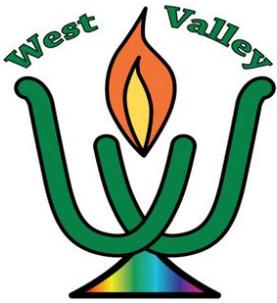


# WVUU Times

August 2019

West Valley Unitarian Universalist Church



## WEST VALLEY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

5904 W. Cholla St.  
Glendale, AZ 85304  
(623) 243-6621  
[wvuu5904@gmail.com](mailto:wvuu5904@gmail.com)  
[www.westvalleyuu.org](http://www.westvalleyuu.org)

### Board Of Trustees

#### President

Emily Whitmore  
[emilyawhitmore@gmail.com](mailto:emilyawhitmore@gmail.com)

#### Secretary

Sandra Mahoney  
[s\\_1mahoney@cox.net](mailto:s_1mahoney@cox.net)

#### Treasurer

Mark Oelerking  
[markoelerking@gmail.com](mailto:markoelerking@gmail.com)

#### At-Large

Noel Johnson  
[longroper623@gmail.com](mailto:longroper623@gmail.com)

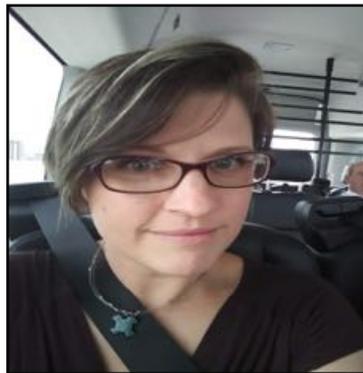
Emily Sulkes  
[emes3@juno.com](mailto:emes3@juno.com)

#### Newsletter Editor

David Moore  
[mooredavid06@gmail.com](mailto:mooredavid06@gmail.com)

## Gavel Talk

Emily Whitmore, President  
West Valley UU Church  
[emilyawhitmore@gmail.com](mailto:emilyawhitmore@gmail.com)



There is one thing that I was simultaneously excited and nervous about when it came to becoming president of the WVUUC Board of Trustees this year: Membership.

And I'm not just saying that because last year we lost more dear members than we added. And I'm also not just saying that because losing more dear members than we added has financial implications because we're bringing in fewer pledge dollars.

I mean, those are concerns too.

But my main concern has to do with burning out existing members. We have an amazing congregation filled with dedicated people who do so much to keep this church afloat. I'm worried that, if our membership numbers continue to dwindle and our dedicated members see no one to whom they can pass the torch, that torch could burn out completely. And I don't want that to happen on my watch.

That's why I attended a workshop at the recent UUA General Assembly titled, "A Radically Inclusive Pathway to Membership." It's an exciting take on helping to guide new members plug into the congregation and feel engaged. It's a way to help ensure new members feel they're a part of the community and stick with us before they even sign the book.

(continued on page 3)

# 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.

August Theme: **Prayer**

## August 4: **Watering the Path of Light and Dark**

Tom Begush

What is in you that can spill out for justice? What is in our community?

## August 11: **Justice As A Spiritual Practice**

Janine Gelsinger

Our new UUJAZ Executive Director, Janine Gelsinger, will speak about justice as a spiritual practice.

## August 18: **Gong Meditation/Sound Bath**

Karyn Diane Kish

According to Nicola Tesla, "If you want to find the secrets to the universe, think in terms of energy, frequency and vibration."

Gong Master, Karyn Diane Kish, will lead the congregation in a gong meditation, incorporating the gong, crystal bowls, and bells.

August 25: To Be Announced

## 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**

*(continued from page 1)*

I've discussed these ideas with our Membership Chair, Terry Mead, and look forward to tailoring these ideas to meet our specific needs here at WVUUC. We aim to roll out the new program by our ingathering service, which is set for October 20.

This new pathway to membership will be required for new members. And existing members will be encouraged to "renew their vows" to the congregation, so to speak. The process should be fun and easy for most of us, since so many of us already do so much.

And speaking of passing the torch, no one has come forward to fill the position of President Elect on the board. This is getting embarrassing. Like, Trump's-empty-cabinet embarrassing. I was really hoping to avoid being compared to that man in any way.

If you are willing to serve, please contact me.




