

# WVUU Times

September 2018

West Valley Unitarian Universalist Church



## WEST VALLEY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

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## Gavel Talk

Diane D'Agostino, President  
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**S**unday service attendance at WVUU Church varies during the summer months. Of course, with our members on vacation or staying in cooler climates, this is expected. But after talking to a couple of friends who attend a Methodist church and an Episcopalian church in central Phoenix, they too noted their church attendance fluctuates during the summer.

I wondered if church attendance in general is on the decline, no matter what time of the year it is. Through a bit of research, I discovered attendance is declining across the board with few exceptions. What has led to this decline?

Obviously, attendance is not the ultimate goal of churches. Hopefully, there is something more spiritual drawing people to religious institutions. But minister and author Carey Nieuwhof shows that those

who attend church "once in a while," "a few times a year," or "never" are on the rise. He offers several reasons for why this phenomenon is occurring, beginning with the fact the middle class has become more affluent over the years.

With families having a bit more money available to them, they have more options as to how they spend it in their off-work hours. Weekend getaways and cultural events often take precedence over religious attendance and, if the family unit has children, sports activities will often be part of the family schedule which might involve weekend travel to games and tournaments.

Nieuwhof also points out a cultural shift contributing to lower attendance.

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# Sunday Services

Sunday Services begin at 10:30 a.m.  
followed by a light lunch and fellowship.  
Child care is available for children ages 3 and up.

September Theme: ***New Beginnings***

## September 2: **The Supreme Court, Arizona Primaries, and Union Rights**

Chuck Foy

The recent U.S. Supreme Court's Janus decision and the Arizona state primary elections substantially affect labor unions. Nationally recognized police labor leader, Chuck Foy, will describe their implications.

## September 9: **Sacred Economics**

Emily Whitmore

With an economy based on continuous consumerism yet having an environment with limited natural resources, there is a need for concern. Emily Whitmore will discuss possible alternatives to this scenario.

## September 16: **Who Do You Think You Are?**

Rev. Catherine Corbin-Mannino

How you answer the question, "Just who do you think you are?" will be your gift to the world. We welcome Rev. Cathy Corbin-Mannino, our new pulpit minister, to the congregation.

## September 23: **To Be Named**

## September 30: **Can You Hear Me Now?**

Rev. Catherine Corbin-Mannino

The theologian Paul Tillich said, "The first duty of love is to listen." So the real question is how well are we listening - to ourselves, our bodies, our partners, our children, our co-workers.

# Who We Are



West Valley Unitarian Universalist Church is affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Association. We are a welcoming congregation whose mission is provide a safe place for celebrating diversity, drawing inspiration for living better lives, fostering social and environmental justice, and compassionately supporting each other in our spiritual searches.

We are a theologically diverse community who encourages you to seek your own spiritual path. We provide a caring environment for each adult and child to learn more about yourself and your place in the interdependent web of existence. Sunday services celebrate our community, challenge us intellectually, and engage us spiritually.



## ***Gavel Talk***

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The structure of families has changed with the emergence of blended and single parent households.

He reminds church leaders that if a teen spends half her Sundays at mom's church, her perfect attendance score will be 26, not 52 weeks. As for single parent households, their tight schedules may mean Sunday mornings are one of the few times of the week where they can regroup, get ready for the coming week, or share a meal.

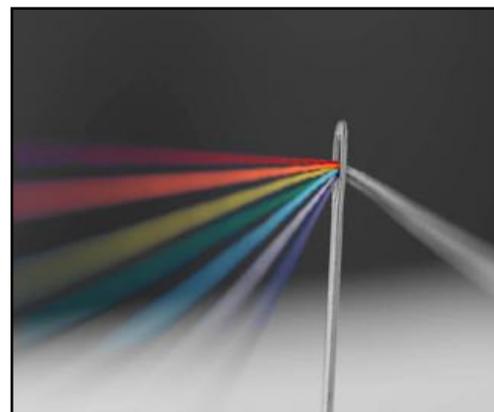
This cultural shift has also created a more self-directed spirituality among people. Nieuwhof says people are looking at other options to be spiritually engaged. For example, technology has allowed podcasts of Sunday services and religious discussions to be viewed at any time. With a reduction of trust in major institutions, people do not have a sense of guilt about not attending church, and they pursue their spiritual journey in other ways.

