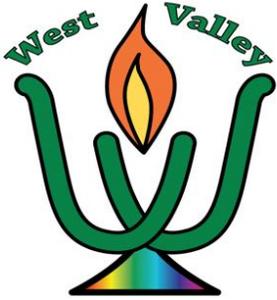


WVUU Times

January 2020

West Valley Unitarian Universalist Church



WEST VALLEY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

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Emily Whitmore, President
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Happy New Year! This year I'm resolving to send these Gavel Talks to David Moore in a more timely manner.

Our theme for January is Authority/Leadership, and I am so thankful we now have a Leadership Committee once again. Thank you to Terry Mead, Theresa Reigadas, and Melanie Poling Maham for volunteering to be on the committee.

Thanks to all of you who attended the Congregational Meeting on December 15 to vote on said Leadership Committee.

I realize there were some uncomfortable moments and asks during the meeting, but they could not be helped, given the circumstances. It just makes me realize how very crucial having a Leadership Committee is to the health and vitality of this congregation.

Another huge thank you goes out to Mandy Oviatt, who stepped up to the plate as our President Elect. I know she will do an amazing job and she has all of our love and support in the coming year.

We are still in need of a Stewardship Committee chairperson, which I would like to select in the next few weeks before our annual Pledge Drive comes around again.

Hopefully our January theme of Authority/Leadership resonates with someone willing to take this role on!



Sunday Services

Sunday Services begin at 10:30 a.m.
followed by a light lunch and fellowship.

Child care and religious education are available for children ages 3 and up.

January Theme: **Authority/Leadership**

January 5: **Leadership without Authority**

Pax Whitmore

How to lead when you have no actual power, be it through example, attitude, or activism.

January 12: **You're Not the Boss of Me!**

Rev. Cathy Corbin-Mannino

Some people are in leadership positions that we do not want to follow. How to recognize and respond to "appropriate" authority.

January 19: **Words Create Worlds**

Sharon Moore and David Moore

An airing of cringe-worthy and embraceable religious words that have shaped our UU worlds.

January 26: **Of Leaders and Lemmings**

Rev. Cathy Corbin-Mannino

We, the church, the world, the neighborhood, are in need of good leaders. What qualities truly inspire compassionate action rather than agitate and manipulate?

Sunday Discussion Group

Everyone is welcome to join our weekly discussion group at 9:30 a.m. every Sunday morning in the office area of the Religious Education Building. UUs have more questions than answers, so don't be afraid to come and toss your thoughts into the mix.

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.

Fall 2019 WVUUC

Congregational Meeting Highlights

Sandra Mahoney

s_1mahoney@cox.net

President's Report

- Emily Whitmore reported that the application for recertification as a Welcoming Congregation has been completed. The previous submission was in 2007. UUA is now requiring annual renewal.
 - Emily noted that our sermons on SoundCloud on our website have had 1,930 plays, with the most popular speakers being Sharon and David Moore, and Kellye Perkins.
 - Reverend Darren Reale is trying to start a Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans (CUUPS) chapter affiliated with our church.
 - The Dungeons and Dragons group has nine people who attend regularly on Fridays.

Treasurer's Report

- Mark Oelerking indicated we have a sufficient amount in our checking account thanks to prepaid pledges.
 - Our financial records were audited as our previous treasurer Kathy Dugan completed her long term of office. There were no errors!

New Business

- Leadership Committee. The church needed a Leadership Committee Chair and committee which serve a three-year term, with one of the three members rotating off each year as another is elected. Terry Mead agreed to become chair, and Theresa Reigadas agreed to serve on the committee. **One more member is still needed.**
 - Stewardship Committee. This committee keeps track of the financial condition of the Church and is responsible for fund-raising and preparing an annual budget for the fiscal year. No one volunteered to serve, so this item was tabled. Canvassing begins in March, and budget requests from trustees and each committee are planned in January. **This committee needs to be staffed, and a volunteer is still needed.**
 - President-Elect. Mandy Oviatt agreed to become president-elect from now through June and then to serve as president. Those present approved her selection.
 - Technology Committee. A by-laws change was approved by those present to establish a Technology Committee with Pax Whitmore as chair and Tom Begush as a member.



STANDING ON THE SIDE OF

LOVE

Hospitality

Sharon Moore leadmoore@gmail.com

December 2019 Hospitality Shout Outs

As always, I am grateful to our hosts each Sunday. They make the coffee, set out the food, wash the dishes, and take out the trash.

Thank you Roz Cook and Tom Begush, Sharon and David Moore, Kay Vogt and Morgan Oviatt, Dorothy Ward and Kitan Wihans, and Diane D’Agostino. And thanks for weekly clean napkins courtesy of Maryke Des Champs.

December was a busy month, food-wise, for West Valley UU. We had a huge and delicious potluck to celebrate the holidays. I know more people brought food than signed up, but here are the ones on my clipboard: Richard Brandes, Kellee Perkins, Valerie Lynch, Sharon Moore, Theresa Reigadas, Maryke Des Champs, Diane D’Agostino, Debbie Barr, Joy Bowen, Pax Whitmore, Emilie Sulkes, Terry Mead, and Sandra Mahoney.

