



Upcoming LCUUF Sunday Services

- May 2** **Every Person Counts** - Inequality is rising in many if not most countries in the world. One of the apologies for inequality is rising meritocracy, the idea that that people should be rewarded with wealth and power based on their talent and achievement. While this might be desirable for overall economic efficiency, meritocracy leaves many people behind. Of course, it's just one way societies leave people behind. We'll explore these issues in the context of our First Principle, affirming "the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Rev. Matt Alspaugh is the speaker and service leader is Heidi MacLennan.
- May 9** **A Melody for Change** - Music reflects society, but music can also be a catalyst for change Michael Reason's multi-media presentation will show how music in the 20th and 21st centuries created social and political commentary and became a global force for change. Dee Dee Camhi is the service leader.
- May 16** **Who are UUs?** - Susan Miller will share information from the UUA and other sources about the people who are UUs, the places they worship and how their numbers have changed over the years. The service leader is Cat Barnett.
- May 23** **Universalist Church of America** - At its peak in the 1830s, the Universalist Church (then known as the Universalist General Convention) is reported to have been the 9th largest denomination in the United States. This service will explore the early beginnings of the Universalist Church of America up to the merger with the American Unitarian Association in 1961 and some of its early luminaries including Hosea Ballou, John Murray and Olympia Brown. The speaker is Kriss Gang and the service leader is Deb Gang.
- May 30** **How to Have a Better Life and Better Relationships** – Rev. Joanna Crawford, who is the Minister for Live Oak UU in Austin, Texas, will present a recorded service which will also be shared with her congregation. Monica Devine is the service leader.



For the foreseeable future, we are meeting on-line, at our usual time, Sundays at 10:30, using a service called Zoom. Here's how to get set up. We suggest you do this before the meeting.

To join via video on your computer, tablet or smartphone, please click the link below – you will be stepped through downloading a free app that will let you connect to the meeting.

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/233941792>

Meeting ID: 233 941 792

Or, for audio, just dial-in by your location

+52 229 910 0061 Mexico

+52 554 161 4288 Mexico

+1 253 215 8782 US

+1 301 715 8592 US

+1 778 907 2071 Canada

+1 438 809 7799 Canada

+1 587 328 1099 Canada

+1 647 374 4685 Canada

Elsewhere? Find your local phone number: <https://us04web.zoom.us/u/fnTR4N3JJ>

We encourage you to try to connect early, to get things set up. However, you won't be able to join the service until about 10:00am on Sunday. But it's good to get set up early.





Rev. Matt Alspaugh

**MESSAGE
FROM MATT**

At our service a couple of weeks ago, we held a Zoom poll on beliefs in God. I was not surprised to see that among us there were very few traditional theists who put God up in heaven (or somewhere else), but I was taken that a great many people, nearly half, held alternate views of God (such as God in everyone and everything). Nearly half also identified as agnostic, and a smallish number identified as atheist. I realize of course that this poll was not scientific. Zoom polling limits how multiple people on one connection can vote, and it's also quite likely that some people stayed away that Sunday because the topic was Theology. Still I think it's valuable for us to reflect on how we view our theologies, our understanding of what god or gods might be beyond our material world. Theology is often a tender or intimate subject. Many of us have had difficult histories wrestling with these ideas of faith, perhaps leaving or even being expelled from other faith communities because of our beliefs. Many of us hold our views with some uncertainty; we know our views have changed and they can change again. On top of all this, we may have been on the receiving end of the proselytizing arguments of others; we know how bad that feels and don't want to impose our views on anyone. Yet we lose a lot when we don't create space to talk about our theological ideas; when we take on a "don't ask, don't tell" attitude about such innermost beliefs. This fellowship especially should be a place where we

can share our explorations and wonderings without fear of judgement or criticism. In that service I noted that I've long been comfortable holding various different beliefs at the same time. Sometimes even incompatible beliefs. In my younger years, I wondered that this 'dabbling' might have seemed odd, even offensive, for many people. Maybe my approach to faith was strange and deviant. It was only in traveling to another country and seeing how people in other cultures meld various beliefs — for me it was meeting a woman who was simultaneously Buddhist, Confucian and Pentecostal Christian — that I began to realize that my approach to belief was not that strange after all. Do you have aspects of belief — or non-belief — that you've had to tussle with? Do you have ideas of faith, theologies, if you will, that you are very careful sharing with other people? Are things in flux with you? I'm always happy to chat (minister@lakechapalauu.org).