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## **July WVUUC Board Meeting Highlights**

Sandra Mahoney s\_1mahoney@cox.net

- The Board of Trustees met on July 14, 2019.
- Rev. Darren Reale received permission to pursue starting a CUUPS (Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans) chapter at WVUUC.
- WVUUC will write off \$2,000 dollars in unpaid pledges from last year. The books from our previous treasurer will be audited on July 24.
- Emily Whitmore attended the UUA General Assembly and came back with many exciting ideas.
- Our Fall Ingathering is planned for October 20.
- The Somos America project to aid immigrants went well with over 100 food bags and personal care items donated by members and prepared by those at the workshop.
- Pax Whitmore and Tom Begush will head a new Tech Committee to manage and secure our website, Facebook page, and podcasts. Emily Whitmore will be managing Facebook content.

The next board meeting is scheduled for August 11, 2019.

# Hospitality

Sharon Moore leadmoore@gmail.com

**W**hen I tell UUs from other congregations that West Valley UU Church provides lunch every Sunday, they are amazed. "How can you do that?" I'm always asked.

Well, you are how it happens! Your generous giving of time and food each week is only one of the ways that West Valley is the little church that could!

During the month of July, our hosts Diane D'Agostino, Roz Cook, Morgan Oviatt, Doug Pope, and Dorothy Ward made our coffee, set out our food, and cleaned up our kitchen. Elaine King washed the napkins. Thanks so much to all of you for your continuing service to the church!

Thanks also go to our food providers. Entrées were provided by Annette Darling, Valerie Lynch, Emilie Sulkes, and Emily Whitmore -- and probably others I don't know of who brought dessert. You are greatly appreciated by the congregation!

Want to serve our congregation – and see your name in the newsletter? See Diane D'Agostino and sign up to bring food. We need entrées and desserts in August and September! You, too, can earn our gratitude with a KISS (Keep It Simple Summer) dish.




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## June 2019 Financial Highlights

Mark Oelerking markoelerking@gmail.com

Total Operating Income - \$2,711

Pledge income - \$1,782

Sunday plate - \$446

Other donations - \$275

Facility use income - \$208

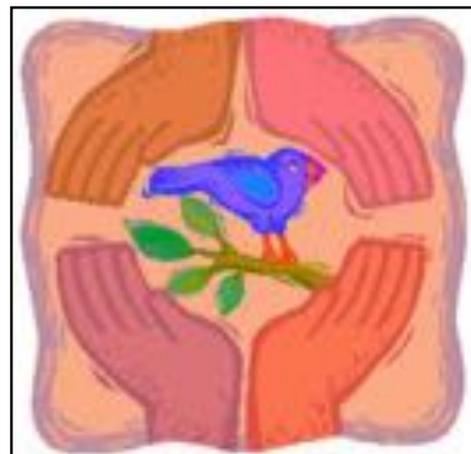
Total Operating Expense - \$5,248

Bank mortgage payment - \$956

Member loan interest - \$1,667

Worship services - \$500

Prop./Liability Insurance - \$197



# Justice in Action

Stacy Fitzwater stacyfitzwater@gmail.com

- The UU College of Social Justice has resources available for individuals and congregations that want to deepen their understanding about migration. It holds trainings and workshops that can help congregations organize. It includes immersion learning journeys to the border so activism is strengthened and grounded in first-hand experience. Visit their website here: <https://uucsj.org/tools-for-sanctuary-solidarity/>
- Are you troubled by the news about immigration and the U.S. border? Want to help Immigrants, but don't know how? Check out this article about 20 ways to help Immigrants: <https://www.yesmagazine.org/peace-justice/immigrant-children-border-crisis-how-to-help-20190625?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=58d73876-7894-482d-b4d4-675669e7cdd6>
- Reflect on the Red for Ed movement with this short documentary film, "*Red for Ed: One Year Later*" on Vimeo. Check it out here: <https://vimeo.com/345071818>
- Each week Nonviolence News brings 30-50 stories of nonviolence in action to readers, illuminating how nonviolence is actively shaping our world. Sign up to have these stories delivered to your inbox at <https://nonviolencenow.org/nonviolence-news-email-list/>
- Volunteer with HeadCount! Register voters at concerts, music festivals, and cultural events. You get to go to cool places while changing the world! <https://www.headcount.org/>
- Do you know your local representatives? If not, find them here: <https://azredistricting.org/districtlocator/>
- Remember to call and write your representatives, to make your voice heard!  
Arizona Legislature: <https://www.azleg.gov/memberroster/>  
U.S. Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121  
U.S. Department of Justice: 202-514-2000  
The White House: 202-456-1111



STANDING ON THE SIDE OF

LOVE

# UU Principled Minutes

Sharon Moore leadmoore@gmail.com

You've heard of the butterfly effect. Wikipedia says it is "the sensitive dependence on initial conditions in which a small change in one state of a deterministic nonlinear system can result in large differences in a later state."