Food was provided other Sundays by Jim Reay, Sharon Moore, Sanda Mahoney and Barry Linden, and Diane D’Agostino. Thank you so much for your caring gifts for our Sunday meals!

You are all remarkable people, and you are the reason we are the Little Church that Could!

Hospitality Needs in 2020

The Hospitality Team grew by one more member in December. Debbie Barr agreed to help out Diane D’Agostino on our periodic fifth Sundays. Thanks so much, Debbie!

Are you willing to join our team in some capacity? We need folks who could be back up hosts when needed. Are you able to be someone I can call on when we need the help?

If not hosting, perhaps you can bring some food to the table!

We already have food providers for each Sunday in January and February. Thank you, thank you!

However, March and April await your John Henry! Oh, and May, June, July . . . LOTS of opportunities to showcase your culinary talents! Or grocery store frozen entrees. We don’t care if it’s homemade. We just like to eat, and people like you make that happen.

Are you able to bring an entrée and accompanying bread? How about a tasty treat for dessert? Sign up on Sharon Moore’s clipboard and get a thanks in the newsletter!





The National Organization for Women Sun City/West Valley will meet 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 11 at the UU Church of Surprise, 17540 N. Avenue of the Arts, Surprise. The program, jointly sponsored by the League of Women Voters, NW Maricopa County, is a fund raiser for healthcare for underserved women.

There will be a special screening of director Andrea Pritchard's new documentary, *Risk: Women on the Frontline*. Tickets are \$15.00 payable at the door. A raffle and light refreshments will be available. For more information, call 623-972-6273 or visit our website: aznow-scvv.org

Happy New Year from the Religious Ed. Committee!

Mandy Oviatt moonsedai@live.com

Throughout the fall of 2019 we focused on learning about some of our famous Unitarian Universalist Superheroes. These are ladies and gentlemen in the past who have practiced either the Unitarian, Universalist, or UU faith and have done amazing things or brought about exciting changes in our world. Thus far we have studied Ralph Waldo Emerson, Dorothea Dix, Lewis Lattimer, Lucy Stone, and even Christopher Reeve, remembered and beloved by many as Superman.

During each weekly lesson we've reviewed the seven UU Principles. The children have really started to blossom, and they are beginning to point out the principles in our weekly stories.

I am so proud of how much our church's children have grown!

November Financial Highlights

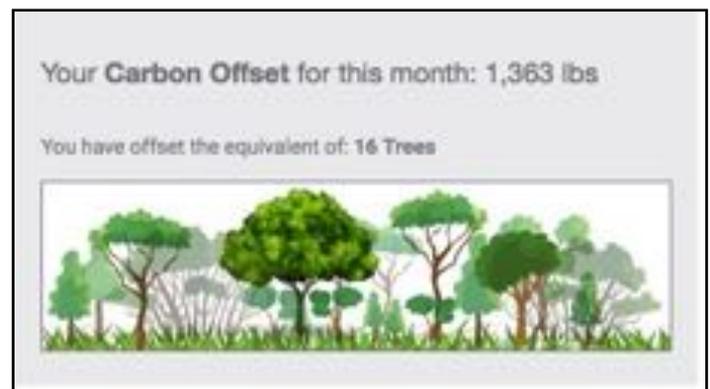
Pledges received	\$3,706
Sunday plate	\$3,465
Facility use	\$435
Total income	\$7,606

(Sunday plate is unusually high due to a nonmember's large donation.)

Bank mortgage payment	\$956
Member mortgage payment	\$2,339
Sunday services	\$650
Electric	\$405
Total expenses	\$4,388

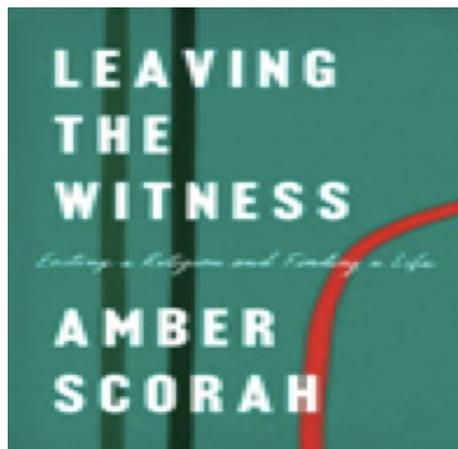
Solar Panels Carbon Offset

The *Enphase Energy* solar panels installed on our WVUUC sanctuary roof are reducing our carbon footprint:



Media Review

Scorah, A. (2019). *Leaving the Witness: Exiting a religion and finding a life*. New York: Viking



Reviewed by
Rev. Darren J. Reale

I met a new member of our WVUU church back in October who recommended this book. This member had left the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the book recommendation came up in conversation when I asked what it was like to be a member of that faith. I had personal experiences with my students of that faith stating to me numerous restrictions, such as not saluting the flag, not singing holiday songs, and not celebrating birthdays.