So what factors bring people to church? The primary reasons are what one would expect: to be closer to God or a spiritual power, to initiate a search for becoming a better person, or to find comfort during difficult times. If children are in the picture, parents may seek out a religious institution to help create a solid moral foundation for their young ones.

A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in December 2017 involved 4,700 adults who identified specific items they look for in a church. The sermon's quality was ranked the highest at 83 percent. People look for something of a personal value in a sermon, seeking a connection that engages them. Not surprisingly, a welcoming environment came in second at 79 percent.

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## Common Threads



from Moses, J. (2002). *Oneness: Great principles shared by all religions*. New York: Ballantine Books.

### **Love Thy Neighbor**

*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

- Judaism

*Seek to be in harmony with all your neighbors; live in amity with your brethren*

- Confucianism

*A new commandment I give to you. That you love one another; even as I have loved you ... By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*

- Christianity

*Full of love for all things in the world, practicing virtue in order to benefit others, this man alone is happy.*

- Buddhism

## ***Gavel Talk***

(continued from page 3)

The style of worship was the next identified factor at 74 percent. Some people feel more comfortable with a more formal style, while others prefer a more relaxed setting. The location of a church matters as well, with 70 percent of the respondents citing this as being important. Many people want to travel to Sunday morning services in a relatively short amount of time. Rounding out the top five factors at 56 percent was whether the church had a religious education program for children.

So what does this information mean for the future of churches? Will attendance continue to dwindle to the point of no one attending church? Nieuwhof doesn't see that scenario occurring. In fact, he believes smaller churches will have an advantage over larger churches because people will want to find a connection, something that engages them in a way a podcast or self-directed exploration cannot. And it can occur easier with a smaller congregation than a larger one.

"Reimagining Sundays: The Future of Faith Formation," a discussion session held at the UUA General Assembly in June by Kim Sweeney, pointed out that Sunday mornings are a changing landscape. Families have choices, and with many families having limited time together during the week, they may want to spend time together on Sunday mornings instead of being part of the standard Sunday School model which has endured for years. She explained

churches have created upstairs/downstairs congregations with the separation of children into RE programs. She gave a startling statistic: only 12 percent of UU children stay on as active adults in the church. What needs to be changed to improve this statistic?

Reverend Jordinn Nelson Long, also a part of the same discussion, suggested there needs to be more involvement for all ages when it comes to Sunday sermons. With UUs being active and involved with community issues with a limited amount of time, that engagement could happen at a Sunday service. Instead of a sermon, a monthly activity takes the place of the sermon and everyone attending is actively involved: children, teens, and adults of all ages. These activities could involve putting together bags of school supplies for children or food boxes for local shelters. Connections among the church community are strengthened and members of the church know they are making a difference in their community.

This is welcoming news for churches in general, but especially for small churches, such as West Valley Unitarian Universalist Church. We can maintain our principles but may practice them in ways that are modified to fit the needs of our congregation. There is hope we can continue to not only survive, but thrive, as we make our way into the future.



# Welcome Rev. Catherine Corbin-Mannino

**R**everend Catherine Corbin-Mannino, our new WVUUC Pulpit Minister, will present her first sermon September 16. She will give a sermon here twice a month.

Reverend Cathy is from the Midwest, born in Council Bluffs, Iowa, and raised across the river in Omaha, Nebraska. After graduating and attending Nebraska Christian College, she married and moved to California where she lived most of her adult life. After divorcing both fundamentalist Christianity and her husband, she moved to Arizona where she has lived for the past 18 years. She is fortunate to have all three of her grown sons and their families living nearby - within 20 minutes of each other.

Cathy worked in health care for over thirty years primarily as a nursing home administrator. She graduated from St. Mary's College with a BA in Health Administration and later earned her MA in Health and Social Services at the University of California, Turlock.

Her life-long interest in religion and spirituality led her from hospital administration to hospital chaplaincy. She completed her chaplain internship at St. Joseph's Medical Center in Kansas City, Missouri while concurrently studying at Unity Institute. She is currently serving as a per diem chaplain with Everest Hospice.



Reverend Cathy is an ordained interfaith minister with a PhD in Philosophy from the now non-operational American Institute of Holistic Theology. She is the creator of Tea 'n Empathy™, a spiritual counseling practice.