Be a butterfly effect for positive change. When you smile at a stranger or pick up something another person dropped, you could change that person's day for the better so that that person does a kindness that changes someone else's day. The domino effect, the butterfly effect. Pass it on!

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

I had conversations with several people recently at a UU religious retreat. One of these functioned as our Community Minister, one of two ministers serving retreat participants. I asked Rev. Kim about this principle specifically, the one I struggle with the most. She was very reassuring. As long as we acknowledge the *humanity* of all others, would help them if they are in need, we can say, with good conscience, that they do not have "worth and dignity" in the way that I always interpreted it: unconditional acceptance of unacceptable people. We don't have to accept others in order to recognize their humanity and treat them as we would treat anyone.

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

Homeless people we encounter on street corners or at fast food establishments want to be recognized as people of worth and value, too. Smile and say hello even if that makes you uncomfortable, even if you are not handing over your change. We carry bags in the car with an energy bar and a bottle of water that we hand out to these folks. It is always met with appreciation that we recognize they are down on their luck and we want to give a hand up in a small way.

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

We participated in a wonderful Summer Solstice Celebration, and I studied the Tao Te Ching with several others while at WUULF (article elsewhere in this newsletter). The experiences reminded me that as UUs we often explore the religious traditions of other faith communities. I am so grateful for the opportunities I've had and seek to have even more. If you agree, request that Sunday Services try to find more such experiences for our services. You might even offer to share with our congregation the religious tradition that you left to become a UU. What is being a Jew like? What are the unique elements of Catholicism? Were you a fundamentalist Christian? Tell us about it. Personally, I'd like to know more about the branch of UUs that consider themselves Christians.

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## ***Principled Minutes***

(continued from page 6)

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

While it is true that Unitarian Universalism is a big tent encompassing a wide-range of religious beliefs, it is not true that we can believe anything we want. There are boundaries that we agreed to when we joined this church. Our seven principles and the six sources we used to derive them are those boundaries. Our covenant binds us to ethical behaviors and beliefs. So we can't believe "anything". When I hear others say this, I call them on it and ask for what they mean by it. If they say, "Oh, I can be a UU Christian or Pagan.", I'm good with that. But if they say we have no boundaries, I come back at them.

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

The 2020 election is shaping up to be even more important than that of 2016. Find a way to get involved. Work for a candidate you support by hosting a calling-party or mailing out flyers. Donate money if you can. Get people to sign petitions. Help register voters. Call your party of registration and ask what job you can do. We must each do more than we have ever done before.



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

While in conversation with the Community Minister at WUULF, discussing Principle 1, she mentioned that when she reads of the unjustified shooting of a person of color by a police officer, she writes to the victim or victim's family expressing her concern for their well-being and sympathy for the situation people of color face. I decided that I could do that, too, but additionally, writing to the police officer might have a larger effect. I will express support for the hard job the police do every day, but I will also tell the officer that it must be hard knowing you shot another person, justified or not. But if the shooting weren't justifiable, I would hope next time another action might be considered.

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

Have you done an energy audit on your household? Do you know what your carbon footprint is? If we each do even a small change, the world will be healthier. You can download an estimator at <https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/consider-your-impact/carbon-calculator/> or <https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/> Make this your 2019 goal to complete an energy audit and identify changes you can make for our world's health.

# Vital UU Congregations

The Rev. Dr. James Kubal-Komoto served the last three years as Regional Lead for the Pacific Western Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association. His account of what makes UU congregations vital comes from his last newsletter article (<https://www.uua.org/pacific-western/blog/newsletter>)

I believe what is most important about vital congregations is their culture. I have visited many congregations during the past three years, and the most vital congregations have a nearly ineffable quality that nevertheless can be felt almost as soon as one walks through the congregation's doors.

What words could be used to describe what is felt in these congregations? People in them are compassionate and kind (without having loosey-goosey boundaries or entertaining an "anything goes" attitude). They practice gratitude and generosity and are joyous. They don't get stuck on past hurts but embrace the move from hurt to healing. They are hopeful about themselves and their future.