This autobiographical book by Canadian, Amber Scorah, was a true eye-opener into the world of growing up a Jehovah's Witness. It chronicles her time of secretly being in China as a missionary, which is illegal in China, to convert the people to her faith. It describes the steps to becoming an illegal missionary of that faith in a foreign country. It tells of her eventual questioning of the elements of her beliefs and the cruel existence she endured when leaving the faith she was brought up in.

Scorah's description of what it was like living in mainland China was interesting reading. I was fascinated by all the unusual (to Westerners) customs that are followed there.

We are taken into the fascinating world of mainland China where Amber is a secret missionary. Living as a foreigner in China involved not only her learning the language but all of the customs that one must know just in order to start and hold everyday conversations with

the Chinese people. To even be there as a Witness involved so much secrecy on her and her husband's part that I felt I was almost reading a spy novel! It is still illegal in red China to be a missionary; it's considered espionage by Chinese officials. (To confirm this current state of affairs, I just read an article by Li Mingxuan from the magazine *Bitter Winter* dated October 13, 2019 about 100 Witness missionaries arrested and deported).

Scorah describes the day-to-day existence as a secret operative as it were. The steps she goes through to do this were amazing to me: going to meet people in specific public places to avoid officials eavesdropping,

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Media Review

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being careful of anything she ever says on the internet (it's monitored in China), passing written materials in wrapped brown paper, and meeting secretly on a weekly basis with people of her faith but never in the same place.

In her personal missionary quest to befriend people there so to eventually witness to them about her faith and hopefully convert them, she begins for the first time to start questioning the strict black and white rules of her beliefs. How this gradually manifests makes for compelling reading, especially how it starts with a chance friendship by corresponding with someone via internet in Los Angeles who is outside her faith (a Witness no-no she repeatedly mentions).

She describes what life is like for her being a child Witness growing up in that faith, her alcoholic father and distant mother, and the many rules one has to follow. Her sad loveless marriage is not initially brought to her attention -- she suppresses feelings of this -- but as the book unfolds, Amber slowly comes to realize that all of the rules given her to follow as a Witness and missionary have the purpose of making her blindly obedient to not only her husband, but to church elders and the specific teachings in the tracts she must read and study.

She can never question what she is taught and is discouraged to ever study opposing views, or even consider getting a college education ("Why would one go to college or

get a career -- the world is ending," she writes). She is forbidden to become personally involved with friendships to "worldly" outsiders with viewpoints that could make one reason and question.

The penalty for questioning the precepts of her faith can result in what is considered the worst thing that could ever happen to a Witness: Shunning. Amber Scorah describes the Jehovah Witness shunning process as one with different levels. The worst level is being branded an apostate, which results in no contact with anyone of her faith, including no contact ever with all members of her family.

I enjoyed reading on how Scorah's, own clandestine Bible students bring up similarities in her teachings to the teachings of Buddha and Confucius. This plus her affair with the man in Los Angeles puts her on a collision course with precepts of her faith, her husband, church elders, and even all her friends. She eventually begins to tell her students to question what they are reading and studying.

The consequences for Scorah are sadly heartbreaking once her questioning becomes known to the elders of her faith. She is shunned and becomes an apostate.

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Web Presence



Go to this online calendar for WVUU events:

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

Facebook Fan Page
facebook.com/WestValleyUnitarianUniversalistChurch



Pin and browse UU-related visuals at this site:

pinterest.com/pin/242772236133017855/

Media Review

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The pain of total isolation from all members of her faith, her husband, and all of her family members makes one wonder why cruelty of this sort is allowed to still exist. Not only is Scorah a total outcast, but she has no one to turn to and no longer has a faith to take any comfort in. Beliefs and the lifestyle she was dictated to accept as infallible facts by her church elders now become myths.

As a lost soul in her own mind, no one to turn to, plus the cold and heartless out casting of her and how she deals with it are sad and often hard to read. However, as readers we are always rooting for her to pull through her own personal Armageddon.

Scorah's description in the last part of the book about leaving China to make a move to New York in the middle of winter with nothing more than two bags to her name (and having to abandon her comforter because it would cost

too much to take) are a metaphor to me on how hard it is to begin a new life and abandon literally that which in the past was once a comfort. Starting out in a major city with no family, friends, or anyone she can turn to for backup help are a stark reminder of what it is to leave a world one once knew well and step into the unknown and what it will bring.

How she is able to come to grips with this along with a personal tragedy involving the death of her young son and self-imposed guilt that follows leads her to embrace the yin and yang philosophy she came into contact with in China.

Overall, I liked this book. There were places I thought were filled with so much introspection that it was painful to read. But it tells the transformation of one who is going through much more than many of us could ever conceive, and it is worth reading.

Clipboard Auction

To start off 2020 with a bang -- and to raise some funds for WVUU -- we will have a Clipboard Auction in January. We want to feature community interactive events as well as items of interest.

If you have a special interest, sport, or craft which you would like to instruct others in, or if you would like to prepare a special meal to benefit the congregation, please contact Emilie Sulkes (emes3@juno.com).