Cathy and her husband, Charlie, are members of the UU Church of Surprise. She worked for four years in their RE

Department leading the children's music program, called *Singspiration*, as well as serving as Board of Trustees Secretary for the last three years.

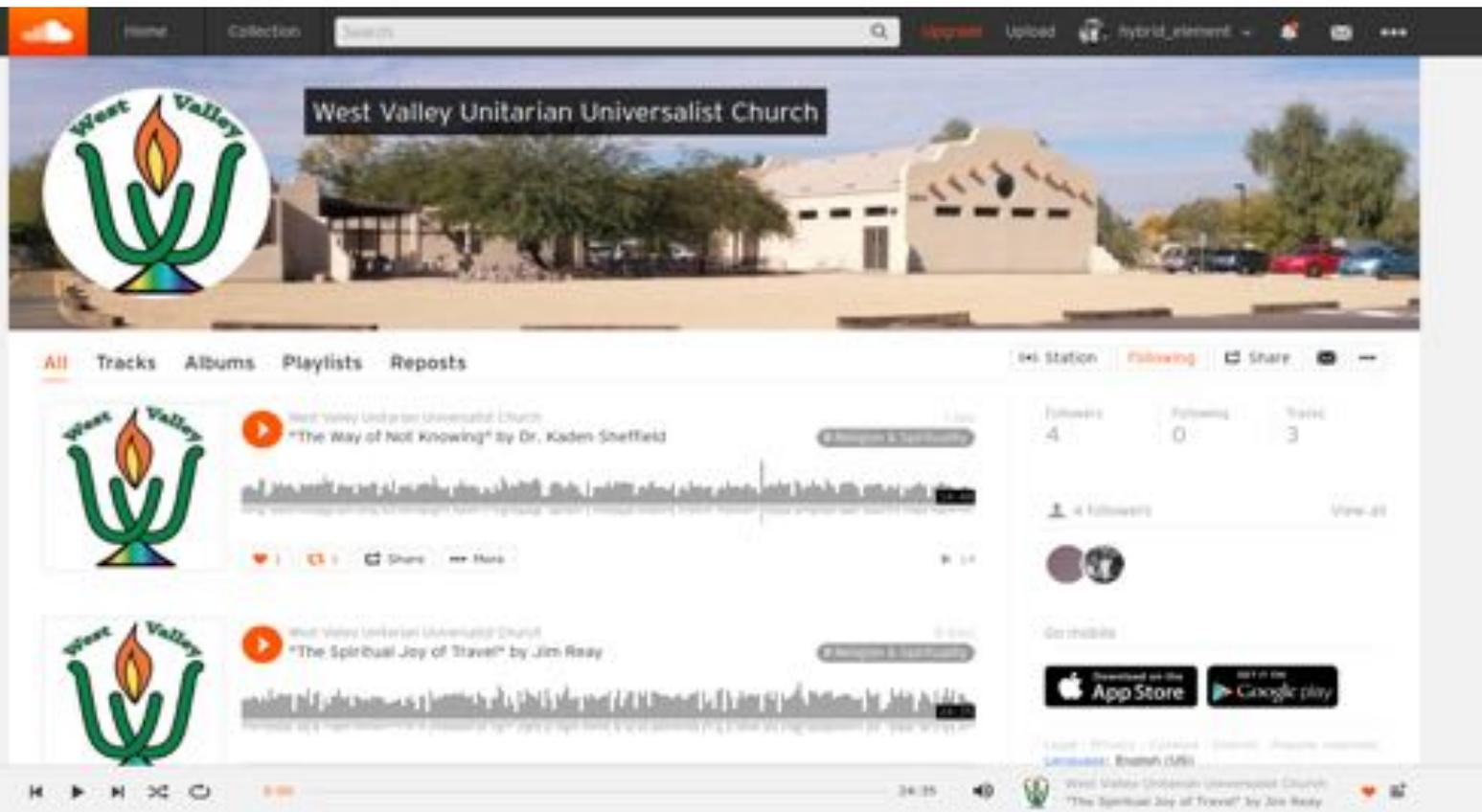
Her special interests are music and literature. You may see her in local community theater productions having been on various stages in the West Valley including Arizona Broadway Theatre, Theater Works, Ghostlight Theater, and Stage Left Productions.