LCUUF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| President | Lewis Crippen |
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| Treasurer | Lorna Dean |
| Member at Large | Eric Luria |
| Member at Large | Cat Barnett |
| Member at Large | Kriss Gang |



with equipment and processes to be able to meet the needs with the budget available. Because the situations are so different in larger congregations, they divided up the congregations into three groups, a congregation of less than 100 members, then 100-249, then over 250.

As the Needs Assessment Contest winner for small congregations, a two hour broadcast was held on Thursday, April 8, where the forum publicly reviewed LCUUF's needs assessment submission and then showed the usually private consultants' recommendations. A written document with their recommendations will be provided and will help LCUUF continue to produce quality Sunday services for both the "in-person" and online attendees.

LCUUF was selected as one of the three congregations out of the 400 members of the UU technical forum. This is quite an honor, especially considering that most of the work required to put on these online Sunday services is done by volunteers from the congregation. Special recognition goes to Charlie Jacobs, Richard Clarke, Roy Haynes, Rev. Matt Alspaugh and the rest of the tech team for their excellent work in producing the on-line services.

LOCAL UU'S WIN INTERNATIONAL CONTEST

By Kathy Koches

The Lake Chapala Unitarian Universalist Fellowship was selected as the Needs Assessment Contest Winner for small congregations by the Hybrid Ministries Tech Forum. This Forum is a group of UU technical and ministerial people from US, Canada, Europe and Mexico. It is run by eight professional media consultants who support UU and Jewish congregations and other groups doing video production and presentations.

The contest was held to support the many congregations who started online video services during the pandemic, and who now see that they want to continue to offer video services even when in-person services resume. This combination of online and live services is called a *Hybrid Service*. Many congregations have found during this time of pandemic that online services make their services more available and attract both members and to new audiences who maybe lived too far away. Discovering this, many congregations want to continue with their online services, even when they reopen.

Contestants provided a detailed description of present audio and video equipment, control systems, networking, facility, present production of Sunday services, what they want to be able to do in the future, and their budget to accomplish this. The prize for the contest was a free professional analysis of the present technical situation and equipment, and professional recommendations of what could be done





BOARD MEMBER MESSAGE

Kriss Gang, MAL

I was fortunate to have been raised Unitarian Universalist. The finding the faith story belongs to my father. Unlike so many UU youth however, I never left the faith. From the age of 24 I was in congregational leadership in one form or another for 30+ years. The LCUUF board is now the fourth congregational board I have had the pleasure of serving on. Because of my years of UU service, some of which I've shared, I've been asked to write about some of my more interesting experiences.

My leadership experience began at the Miami Valley UU Fellowship (MVUUF) in Dayton, Ohio. When we first joined it was a lay-led fellowship. My wife Debbie and I were asked to serve on the Sunday Services Committee, where like at LCUUF, we were responsible for securing guest speakers, selecting readings, arranging for music etc. At age 24 it seemed a daunting task but we succeeded. Maybe a year or so later I agreed to serve as the treasurer. Big mistake. "Easy" they said it was...riiiight. Accounting was the only college course I ever failed. It did not go well and I ultimately had to step down. I have always jokingly said that the church treasurer was the slowest runner. After that experience I learned to run faster and never served as treasurer for a church again.

Shortly after this we moved to Minneapolis where we jumped right back into UU life as members of the First Universalist Church for 12 years where I served in membership, communications and on the board. While there we saw membership grow from 300 to over 700, a very energizing and invigorating experience. While living in Minneapolis I helped form an ad hoc committee created to promote UUism in the Twin Cities. We conducted research to form messaging strategies and explored various communication avenues including use of the newest

technology-- the internet. We developed a website (this was in 1994 or so!), produced print ads (my kids were models) for demographically-friendly publications and created a print brochure listing all 19 area congregations which we distributed to hotels, libraries etc. To pay for all this we solicited funds from the individual congregations. The campaign worked and we were able to demonstrate increases in attendance and membership across the region.