What might you do if your congregation's culture falls short in any of these areas? I believe anyone who participates in a

congregation, from a child or youth to a newcomer to a long-time member to a board president to a staff member to a minister, has the power to positively influence a congregation's culture. How? Not necessarily by criticizing the current culture, but by embodying the cultural change one wants to see—in the paradigms one uses, in the way one frames questions, in the way one talks about problems and challenges, in one's own actions, and most of all, in the way one interacts with others. Change like this is caught more than it is taught.

Cultural change won't happen right away, and there is no guarantee it will happen at all, but it might, and it might lead to many other changes as well.

The world desperately needs vital Unitarian Universalist congregations, so I wish each of you the best in helping your congregation become the most vital congregation it can be.

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## WVUUC Fall Ingathering

Sharon Moore leadmoore@gmail.com

The official church in-gathering service and potluck lunch is scheduled this year for **October 20**. Dust off your best recipes and come with a dish to share with the congregation.



We need the whole panoply of deliciousness! You can make a main dish, a side dish, salad, or dessert. We need it all!

So mark the date on your calendar and show up on **October 20** for the kind of famous feast we always put on!

# Getting to Know Sandra Mahoney

Sandra Mahoney

s\_1mahoney@cox.net

Sandra Mahoney was born in Kentucky; her family (an older and younger brother and parents) moved to Texas when Sandra was four. While living in Brownsville, her younger sister was born.

At age 6, Sandra contracted polio which impacted her stamina and muscle strength. Her family moved to a 10 acre farm outside Cedar Hill (population 300) and lived there until 1958 when they moved to the Washington, D.C. area. While in Texas, her mother took her and her three siblings to a southern Baptist church every Sunday and most Wednesday nights. After moving to D.C., church attendance ceased.

After a year at the College of William and Mary, Sandra married in 1963 and had two daughters. After divorcing in 1972, she moved herself and her two daughters to Lubbock, Texas to attend Texas Tech University where she obtained her doctorate in psychology.

During the required one-year internship in Wichita, she met Barry, who worked at the mental health center, while she worked at a child guidance

center for several years. They opened a private practice which they ran until relocating to Phoenix for a new employment opportunity for Barry in 1990.



While living in Kansas, Sandra developed post-polio symptoms which have limited her preferred more active lifestyle. While in graduate school and for several years after, she took jazz and modern dance classes. She had to give that up, stop playing tennis, stop hiking in the mountains, and avoid repetitive tiring activities. Thus, she began quilting which has become a beloved hobby.

While in Kansas, she and Barry had friends who attended a UU church and liked its acceptance and diversity. After moving to Glendale, they

decided they needed a community of friends and like-minded people. Sandra and Barry attended First Unitarian Church for a few years before joining West Valley. Sandra became secretary to the WVUUC Board shortly after joining. She then served as president for three years, overseeing the purchase of modular buildings and land, the move to a permanent location, and the development of the current site. Now she is once again serving as secretary.

Sandra is attracted to Unitarian Universalism by the acceptance of people of different beliefs and sexual orientations. She likes the first principle regarding the worth and dignity of every human being; it has served her well as a person and as a psychologist. She likes the welcoming attitude of members of WVUUC.

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## **Sandra Mahoney**

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Sandra worked for Social Security Disability Determination Services prior to retiring; she also taught online classes for graduate students in psychology at Walden University on a part-time basis. Currently she chairs dissertation committees for Walden.

For fun, she quilts, plays golf, loves to read, and entertains herself with their three cats.

Sandra and Barry have two daughters, one in Denver and one in Deltona, Florida; they have two grandchildren and a great grandson.

## **Dungeons and Dragons**



**An Adult Religious Education Team-Building activity has taken the form of a *Dungeons and Dragons* campaign on Thursday nights at WVUUC. Dungeon Master, Morgan Oviatt, shows great patience and guidance with first-time players, Tom Begush, Shannon Bailes, Emily Whitmore, Pax Whitmore, and James Whitmore. Thankfully, Melody Gorman, the sixth member of the party, has extensive gaming experience as well and provides valuable insight to the other players.**

All six players have chosen characters of different races and classes, exhibiting the inherent worth and dignity of every person. Three characters have diverse religious backgrounds, including monk, a paladin, and a druid, showing acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth. They make decisions during the game invoking the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process.



# Western UU Life Festival

David Moore and Sharon Moore leadmoore@gmail.com

We Moores spent a glorious week at the Western Unitarian Universalist Life Festival held annually in June at Ghost Ranch near Abiqui, New Mexico. WUULF is a camp designed for those of us in the Pacific Western UUA Region to gather and express appreciation for each other and the world. UUs mostly from New Mexico and Colorado have been directing it for about forty years.