She has been a member of the Phoenix Symphony Chorus, the West Valley Chorale, Sweet Adeline's, and currently with Sonoran Sounds. She enjoys water sports and will parasail, jet-ski, and snorkel whenever she gets the chance.

Reverend Cathy is very excited to have been asked to serve in this community and is looking forward to developing long and strong relationships here!

# Sunday Sermon Podcasts

Listen to our sermons online! Whether you're out of town, just couldn't make it to a service, want to hear a particular sermon again, or want to share a sermon with someone, it's now just a few clicks away! A podcast (i.e., "iPod broadcast," or audio recording) of each WVUUC Sunday Service sermon can be found on our website at <http://www.westvalleyuu.org/services/sermons/>. Pictured below is our WVUUC web page displaying podcasts of our Sunday sermons



## UUA's LeaderLab

LeaderLab is a set of online resources representing a range of perspectives in leadership development and congregational life. Go to LeaderLab when you're curious about a scenario in your congregation and want to learn more. Find articles, videos, webinars, tips, tools, tutorials, and links to other valuable online resources. Share them with your board and staff members, and consider learning together as a group.

Imagine a search engine similar to Worship Web. Or a way to onboard new board members or ideas for facilitating board retreats. As individuals or as congregational teams, you can also go deeper by taking an online course (at your own pace) through UU Leadership Institute or register for an in-person Leadership School. You can find all this and more by checking out LeaderLab at [uua.org/leadership](http://uua.org/leadership).

# UU Principled Minutes

Sharon Moore leadmoore@gmail.com

**We** sing songs from our hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*. The title expresses a fundamental expectation in our church to live the principles we say we believe in. Here are some ways to do that.

## **Principle 1: The inherent worth and dignity of every person**

Respect and establish confidentiality with others, especially with people you might otherwise avoid. If you share, they will share. Emphasize that no one is perfect or expected to be. Find good traits to recognize.

## **Principle 2: Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations**

To know another's life experiences is to better understand what we must all do to promote justice and equality. Without being demeaning, confrontational, or overbearing, ask the person to tell you of their experiences, assuring them you will respect their confidences. Ask what they need or expect from others. Ask how you can help with physical or emotional supports. Offer to help marshal the necessary resources.

## **Principle 3: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations**

Did someone mention having a belief you've never heard of or one you've heard of and rejected out-of-hand?

Rewind your mind. What underlies that belief in reincarnation? How does one practice witchcraft in the modern day? What are the merits of Christianity? How can Hindus have so many gods requiring attention? Do some reading. Talk to the one with the belief and ask questions in a seeking, not interrogatory, way.

## **Principle 4: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning**

An important factor in your own search for truth and meaning is to be a good listener. Before you head out the door with that megaphone to spread your message, remember to always be courteous and open to hearing what others think and feel. While you may not agree on everything, debating issues you feel strongly about in a calm and non-aggressive fashion could be eye opening and validating for both them and you. Civility benefits everyone. Remember the old counseling maxim: First seek to understand.

## **Principle 5: The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large**

Do you know people who have dropped out of the voting process either due to ennui or disenchantment? Voter turnout for the presidential election in 2016 was at the lowest point in 2 decades with only 55 percent of eligible voters casting a ballot. Turnout in state and local elections is even lower. Tell these people how important it is to inform themselves and then vote. Discuss candidates and issues with them so they have information they need to cast their votes.

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## Principled Minutes

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### Principle 6: The goal of world community with peace, justice, and liberty for all

Don't hide from life. Have faith that there is still an abundance of good in this world. Identify your own areas of concern about peace, justice, or liberty. Locate and serve on committees and task forces that work to make your neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces safer and fairer for all. Maybe you'll take a leadership role or maybe you will bombard legislators or industrialists with frequent communications asking for resolution of issues.

### Principle 7: Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part

Since we are getting less help from policy makers in protecting our environment, we need to step up our own efforts in conservation. Given our extreme summer temperatures, try these tips to make your home more energy efficient. Test windows and doors to see if they need new weather-stripping by lighting a candle and moving it around the perimeter of your windows and doors. If the flame flickers, you need to install new weather-stripping. Don't put the candle near curtains or blinds though! Also, Install window film for windows that you don't

## Thank You

Dear VWUU Members,

My family and I are so grateful for all your recent help, cards, calls, and loving support during my sister's illness and passing.