We moved back to Dayton in 1998 and rejoined MVUUF. Around the time I was serving as board president, another long-time friend asked if I would like to serve on the UUA Annual Program Fund (APF) committee representing the Heartland District of churches. She was the director and needed to fill the vacant seat. I agreed. This committee was made up of representatives from the 20 US districts plus representatives from the minister's association, a UUA board liaison and a religious education liaison. This committee was under the offices of the VP of Stewardship and Development for the UUA, my former minister from First Universalist in Minneapolis was the VP! Our role was to build relationships with our district congregations, specifically to encourage them to pay their annual dues to the UUA known as their "Fair Share". Many did not believe there was anything fair about it, and that is where we did most of our work. I had 53 congregations in four states. I loved this work and used my past experiences to develop stewardship presentations that I would give to congregations when invited. I would also facilitate stewardship and growth workshops for church leaders. It was amazing and fulfilling work. The APF committee would meet twice a year. At these meetings we would all share our challenges and successes and build on our expertise and knowledge of what worked and what didn't for our congregations. For the association we were literally the eyes and ears on national congregational activity. And because of this, our committee was privy to ongoing UUA board activities, often being asked as a group to weigh in on policies about which they were deliberating including things like the national advertising campaigns, national social justice initiatives, new RE strategies and in one interesting instance (when I was on the executive committee) the plan to restructure the entire UUA moving from districts to a regional structure. Only the executive committee was present and for this briefing, doors were shut, windows closed and all briefing materials

were to be returned. They did not want info getting leaked at that early stage of what became the final plan. Ironically the last thing we were consulted on was to develop a plan to transition our volunteer-based committee of 20+ to a paid staff of five fundraising professionals, which did happen. I had served on this committee for seven wonderful years and developed a national UU resource network and made many lifelong friends.

After my three years as board president and seven years on the APF committee I eventually backed off from church to spend more time with grassroots organizing for national, local and state candidates, until we moved to Lake Chapala, where I continue to build on my life experiences serving UU congregations and for this I am grateful.



Cat Barnett
Member at Large



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Hello fellow UUs, my name is Catherine Barnett, called Cat, and I am now on your Board of Directors. This is my first time being on the board of anything, and I want to thank all of you for the opportunity to be of service. I am also a member of the Sunday Service Committee and the Tech Team. I am from Texas. I grew up in Houston and went to the University of Texas at Austin long ago, where I met my husband, Robert Barnett. We had three children, and I worked for the Houston Health Department, first in Tuberculosis Control, and then, after obtaining a Master's Degree in public health, in Epidemiology. We joined the First Unitarian Universalist Church when my youngest child was a junior in high school. I had never attended a church for any length of time before, but knew church was

a good place to look for good people and find friends, and we did indeed meet a lot of good people and find friends. Robert and I were both very involved at church; we attended there for about 12 years. My favorite thing is small groups. I retired from the Health Department in 2001, but continued to work for four more years, teaching English as a second language to adults from all over the world in a Houston non-profit.

I had to quit working when I took on the care of my mother, who had had a stroke that left her unable to walk or speak. We were fortunate that she could understand - she could follow commands and feed herself - but she could not be left alone. After four years with us, Mom died in 2012. Six years later, Robert retired and we decided to do what we had been talking about for 40 years - move to a place where people speak Spanish and live for a while. We both used Spanish in our work, but neither of us got much beyond present tense, so we are now taking a Spanish class. We LOVE it here at Lakeside. I am a quilter and now that I have time, I do a lot of that and I also sew some garments. Robert learned stained glass before we had children and has made several stained glass windows since we moved here. Having a UU church in the place we moved to was a prerequisite for us, so this is the perfect place for us. I'd also like to send a big thank you to Matt who got us going on our Zoom services so that we could stay connected during this pandemic. Now that vaccinations are happening, I hope to see you at the Fellowship soon.





