



# LAKE CHAPALA UU FELLOWSHIP 2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT

The following is a report on the state of the Lake Chapala Unitarian Universalist Fellowship including activities, events and decisions taken by the board, teams and committees for 2023-2024

**Kriss Gang**  
**President**



## INTRODUCTION

LCUUF came together in 2006 in response to a local webboard posting by a long-time UU and resident of the Lake Chapala area, asking if there was interest in forming a local fellowship. Four UU's met to form a fellowship and twelve people attended our first service. Today we have over 100 members and friends and are a healthy, thriving and growing fellowship. The following report will give you a clear picture of the busy and successful year we have had as we prepare

for our big move to our new location. This annual report highlights activities, events and updates from the following:

- **Board of Directors**
- **Minister**
- **Sunday Service Committee**
- **Social Action Team**
- **Care Team**
- **Music**
- **Membership and Welcoming**
- **Hospitality**
- **Discussion Groups**
- **Tech Team**
- **2024 Pledge Campaign**
- **2024-2025 Proposed Budget**

## 2023-2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Kriss Gang,  
President



Charlie Jacobs, Vice  
President



Cat Barnett,  
Secretary



Al Castleman,  
Treasurer



Cate Howell,  
Trustee-at-Large



Catherine Luria,  
Trustee-at-Large



Paula Odom,  
Trustee-at-Large

## Board Activities 2023-2024

LCUUF was founded 17 years ago, though by our denominational standards we are still a young startup. In reality, based on our financial stability and growing membership, we are beginning to

transition to what could be defined as an established mid-sized congregation. What does this mean? It means that with more members, there is more programming, more activities and more opportunities to engage and become involved. It also means that the informal organizational structures and practices that we have sustained ourselves with are no longer sufficient to effectively and/or efficiently serve our needs. The board has recognized this and has put quite a bit of work into formalizing the informal. Here are some of the more important projects your board has worked on this year.

**Policies:** It is human nature or at least UU nature to push boundaries which is good up to a point, the point where the good of the whole congregation is compromised. This year the board has defined and put in place a number of new policies and/or operational guidelines) to more clearly define how we manage events, fundraise, receive donations and gifts and use of the building.

**Financial:** We have been financially sound for as long as I have been a member and that is a good thing. Our annual budget grows as we grow, both in value and complexity. For example this year's budget includes rental expenses for the first time. Also we have hired Jesus and Fernanda, our first "local hires" which comes with specific accounting requirements base on Mexican Law. We were very fortunate to have Al Castleman agree to serve as treasure. Al comes to us with robust financial experience and has been working to formalize our budging and account practices to bring us more in line with what I believe Al would call auditable financial record keeping. Thank you Al.

**Charitable Giving:** This year the board approved a comprehensive plan and structure for how we select the charities we support through "Share The Basket" and other "giving" opportunities. The hard work for this was done by the new Social Action Team spearheaded by D'vorah Kelley and Colleen Beery. Their team did a tremendous amount of work defining a "vetting" structure for selecting charities based on a defined set of criteria. In addition the members of the SAT Team visited

and interviewed each of the charities they determined we should support. As a result of their work we have added two new organizations to our Share The Basket list of charities. We have been able to add these new organizations because the congregation has been so generous with “Share the Basket” donations.

**Tech Support:** The board has worked closely with the tech team this year monitoring the challenges of supporting the quality of Sunday Service we deliver in-house and online. There is no doubt that we present a very professional service from a technological perspective, especially for our Zoom attendees (and we have been recognized nationally for it.) I have personally attended three UU Congregations since becoming a member of our tech team. Not one of them even comes close to what we produce. Most provide a single camera angle and little to no use of slides or visual projections—basically where we were before the pandemic. Under Matt and Charlie’s direction we have evolved from a camera on a tripod to where we now work with 3 moveable cameras, a fixed camera for large screen monitors, including the teleprompting monitor. The board has recognized our growing tech requirements and has supported the tech teams requests for an additional camera and critical software to automat how sound, videos, slides and camera angles all coordinate. After 3 threes years of relying on 4-5 volunteers every Saturday and Sunday (for which many of us had become quite burned out) The board developed a tech assistant job description and with the invaluable help of Heidi MacLannan and Paula Odom, identified Fernanda and Jesus who have now been with us for six months and, through their contributions, we now need no more than 2 people on Sundays to make things happen. It has been a big move for the board to take on “local” employees and we are now looking to formalize “personnel” policies and processes. (If any of you have personnel backgrounds and experience we would welcome your help.)

