her focus for both is ethics, always a timely and thought-provoking subject. We look forward to hearing Rev. Fowler bring this focus to our Christmas service. Susan Miller is the Service Leader. We also look forward to hearing our newly formed chime choir.

Dec 29 - "Change Agent" - As we approach the New Year, change is on our minds - end of year reviews, New Year's resolutions. Change is part of life. We know that to grow, we have to change, and that change can be invigorating, challenging, as well as worrisome, even terrifying, something we might like to avoid. We think of changes we've faced over the last year, and changes to come. We'll comment on changes the Fellowship faces, and also changes in our own lives and in the world. We explore how we might become 'change agents', embracing, guiding, rather than resisting, the change around us. Speaker is Rev. Matt Alspaugh and Service Leader is Monica Divine.





MESSAGE FROM REV. MATT

These are exciting times at Lake Chapala UU Fellowship, with many good things happening. Our Fellowship Facilities Work Team is already at work evaluating options for accommodating our growing membership and Sunday attendance. This likely will involve finding a larger space that we would buy, or constructing our own facility. See the article on the team's progress in this newsletter.

We have had a successful stewardship campaign, with pledges now exceeding our goal of \$600,000 pesos. We also continue to be amazed at the generosity we receive through our 'Share the Basket' program, assisting charities in the local community - our Sunday morning donations are well over double those when we started this program. Our Welcoming and Membership group is doing amazing work welcoming our visitors and supporting them, whether they become members or remain friends of the fellowship.

I see my primary focus as assuring that our Sunday morning experience is of consistent high-quality. Working with our Sunday Services team, we have made changes to ensure this goal. I'm pleased to see new presenters on Sundays, as well as long-time presenters improving their skills. We're trying to involve more people in worship, from things like lighting candles and running projection to offering readings and reflections and sometimes rituals. We've added a Care Candle to remember those losses that can't be easily expressed in Joys and Sorrows.

I'm especially happy about changes to our music in worship. We've come a long way from the days of timidly singing to recorded hymn music. Michael, our pianist, has been a real blessing, but he's not

alone. We have so many talented musicians and singers emerging, with solos, in small groups, on flute, clarinet, sax, and yes, hand chimes. December will be especially rich in music.

One of the things we will be experimenting with is inviting guest ministers to speak on a regular basis. We've had guest ministers before, but only occasionally. My hope is that by having guest ministers more regularly, we'll get a chance to hear some of the best our faith has to offer — for guests typically bring out their best when they visit. Further, they are likely to return home spreading the word about our existence, which might be helpful for people considering relocating to Mexico. Also, I wish to have colleagues to converse with, and here in Mexico, the only other active UU minister is over four hours away, in San Miguel de Allende. In some cases, our guests may offer a workshop.

A theme running through all this activity is change, and change can be both invigorating and scary. At our board meeting this month, one member noted that change is like swinging on a trapeze bar under the big top. To move forward, you have to be willing to let go of the old bar, and swing through thin air, for at least a moment, before grabbing the next bar. Some of our changes will feel like that. They bring new opportunities, but also loss of some old things. We'll need to work together to discern what we keep, what do we let go of, and how do we get where we want to go. As I said, exciting times at LCUUF!



Important Meeting Notices

On January 5, 2020, after the service, we will have a discussion about LCUUF's proposed 2020-2021 budget. On January 19, 2020, also after the service, we will have the LCUUF Annual General Meeting. A reminder: All members have voting privileges thirty (30) days after signing the Membership Book. Also, neither proxy voting nor absentee voting is permitted.



BOARD MEMBER

Joan Ward, Member at Large

MESSAGE

LCUUF reaches out to support our community:

“Share the Basket” This now familiar program at LCUUF was first mentioned here in Rev Matt’s Newsletter article of February 2018: “We are about to embark on another experiment, this one expanding how we do outreach. At the February LCUUF Board meeting, we agreed to a trial “Share the Basket” program for three months (March-May). In this program, we will give half of the “loose money” we receive in our offering baskets to an organization that is helping improve the community. (Money that is in marked envelopes, such as for pledge payments, is not included in this sharing.)

These “Share the Basket” programs are found in a large number of Unitarian Universalist congregations in North America. They find that giving part of their offering to community groups helps UUs “walk the talk” about making the world a better place. As a member at one such church put it, “So often there seems to be a disconnect between what we do in our worship and the real world expression of our values. This practice makes a clear and intentional connection.” He then also mentioned that “For those who have concerns about the impact of these programs on the finances, most congregations have seen an increase in loose offerings that more than makes up for the part given away to other organizations.”