Thank you so very much,  
Maryke, Mike, and Eric DesChamps



## June 2018 WVUUC Financial Highlights

Kathy Dugan, Co-Treasurer  
*k.dugan@cox.net*

Total Operating Income - \$28,718  
 Pledge Payments credited to the start of the current fiscal year \$21,708  
 Pledge Payments for fiscal year 2017-18 \$875  
 Pledge Payments for fiscal year 2018-19 \$5,014  
 Total Operating Expense - \$8,992  
 Interest on member building loans \$4,375  
 Office supplies \$177  
 Facilities \$509  
 Net Operating Income - \$22,096  
**Note:** Income is inflated due to volume of pre-paid pledges credited in the first fiscal month of 2018-19.

# Getting to Know Roz Cook

Sandra Mahoney

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**R**oz Cook grew up in St. Louis in a home that was not particularly religious. Although both her parents were Jewish, they did not attend synagogue and did not think it right to insist their kids attend when they didn't enjoy it.

As a teenager, Roz spent a summer on a farm in Maine and became interested in agriculture. She thought the farm was the most marvelous thing she had ever seen. She was fascinated that one could plant seeds and things would actually grow into what they were supposed to be. After attending the University of Maine for a degree in agriculture, Roz attended the University of Massachusetts Amherst for a master's degree in plant science.

After college and graduate school, Roz moved to New York for a job. She worked at Cornell University, a private land grant institution, and used her degree to help start school garden projects with elementary school children, boost farmers' markets, and get local foods into hospitals and restaurants.

Roz worked as an assistant membership director for an NPR station for many years. In Phoenix she taught at a women's prison for Rio Salado Community College. The idea was to train the women for jobs upon their release, but it was difficult because they weren't allowed to use tools. She has just started a full-time teaching position for one term at Phoenix College.



While living in Watertown, NY, a friend invited Roz to a meditation class at a UU church. She went to the class and liked it but was not interested in attending church. After two months, her friend invited her again, and she attended a service. It wasn't what she had expected, and she was reasonably comfortable.

When she and Tom moved in 2011, they went to the Surprise Church, which didn't have a lot of families with children. When they attended West Valley, it was "like putting on a pair of comfortable shoes that did not need breaking in." She and Tom were married in October 2011.

Roz has served as a Member at Large on the WVUUC Board of Trustees, and when a Secretary was needed she volunteered and held that position for four years. She is also on the Worship Services and Hospitality committees.

Roz and Tom have fostered 50 dogs; they work with Arizona Border Collie Rescue. The dogs are their hobbies and exercise companions.

When in seventh grade, Roz refused to take home economics, not wanting to be told she had to learn how to cook or sew. She was the only girl in shop class. Now Roz likes to cook. She also loves to hike and is a big reader.

# Grading on a Continuum

Emily Whitmore

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A few weeks ago a guest speaker gave a sermon titled “Community in Unity.” I can’t remember who the speaker was, unfortunately, because it was right before our podcast got up and running. The topic reminded me of a Facebook post I saw once, which I was unable to find again after several minutes of googling.

Boy, this month’s column is off to a great start.

But the gist of the Facebook post went like this: A man was hit by a car and died. The next thing he knew, he was surrounded by nothingness. He was still shaken by the incident when he was greeted by the Supreme Being. The man asked if he was in heaven and wondered where everyone else was. The Supreme Being explained that there are no others. The man is actually the Supreme Being’s immortal offspring, and the man has been living the lives of every single human being who ever existed on Earth as part of his training.

Next, the Supreme Being was sending his offspring to be a girl in feudal China. Eventually, once the offspring lived enough human experiences, he would be wise enough to join his Begetter.

I’m not saying I believe this in a literal sense, that this is the answer to the question of Ultimate Reality. But it is a cool perspective to keep in mind when interacting with other people. If someone is

being annoying or frustrating, rather than getting angry with them, I think, “I used to be so silly several lifetimes ago.”

If I encounter someone who I think is very smart or inspirational, it gives me hope that I’m going to be that smart and inspiring someday when I’m that person. It creates a connectedness by making me and we indistinguishable.

In this thought experiment I know I still have several eons of incarnations to go before I’m finished. I’ve done things, just in the past month, that I’m sure other people have watched me do and thought, “I used to be so rude several lifetimes ago.”