**Communications:** At the beginning of 2023 it was becoming obvious that the level of activities and events of our growing congregation would require a more frequent and timely way to communicate to our members and friends. The board agreed and authorized the creation of a weekly newsletter, replacing the wonderful monthly newsletter that had been published by Kathy Koches for a number of years. Having years of experience publishing in-house newsletters I agreed to create a weekly newsletter. In April of this year we launched the LCUUF News Of The Week (NOW) which has been well received. A side benefit of the weekly news digital format is that we can track readership and have been able to clean up our mailing list to accurately reflect the correct audience of members and friends.

Rev. Matt took the lead to migrate our information management platform from groups IO to Google Workspace and with Colleen Beery’s help we have successfully

migrated our documents and records to a much more useable and accessible platform, although many of us in leadership are working through the learning curve.

Roy Haynes continues to support our services with his beautifully designed PowerPoint Slides and reinforces our weekly newsletter with the announcement slides presented every Sunday. Thank you Roy for your valuable and professional contribution to our Sunday Services and all of your beautiful seasonal aesthetics that make our space beautiful.

**The Move:** I can still remember that Monday morning when I got the call (I Think from Lorna Dean) that the owner of this building no longer wished to lease it to us. Within a week the board met in special session and approved a search committee (Lorna, Larry, Paula and Joan) and within a week they had already researched 40 locations and within 2 weeks had selected St. Andrews Episcopal. With a location decided the board Asked Paula Odom to serve as the project manager for our move. Words cannot describe what an amazing job she has done and I have no doubt that next week will be a historic one as we move to our new location. The board has only had to engage for approvals on things like new service start time and some misc. move expenses. Individual board member have take a more active role...Paula of course has the full time job of project manager. Chalie and Matt have been working with SA to integrate our system with theirs. I have participated in a number of “integration” meetings where we engaged in a give and take between SA, LCUUF and BareStage and to date all has gone well. Matt has also worked with BareStage on the design of their stage in a way that will allow us to leave our production studio permanently set up saving time and wear and tear on our equipment. Cat has been working on coordinating calendars (a real challenge) with 3 organizations using the same space and on the same day at least once a month. And finally, Al has been working with our budget to accommodate new expenses and has been working with their financial folk to define additional shared expenses and payment options.

### Summary

I am pleased to report that the state of the congregation is strong, we are a growing, fiscally sound and loving community, one of the best I have ever been associated with. I am looking forward to what 2024 has to bring.

Kriss Gang  
President, Board of Directors







## Rev Matt Alspaugh

As Kriss provided much detail in the Board Activities section, I will keep my report brief.

This has been a good year, another good year, for us at LCUUF. We are stronger than ever, our Sunday Services are consistently of high quality, people care for each other, especially when people are sick or injured, we've been reaching out to help the local community more generously, our leadership and congregational culture are strong.

The big news this year is the move. I was initially disappointed to hear about our need to relocate, as I thought it would distract from other goals we had. I became even more unsure when both our two top relocation choices involved sharing space with others, either with a bar with trivia and karaoke, or a traditional Christian church with a choir loft and an organ. We chose the Anglican church.

I have warmed to the move, as I have gotten to know our contacts at St. Andrews Anglican, particularly the ministers, and I really feel that we can work together well. Not just as in, 'how do we stay out of each other's way', but 'how can we work together to achieve some shared goals'. For example, I know we and St. Andrews have shared interests in social action work, particularly supporting the local community, and I'm excited that we might be able to work together on these areas. Also, the Anglicans are quite interested in our tech work, and we're already working to share tech resources. Personally, I'm glad to have other ministers to converse with, and I think our lay leaders also may enjoy collaborating with the Anglican lay leadership. To be clear, a collaborative relationship like this does not change who we are, but such a relationship can help us have a deeper understanding of who we are and what we do. Similarly, we continue to share space with Bare Stage, as they are moving to St. Andrews also. This promises to be a smoother relationship as some of the issues we've had will not follow us to the new space.