Lorna Dean, Treasurer

Qualified Charitable Distributions from an IRA

If you have an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) in the USA and are required to take a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from it in 2021, you may want to consider using part of your Required Minimum Distribution to pay your pledge or to make a donation to LCUUF. You can do this by taking a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your IRA and paying the funds directly to Lake Chapala Unitarian Universalist Fund, Inc. (LCUUF, Inc.) which is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization in the USA.

The advantage of a Qualified Charitable Distribution is: **The withdrawal from your IRA counts as part of your Required Minimum Distribution, but it does not count as taxable income to you.**

This can be more tax efficient than withdrawing your Required Minimum Distribution, counting it as taxable income, and then paying your pledge by making a charitable donation to LCUUF, Inc., especially if you take the standard deduction. As you get older, the amount of your Required Minimum Distribution becomes larger, so a Qualified Charitable Distribution becomes more valuable. If you are considering doing this, you must:

1. Talk to the financial institution which holds your IRA, and find out the choices for distributing the funds to a charitable organization. In my experience, some financial institutions will only mail a paper check, made out to the charitable organization, and mailed to the address of record on the account. Some will do an electronic transfer. Some people

have paper checks for their IRA account and can write a check directly to the charitable organization.

2. Talk to your tax preparer in advance to ensure that this is beneficial for your tax situation and that he/she knows how to treat a Qualified Charitable Distribution on your tax return. There is no specific tax document which the financial institution will issue for a Qualified Charitable Distribution. You will get a 1099-R that indicates the withdrawal is taxable. It is up to your tax preparer to adjust the entry on your tax return so that the withdrawal is treated as a Qualified Charitable Distribution and is, therefore, non-taxable income.

3. Contact Susan Miller, Treasurer of LCUUF, Inc., ssmiller999@gmail.com for the bank account details or to discuss getting your paper check deposited in LCUUF, Inc.'s bank in the USA. A paper check must be written to: Lake Chapala Unitarian Universalist Fund, Inc. If you would like to read further on this issue, see:

IRS - IRA FAQs - Distributions (Withdrawals), "Qualified Charitable Distributions" part way down the page.

<https://www.irs.gov/retirement-plans/retirement-plans-faqs-regarding-iras-distributions-withdrawals#:~:text=Qualified%20charitable%20distributions&text=Generally%2C%20a%20qualified%20charitable%20distribution,IRA%20to%20a%20qualified%20charity>

The Balance - Learn About Qualified Charitable Distributions

<https://www.thebalance.com/qualified-charitable-distributions-3192883>

Fidelity - Donating to a charity using a qualified charitable distribution (QCD)

<https://www.fidelity.com/learning-center/personal-finance/retirement/qcds-the-basics>



SHARE THE BASKET

The LCUUF Share the Basket program donates MXN 5,000 pesos or more to an organization providing food to the Lakeside community during the coronavirus crisis. Our May recipient is Tepehua Centro Comunitario, AC <https://tepehua.org> which runs a nutrition program for its elderly, sick or poverty-stricken members, among other social service programs. We appreciate the congregation's support for the Share the Basket program separate from your pledge payments. If we collect more than MXN 5,000 pesos in any month, the full amount will go to an organization providing food to the Lakeside community. If we collect less than MXN 5,000 pesos in donations in any month, the balance will be subsidized from the LCUUF treasury, as long as this is financially feasible. Please designate your donation for "Share the Basket" when you use one of the usual payment methods (PayPal, Bill Pay or pesos) listed in more detail under the Board Column this month. If you have questions contact Lorna Dean, at: lmdean695@gmail.com



MAY BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 03 Doug Mattoon | 17 Sharon Merits |
| 06 CB Kelley | 19 Liz Hill |
| 11 Cate Howell | 20 Fred Koesling |
| 13 Wes Weston | 31 Kaya Reed |
| 14 Ellen McFarland | |



HUMANIST DISCUSSION GROUP

The Humanist Discussion Group will meet on Wednesday, May 26th at 4pm. Note the new link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86577912863>

Our topic this month is: How does a UU Humanist view process theology?

If you wish to receive the reading materials prior to the meeting and are not on the mailing list please contact Bob Koches at: bobkoches@gmail.com



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