Rev Matt’s comments in this month’s Newsletter prove this to have been the welcome result at LCUUF too: “We continue to be amazed at the generosity we receive through our ‘Share the Basket’ program... our Sunday morning donations are well over double those when we started...”

Since this began in 2018, March-December, we shared 39,595 pesos and **already in 2019, Jan-October we have shared 63,959 pesos!** *

The happy and appreciative recipients of these ‘Basket’ funds have been: University Vocational Assistance Program (UVA), AC; Mar-May 2018 & Mar-May 2019 , Musica Para Crecer, AC, June-Aug 2018, Tepehua Centro Comunitario, AC; Sept-Nov. 2018, El Centro de Desarrollo, Jocotepec (CEDEJO): Dec 2018 & Jan-Feb 2019, Poco A Poco of San Pedro Itzicán, AC; June-Aug 2019 and Los Niños de Chapala y Ajijic (NCA), AC; Sept-Nov. 2019. If you know of any other deserving groups, with AC status, please let the Board know as soon as you can. We want to broaden our outreach and depend on your suggestions. Joan Ward Board Member at Large



SHARE THE BASKET

Our Share the Basket recipient for December, January and February is “Poco a Poco. San Pedro Itzicán. Poco a Poco is a nonprofit organization that supports various initiatives in San Pedro Itzicán and the surrounding towns. These remote villages are located along the shore of Lake Chapala, in the vicinity of Mezcala, and are indigenous communities who lack education and support. Health issues, poor nutrition, and little work, together with many social issues, make it hard for these communities to survive. People are willing to learn and work, but it’s not easy for them because of the lack of education, and money to make a change to their lives.

Poco a Poco believes that a "hands up - not a hands out" approach is the best way to help. Poco a Poco works on creating small, start up projects to enable local people to earn a living, and encourage and enable children to attend school. Some of their numerous projects include English classes, food share programs, gardening projects, emergency health funds, and more. To learn more about this organization visit their website at www.pocoapocosanpedro.com



FACILITIES PROGRESS

On Friday, September 19, I made a presentation titled *Facilities Discussion and Direction: A Guide for the Future*. After listening to the discussion afterwards, as well as having received feedback via email I asked the congregation for help in this issue by volunteering to join in a work team. I am pleased to announce that several members have agreed to join in the effort to help determine a way forward for our physical future,

The *Fellowship Facilities Work Team* (FFWT) consists of Paul Bennett, Trudy Crippen, Mardele Harland, David Miller, Roy Haynes, Paula Odom and Joan Ward. Matt Alspaugh has agreed to join the team and will provide his experience in this area as we move forward. I consider this an ideal mix of long-time members, new members, Board members and with a significant mix of expertise in various areas, most importantly team members who have gone through similar projects.

A *Statement of Purpose* agreed by the team will be used to help provide direction: "The purpose of the Fellowship Facilities Work Team is to consider and define the future physical requirements of the LCUUF and to examine and propose solutions that will optimally, if not perfectly meet those requirements. We will not immediately begin to consider a capital campaign. This will necessarily be a separate effort. The first section should finish by 1 June, 2020."

The FFWT has had two meetings and has agreed upon a work plan that has a target finish date of 1 June, 2020. Our goal is to present the congregation with a vision for their consideration. Upon approval we would begin another project.

In accordance with our Work Plan we have been focused on defining requirements. Although the requirements definition is not complete, the team has determined the following:

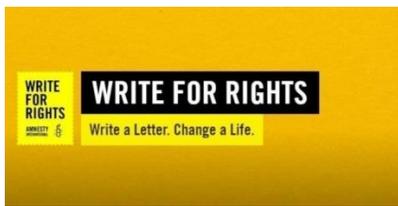
- We are considering our needs for 5-15 years out.

- Analysis of our and Lakeside growth means that we should size for a congregation of 180 people. At 80% capacity we should size for 225 seats in the meeting area.
- Space analysis according to UUA means an area of about 315-360 sq. m. This means that our current location will not be suitable for the future.
- Our lack of capital and likely inability to secure a loan makes a purchase of existing land or building difficult, though not impossible.
- We need parking for 60-90 cars.
- We should be no more than 4 blocks off a bus line.
- We should stay in the Chapala municipality, but not in Chapala itself. We have also excluded the Libramiento and Ajijic Centro.
- Any site must pass an *environmental* test. That is fault lines, water table, etc.
- An empty lot would be ideal for our purposes as we would have a "blank canvas".