I have been involved with several UU congregations, either as their minister, or before that as a lay leader. I have interacted with many more in denominational roles, offering training, helping congregations find

ministers, and in district and regional leadership. When I reflect back on those other congregations, and then consider this congregation, LCUUF is, well, like a pleasant dream. The culture is solid here, the congregation is healthy. I enjoy working with you, and our working together has been satisfying and fruitful. There is a love here, a love for each other, and for the congregation. This love is perhaps more intense than in other places because most of us chose to move to Lakeside, we chose this congregation, and these have become 'our people,' as we live our lives in a different culture. It is this love, this deep connection with one another, that I notice, and cherish; it gladdens my heart.



## Sunday Service Committee 2023 End of Year Review

**Members: D'Vorah Kelley, Co-Chair, Cat Barnett, Co-Chairs, Dee Dee Camhi, Catherine Luria, Jane Castleman, Kathy Varty, Rena Swan, Barley Donahue**

The Sunday Service Committee (SSC) is responsible for planning and organizing high quality, diverse Sunday services which reflect Unitarian Universalist principles and sources of faith. We met each month to review the previous month's services and plan or fine tune upcoming services. The feedback we've received has been very positive in terms of both presenters and topics.

We were very pleased to welcome three new members in 2023: Kathy Varty, Rena Swan, and Barley Donahue.

Services on a variety of topics were presented by Rev. Matt (22), LCUUF members (20), and outside guest speakers (4). There have been two important changes in 2023. The implementation of the Quarterly meetings beginning in January has made the job of the SSC much more manageable, and is a reflection of the goal of shared ministry. At each meeting those in attendance, usually about 15 LCUUF members, volunteer to be presenters, service associates, suggest possible topics, and by the end of the meeting the next three months are 98% planned. We would like to encourage all those interested in developing quality services to attend the quarterly meetings in 2024!

The second change, which is slowly being implemented, is that we are now using Google Workspace and a shared Drive - a challenging but worthwhile endeavor. Cat and D'Vorah have done 1:1 trainings on the benefits and use of Google Workspace.

The creation of a manual for SSC was developed and completed in 2023. It contains job descriptions of the committee, committee chair, Service Associates, Associates, and other important information.

We would like to thank Matt for his leadership and vision as we move into greater shared ministry.

Looking ahead to 2024, Erica Hewitt, Minister of Worship Arts for the Unitarian Universalist Association, has a 12 modules series on Worship design which we plan to offer in March for anyone interested.





## Social Action Team

**Members: D’Vorah Kelley, Colleen Beery, Catherine Luria, Eric Luria, Dee Dee Camhi, Kathy Varty, John Cleveland, Mark Etkin and June Wilson**

Reflecting over the past 18 months In July of 2022, our Board President, Kriss Gang and his wife Deb Gang, presented a wonderful Sunday service about UU Resistance and Social Justice, asking our fellowship to consider taking action to support social justice causes in the Lake Chapala region. This service spurred a number of members, including me and D’Vorah Kelley, to answer the call to action. We met with Kriss and Matt a few weeks later, formed a team, created a vision statement, and started making plans for how to support social justice education, events, and community outreach at LCUUF.

In the year and a half since we formed our Social Justice Team, we have accomplished a lot. We held four Sunday services during 2023 on the topics of Social Justice, covering topics such as migration and women’s history. Our team organized three events: an International Women’s Day celebration and two Peace/Light/Love vigils that have been very well received. We created large poster boards for all our principles, in both Spanish and English, to be used at services and events. We encouraged members to order and wear their LCUUF “Elige Amor” t-shirts at events for community visibility.

We also worked long and hard on reviewing all the community organizations that the fellowship has been sponsoring financially over the years and recommended some new ones to the Board as well. We have set a schedule for these six organizations to come visit during selected Sunday Services so that you can learn about the great work that they are doing Lakeside, and discover ways we can support them with our time, talents, and treasures. We have an ever-growing team of dedicated members involved in supporting social action and justice, including Catherine and Eric Luria, Dee Dee Camhi, Kathy Varty, John Cleveland, Mark Etkin, and June Wilson. We are always glad to have more members on the team, so please reach out to one of us. We’d love to have you join us!