WUULFies organized secular activities for children, youth, and adults throughout the week. They ranged from playing in mud to swimming, storytelling, arts and crafts, visiting local museums and galleries, and touring Taos Pueblo and Georgia O'Keefe landscapes.

Two UU ministers addressed spiritual concerns. A Community Minister opened each day under a large cottonwood tree with meditation, music, and readings that set the tone for spiritual quests. She was available for individual counseling or conversation each day. A Program Minister conducted three morning-long sessions on the *Bones of Our Community*. He emphasized spiritual deepening through personal endeavor as well as collective practice. We found both ministers engaging and informative.

WUULF leaders directed various discussion groups and workshops. For instance, Sharon attended two sessions discussing the *Tao Te Ching*, and she participated in workshops on eco-sustainability and an attitude of gratitude. David hiked several local landmarks with a group, and he attended a speaker's recounting of his friendship with Edward Abbey.

Social/happy hour started promptly every day at 4:30. Evening activities included board games, karaoke, square dancing, and a talent/no talent show.

A Summer Solstice Celebration held during WUULF's last evening was a highlight. Led by two pagan-wiccans, the WUULF community gathered in a natural amphitheater at a nearby state park. We marked the power of the sun then welcomed the elements to our presence through chanting, singing, dancing, and drumming.

The Ghost Ranch facilities were rustic but adequate, camping sites were available, and the food was quite good. The WUULF organizers were superb. In a short time, our group of 85 UUs of all ages became a closely knit community. We look forward to returning!



# Media Review

Sweeney, K. (2017). *The death of Sunday school and the future of faith formation*. Retrieved online from [https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/the\\_death\\_of\\_sunday\\_school\\_and\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_faith\\_formation\\_ksweeney\\_june2017.pdf](https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/the_death_of_sunday_school_and_the_future_of_faith_formation_ksweeney_june2017.pdf)



KIMBERLY SWEENEY | JUNE 2017

## The Death of Sunday School and the Future of Faith Formation

New England Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association

Reviewed by Sandra Mahoney

*The Death of Sunday School and the Future of Faith Formation*, written by UU religious educator Kimberly Sweeney, states that religious structures of the past are not meeting the needs of families today. We need to change programs and strategies with our purpose remaining “to bring the love and grace of Unitarian Universalism to our families’ lives.”

Over the past 20 years, religious professionals and lay leaders have been questioning the effectiveness of traditional Sunday school. Demographics, family structures, societal norms, and the roles of the church in U.S. life have evolved, while the Sunday school model that came out of the twentieth century has remained unchanged. Enrollments in Sunday school are declining.

I must admit I felt some relief discovering that many denominations are having difficulty attracting young families to services and especially to Sunday school programs. It’s not just our WUUUC or our UU denomination; it is a widespread problem.

Sweeney is from the New England region, and declining religious education enrollment has been especially severe there. She says this is because “There is little to no programming that engages the family as a family or that empowers and equips parents for their tasks as the primary religious teachers of their children and teens” (p. 9).

Since roughly 88 percent of adult members come to Unitarian Universalism from other faith traditions or from no tradition at all, development in the UU faith is needed. While UU adults attend services, they often have not moved their theological development beyond what it was when they quit attending church as teens or young adults. Thus, “there is a need to engage our families in worship together. A priority for churches is to focus on spending time, attention, and resources to equip families to do the work of faith formation at home” (p. 16).

Several educators have suggested modeling how to bring UU faith home. Parents and caregivers can share songs, stories, spiritual practices, and social justice opportunities from ethical eating to voting as a person of faith.

(continued on page 13)

## 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.

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## **Media Review**

(continued from page 12)

Churches do well to influence adults to be the spiritual leaders of their children.

Sweeney also suggests that UU children and youth have no opportunity to learn how to be in sanctuary, let alone benefit from the spiritual practice of congregational worship, when they do not experience worshiping with the whole congregation. They cannot see adults modeling moments of silence or stewardship, caring deeply for one another through sharing

joys and sorrows, or singing the songs of our faith, or sharing in the ministry of worship.

To learn more about changing the UU Sunday school model to meet changing times, go to Sarah Montgomery-Richards' 2018 online report available at <https://uucgt.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Death-of-Sunday-School-DLE-Report-Feb-2018-1.pdf>