This means two things:

1. We actively solicit input from the congregation, especially as to lots or buildings that might suit our needs and are in accordance with the above requirements. In order to meet our work plan timeline any suggestions should happen NLT 10 January, 2020.
2. After rejection of several sites that do not meet the above criteria, the Team is focused on a membership owned lot. To that end the Board has authorized money to hire an engineer or hydrologist to examine that lot as regards the environment.

Our next team meeting has scheduled for November 27. Your comments are welcome and will be given due consideration. The FFWT will continue to keep the membership apprised of our progress. Lew Crippen, LCUUF President



Please join us after

the service on Dec. 8th to participate in Amnesty International's annual letter writing campaign in support of global human rights. Last year LCUUF members wrote over 100 letters and emails on behalf of women who suffered threats, harassment and imprisonment while trying to make a difference. This year the focus is on young people. Please plan to take part in this global effort. Your participation can make a difference! For more information contact Mardele Harland (mardeleharlandmx@gmail.com) or go to <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/write-for-rights/>



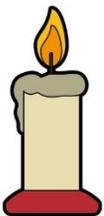
CHOIR NEWS

Do you know that singing has amazing health benefits? Here are a few:

- Singing strengthens the immune system. ...
- Singing is a workout. ...
- Singing improves your posture. ...
- Singing helps with sleep. ...
- Singing is a natural anti-depressant. ...
- Singing lowers stress levels. ...
- Singing improves mental alertness. ...

In addition to the above singing in a choir provides a positive feeling of well-being and self-confidence. The best thing about being in a choir is that you don't need to have had singing lessons, you don't have to read music (although it can help!) and making music collectively is one of life's greatest gifts.

Are you ready to take the plunge? The LCUUF choir is starting up again in January. Starting on Friday, January 10th at 10.00 am choir rehearsals will initially be every 2 weeks with a performance at a service towards the end of each month. Rehearsals will last about 1 hour. Michael Reason has agreed to be the choir's Music Director and he promises to make it fun! At each service from now until January there will be a choir sign-up sheet where you can add your name and contact details. Sign up now and see how singing in a choir can put a smile on your face!



CARE CANDLE

The Care Committee has placed a new candle in our sanctuary. This candle is there to represent deep sorrows, the sorrows that are there every day—the loss of a partner, a child, a grandchild, or any sorrow that resides in your heart and that you may not choose to speak. You are welcome to come in and light the candle before the service. You are welcome to place a picture by the candle. You may always ask Doug Mattoon or Trudy Crippen if you would like the candle lit and ask them to speak on your behalf.



We mourn the loss of LCUUF member, Jim Rhodes who passed away in November. Our sympathies are with Flo and the rest of Jim's family and friends.



NOVEMBER

- | | | | |
|----|---------------|----|----------------|
| 01 | Jesse Quarter | 25 | Linda Jessen |
| 10 | Roy Haynes | 26 | Flo Rhodes |
| 15 | Carol Powell | 27 | Frank Howell |
| 17 | Sue Kelley | 28 | Richard Clarke |



FELLOWSHIP

HOLIDAY COCKTAIL PARTIES

Members of the fellowship will be gathering in the homes of our members to celebrate the holidays this year. These events will take place the second week of December. Please sign up at the fellowship or send an email to Karyn Carpenter at newfugger_wander@mac.com if you would like to be included. We need your name, email, and how many in your party. These will be fairly small intimate gatherings of about 20 people each. Your name will be put into a hat and we'll draw for which party you will be attending. We hope you will be flexible. BRING an appetizer and your favorite beverage.



HUMANIST DISCUSSION GROUP

The Humanist Discussion Group will be talking a break for the holidays in December. We will meet again in January on Monday, Jan. 27th at 1:30 pm at the Fellowship. Look for the January newsletter and an e-mail as to the topic. If you are not on the mailing list to receive the reading materials and want to be, contact Bob Koches at bobkoches@gmail.com



MEMBERSHIP

LCUUF invites you to consider membership and become part of a growing community at Lakeside. The last new member orientation in 2019 will be Saturday, December 14th. Please stop by the Welcome Table to ask questions or sign up.



Voces de Luz – the children's choir from San Juan Cosala – sang for our service on November 17th



The Chime Choir and Michael Reason performed for our service on November 10th



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