## LCUUF CARE TEAM

**Members: Trudy Crippen, Lynn Cleek, Doug Mattoon, Eric Luria, and Pam Cucinell**

The Care Team has been very busy recently, which is not good news. We are happiest when life is boring because that is when the fellowship is relatively healthy and happy.

We are a team of people who are ready to help you. The easiest way to engage us is to write to our team email, [lcuufcareteam@gmail.com](mailto:lcuufcareteam@gmail.com). That way we all see your message.

Doug Mattoon sends out all the cards you receive.

Pam Cucinell maintains our data. We need for you to fill out the Care form. It is especially important that we have your emergency contact information.

Carol Johnson, Eric Luria, Lynn Cleek, and Trudy Crippen provide hands on care. We are the ones who respond when care needs arise. We have helped facilitate several celebrations of life and continue to send out updates on any member we know who is struggling with medical issues

We rely on you, the fellowship, to let us know when someone needs care. We know that you are also giving care to each other every day and we are truly grateful for this. We cannot do it all. We need your efforts.





## Music Program

Music, as we all know, is an integral part of the Fellowship services. I always strive to make the musical content relative to the topic of the day. It is not always possible but as long as the music choices including the hymns create the right atmosphere that, at the end of the day, is the most important thing.

This past year I have been using a lot more videos than in previous years.

These video choices offer more opportunities to reinforce the service presentations. All the videos used are downloaded and edited with titles, fades and equalization so that they are in a presentable form for the services.

I am very pleased with the choices of guest artists for the past year and highlights include the amazing violinist, Brenda Galvin and our very own Fernanda Parra. It is very rewarding for all our guest artists to receive the appreciation you give them. As we move forward into our new home I want to form a small group of singers that will help lead the singing of hymns. This will help us to explore new ones, adding to those we know so well.

I thank all of you for your support and appreciation of the "Music Division" and look forward to the opportunities our new home will present.

Michael Reason,  
Music Director

And many thanks to our wonderful vocalist Linda Jessen for all her work with Michael in recording and singing for our services.



## Welcome Committee

**2023 Welcome Committee Greeters: Cat Barnett, Dee Dee Camhi, Pamela Cucinell, Barley Donahue, Michael Swords, Larry Pihl, Kaya Reed, June Wilson, Bob Koches, Zoom Greeter**

Our amazing Welcome Committee Team greeted 122 guests in 2023! Welcome and greeting is often a challenge for congregations as visitors walk into a cohesive community that engages within itself. Our welcome team greets visitors, provides visitor name tags and does everything possible to make them welcome. All visitors are given the opportunity to sign up for email notifications and to receive our weekly newsletter. To the credit of our members, visitors are warmly greeted and most report feeling quite welcome. We are a most welcoming congregation.

Our average attendance in the last years was 70 persons per service. That breaks down to an average of 48 people in attendance and an average of 22 persons on Zoom. We are doing well.

## Membership

20 people joined the Lake Chapala Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in 2023. This is the largest number of new members in a single year since the congregation's founding in 2006.

23 July	2023	Dena Turner
23 July	2023	Christy Caldwell
23 July	2023	John Cleveland
23 July	2023	Rena L. Swan
23 July	2023	Marsha Buly
23 July	2023	Sally Ann Bowen
23 July	2023	Elizabeth Weaver
23 July	2023	Dave MacMillen
23 July	2023	Michael D. Sword
23 July	2023	Ilona de Borhegyi
23 July	2023	Kathy Varty
10 Dec	2023	Ron Avalon
10 Dec	2023	John Adams
10 Dec	2023	Lois Cugini
10 Dec	2023	Phyllis Avalon Rosh
10 Dec	2023	Trish Farrell
10 Dec	2023	Joyce R Kinnear
10 Dec	2023	Scott T Kinnear
10 Dec	2023	Mark Etkin
10 Dec	2023	Gloria Rathwell



## Hospitality Committee

**The hospitality committee:**

**Paula Odom, Chair and Circle Suppers**

**Sue Kelley, Sunday Lunches**

**Barley Donahue**

The hospitality committee is really the party team (Their description). This group plans lunches, serves coffee, schedules Circle Suppers and more. They are the one who truly “make it all work”. They had a very busy year. Here are the activities and events they hosted for LCUUF:

- **Monthly luncheons at many Lakeside restaurants**
- **New Years day taco party**
- **Summer solstice potluck**
- **Celebratory Fiesta with Saint Andrew's**
- **Day of the Dead buffet at Viva Mexico,**
- **Quarterly Circle suppers,**
- **End of year holiday parties**
- **Annual General Meeting**



**Many thanks to the organizers and hosts for all of these wonderful events.**



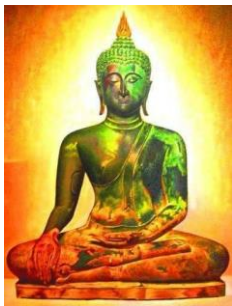
## LCUUF DISCUSSION GROUP

Our congregational life is greatly enhanced by the number of discussion groups facilitated by our members. Thank you to the leaders and facilitators.



### **Humanist Discussion Group**

**Bob Koches** leads this group in monthly discussions on the third Wednesday of the month. Monthly discussions cover a wide variety of topics and are always interesting. These discussions are facilitated on Zoom and are open to all. If you wish to be added to the reading list or have questions contact Bob Koches at [bobkoches@gmail.com](mailto:bobkoches@gmail.com)



### **Mindful Meditation**

**Richard Clarke** leads this weekly online activity. Mindfulness is the fountain of youth for the mind. It enhances clarity, boosts mood, and keeps stress at bay. Meditation not only helps you age gracefully but also lets you savor life's every moment. Richard Clarke, Facilitator. To find out more contact: [riberasmeditation@gmail.com](mailto:riberasmeditation@gmail.com)

### **Women's discussion group**

Catherine Luria facilitates this discussion on the first and third Monday of each month on Zoom. Contact [CLuriaARNP@gmail.com](mailto:CLuriaARNP@gmail.com) for topics

### **Friday conversations**

Richard Clarke facilitates this weekly conversation via Zoom. Conversations are open to all questions. Email Richard Clarke at [arunachalakindle@gmail.com](mailto:arunachalakindle@gmail.com)



### **Conversations on the Plaza**

There is no leader or facilitator. Meet other UUs for weekly at Los Gringos (above the ice cream place) on the Plaza. Bring a friend!



## Tech Team

As previously highlighted in the Board Report, the LCUUF Tech Team has had a busy and significantly Transformative year. Under Matt and Charlie's supervision, and with board support the Tech teams has added new software to improve our sound management capabilities and has added a new moveable camera. Plus, mid year two part-time employees were hired (Fernanda and Jesus) to assist in our tech needs. They have brought a fresh outlook on how we organize and prepare for our weekly services. As a result we have been able to combine presentation functions and reduce the need for at least one volunteer position and can even manage a Sunday Service with only two people. We've come a long way from a couple of camera phones on a tripod!

Our transition to St. Andrew's has gone very smoothly as they have embraced our technology and experience. Charlie Jacobs has been working closely with them to integrate our tech and experience. By the time of our move we will be able to transition our Sunday Service presentation to our new location. Kudos to those have been working to make this possible.

Here is a list of the LCUUF Tech Team:

- Rev. Matt Alspaugh
- Charlie Jacobs, Team Lead
- Colleen Beery
- Richard Clarke
- Deb Gang
- Kriss Gang
- Roy Haynes
- Cate Howell
- Bob Koches
- Fernanda Parra
- Jesus Hernandez



## 2024 Pledge Campaign

Campaign Chair: Al Castleman

This year's pledge campaign was a financial success. We achieved 94% of our pledge goal and had a 90% participation rate. With this level of pledged giving we will be able to fund 100% of our projected expenditures, including social action team initiatives, guest ministers, speakers and musicians, tech upgrades, rent and absorb the exchange rate adjustment from 20:1 peso/dollar to 18:1. We are truly a loving, thriving and giving community.