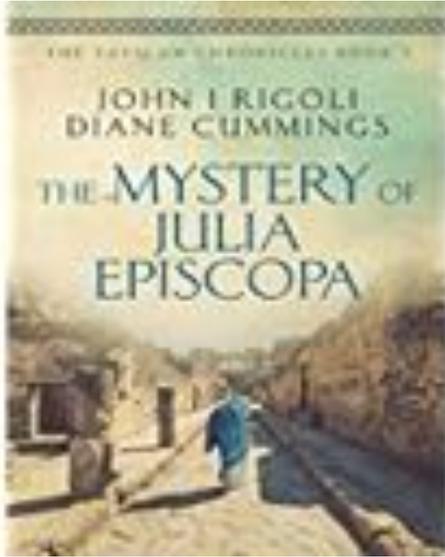
Seriously. I’m going to drop a truth bomb on you and blow my flaws into the open. A 10 year-old boy at McDonald’s asked me to buy him a hamburger last month. I was begrudgingly about to, but he annoyed me, so I changed my mind. I’m not proud of this. I probably ruined that kid’s day. And I’ve thought about him and regretted that decision every day since. The hurt I caused him reverberated back to me, because in looking through this we/me perspective, I was rude to myself.

Talk about community in unity! It brings a whole new level of meaning to “treating others as you want to be treated,” doesn’t it?



# Media Review

Rigoli, J. I., & Cummings, D. (2018). *The mystery of Julia Episcopa (The Vatican Chronicles; Vol. 1)*. Amazon: CreateSpace.



Reviewed by Sharon Moore

An ancient parchment. A secret the Vatican will kill for. A woman who must flee for her life. Can two thousand years of history be a lie?

I love historical fiction books that not only tell a good story but inform me of things I am interested in: ancient Rome, the beginnings of Christianity, alternate history, women's roles in religion, and research-based insights into the Bible. Throw in the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, and you got me!

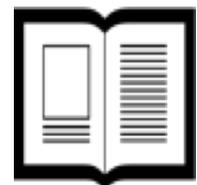
Tasked by a new pope with finding information on the role of women in the early Church years, archaeologists Valentina Vella and Erika Simone stumble upon a document in the Vatican library that, though altered, shows that a woman was once a bishop in the early days of the Church. However, they know that this evidence will not be welcomed. Indeed, it will be destroyed by the power hungry, gynophobic Cardinal Ricci.

The female bishop, Julia, is a high-born Roman woman who, through a series of circumstances, becomes involved in first-century politics and the developing religion of Jesus' first followers. She knew Mary Magdalene and preached alongside Paul. She sent a letter, signed as Bishop Julia, to the fourth pope, Clement, requesting a meeting with him and other bishops to express concern about how some were straying from Jesus' original message.

Fast forward to present day Vatican politics, and Cardinal Ricci is not pleased with the

archaeologists having found this letter. He means to suppress it and silence the women who discovered this most inconvenient bit of history. If women were accepted as bishops in the first years of the Church, it would undermine 2,000 years of the suppression of women as religious leaders. The present-day Catholic Church would have to change.

While reading *The Mystery of Julia Episcopa*, I benefitted from the authors' research into New Testament statements attributed to Jesus. I gained much from their knowledge of the beginnings of Christianity and the formation of what would become the Catholic Church. It held my interest well enough, and it informed me in areas I enjoy learning about.



## Web Presence



Go to this online calendar for WVUU events:

[westvalleyuu.org/events/calendar/](http://westvalleyuu.org/events/calendar/)



Keep up with WVUU church and member news, post comments, and share articles and photos with friends at these websites:

Facebook Group  
[facebook.com/groups/wvuuc](https://facebook.com/groups/wvuuc)

Facebook Fan Page  
[facebook.com/WestValleyUnitarianUniversalistChurch](https://facebook.com/WestValleyUnitarianUniversalistChurch)

Pin and browse UU-related visuals at this site:

[pinterest.com/pin/242772236133017855/](https://pinterest.com/pin/242772236133017855/)

# UU Principles and Sources



Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote seven principles:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and society at large;
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all; and
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

Unitarian Universalist principles are drawn from six sources:

1. Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
2. Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;
3. Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;
4. Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
5. Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit; and
6. Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.