*Credit: "What Peace Looks Like" by 11-year-old Arja Renter, a primary school student in Slovakia*



# LCUUF 2024-2025 Proposed Budget

## Lake Chapala Unitarian Universalist Fellowship PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-25

RECEIPTS --	In MXN Pesos	Comparison *	Budget Calculation Notes
Member Pledges:			
In MXN Pesos	149,200	116,000	Pledges as of 1/16/24
In US\$ Conv at 18:1	773,460	590,000	Pledges as of 1/16/24
In Can\$ Conv at 13:1	19,500		Pledges as of 1/16/24
Sub-Total	942,160		
Reserve for Non-Pay (@5%)	(47,108)		Projected rate of 5% of total pledges
Total Net Pledges	875,552	706,000	
Sunday Offerings (excluding STB %)	70,000	90,000	50% of average of MXN 2,700 / week
Share The Basket (50% of Offering +)	85,000	108,000	Remaining 50% + STB donations
Fund-Raising Projects	5,000	9,200	
Interest on MXN Investments	100,000	100,000	
Miscellaneous Receipts	-	-	
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>1,135,552</b>	<b>1,013,200</b>	
DISBURSEMENTS --			
OPERATING EXPENSES:			
Facilities --			
Building Rent	120,000	-	MXN 10,000/mo X 12 mos = MXN 120,000
Additions/Furnishings	1,000	1,037	
Share of St. Andrew's Util/			
Clean/Maint/Supplies	24,000	23,143	
Total Facilities	145,000	24,180	
Technology --			
Equipment Purchases	10,000	35,606	
Equipment Repairs	10,000	1,500	
Electronic Services	15,000	12,155	(Internet, Zoom, etc.)
Tech Support Personnel	93,600	30,800	12 hrs/wk X 52 wks = 624 hours X MXN 150/hour = MXN 93,600
Total Technology	128,600	80,061	
Minister --			
Housing Allowance	331,128	334,560	* US\$1,394 + 10% = \$1,5333 X 12 = \$18,396 X 18 = MXN 331,128
Minister Bonuses	-	-	* US\$500 / month X 12 months = US\$ 6,000 X 18 = MXN 108,000
Professional Expenses	108,000	45,000	
Total Minister	439,128	379,560	
Administrative Expenses --			
Accounting / Govt. Filings	18,096	18,100	
Legal Assistance	7,000	-	
Insurance	3,500	3,300	
Advertising / Promotions	5,300	5,000	Incl. banners for SA facility
Board Expenses / Retreats	14,500	800	Incl. 11,500 pesos for pro facilitator

U.S. Admin Expenses	4,000	-	Historic amount (2023 was pre-paid)
Total Admin Expenses	52,396	27,200	
Total Operating Expenses	765,124	511,001	
COMMITTEE EXPENDITURES:			
Sunday Services Committee --			
Music Services	43,200	42,000	* US\$ 200 X 12 mo. X 18 = MXN 43,200
Guest Artists	10,000	4,000	* 20 guests X MXN 500 = MXN 10,000
Visiting Ministers	17,000	12,800	* 3 guests X US\$ 315 X 18 = MXN 17,010
Materials & Supplies	9,500	24,000	
Total Sunday Service	79,700	82,800	Amount proposed by SSC
Community Outreach --			
Share-The-Basket Contributions	85,000	108,000	
Other Programs	-	15,000	CEDEJO
Total Community Outreach	85,000	123,000	
Social Action Committee --			
All Expenses	10,000	-	Amount proposed by SAC
Hospitality Committee --			
Share of St. Andrew's Coffee Hour Expenses	12,000	14,000	
Other Congregational Events	8,200	1,500	
Total Hospitality Comm.	20,200	15,500	Amount proposed by Hospitality
Membership Committee --			
Website	2,200	1,900	
Guad Reporter Ads	22,500	21,250	
New Member Events	2,000	1,464	
Member Directory (new)	1,782	-	
Supplies / Copies	3,500	530	
Total Membership Comm.	31,982	25,144	Amount proposed by Membership
Member Care Committee --			
All Expenses	2,400	2,200	
Total Committee Expend	229,282	248,644	
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	994,406	759,645	
NET RECEIPTS / (DISBURSEMENTS)	141,146	253,555	
Net as Percentage of Total Receipts	12.4%	25.0%	Generous contributions / frugal spend / favorable exchange rate

*\* Comparason = 2023 YTD actual extrapolated to full-year equivalent (all US\$/MXN peso conversions at 20:1)*

*\*\* Note that these payments are actually made in US\$; MXN peso amounts are for bookkeeping purposes only (i.e., increases appear to be reduced by the exchange rate difference ... but that is not the reality)*

**Thank you members and friends of the  
Lake Chapala Unitarian Universalist  
Fellowship for a wonderful year.**

