

WES Express

Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Ethical Society

November 2014

Upcoming Platforms – Join us at 11am

Sunday, November 2th "Be the Beholder", Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. As we begin our monthly theme of Beauty, Amanda will explore what we think is beautiful--and how it's connected to our personality, our class, our culture. How do we engage with the richness of beauty around us, while still being true to our own beholding eye? And what might that mean for our congregation? Music from the WES Chorus led by Bailey Whiteman.

Sunday, November 9th "Beauty Finds Us", Saundra Dobbs Bishop, Barry Galef, and other voices. Members of WES reflect on the many different places they find beauty, and beauty finds them—from nature to art to people. Music from the DC Labor Chorus.

Sunday, November 16th "Beautiful, Beautiful Me", Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. How do we interact with beauty in our own lives? How do we claim what is beautiful about us – and how is that claiming one of the greatest counter-cultural statements we can make? Music from pianist Perry Beider.

Sunday, November 23th – Stone Soup Celebration. Please join us for our annual, multigenerational celebration of the Stone Soup story and the spirit of sharing and community. And then join us afterward as we share our soup, bread, and pie lunch together!

Sunday, November 30th "Give Thanks--Be Beauty", LEA. Join singer-songwriter LEA for this multigenerational platform service full of music and gratitude.

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The Washington Ethical Society is a humanistic congregation that affirms the worth of every person.

We strive through our relationships to elicit the best in the human spirit.

With faith in human goodness, we appreciate each person's unique capacities. We joyfully celebrate together and support each other through life. We nurture a sense of reverence and responsibility for each other and the earth.

We invite you to join our community of children and adults as we work for a world where love and justice cross all borders.

ethicalsociety.org

November Theme: Beauty

Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader

Ah, beauty. Perfect theme for a community like ours, and a piece of cake after a whole month of Death, right?

That's what I thought. Turns out this theme was tricky to plan for--and even harder to find the right story to share with our children. Melissa, Bailey, and I all talked through different stories, different ways to approach the idea of Beauty. One of the hard parts was that many children's stories about Beauty focus on the idea that we can be beautiful inside even if we're not beautiful outside--but we wanted to challenge the whole construct of what "beautiful" is, inside and outside. We looked at plenty of books with the plain-but-brave princess or the funny-looking-but-lovable elephant. They weren't right. What we wanted was a way to open the idea of Beauty much wider, to have it encompass more than we first imagined.

And then there's the whole problem of what Beauty is in the first place. A couple of queries on Facebook brought back a lot of answers, from people who struggled with the notion of Beauty as being all societally-approved, to those who equated Beauty with meaning or with connection or goodness. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty--That is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know" (John Keats). Turns out WES members know a lot more than that, or at least wonder about it.

We ended up with the very first story we considered--recommended by Becky Klabunde-Tomer, a member of the Children's Education Council. "Frederick" explores the idea that Beauty is central to our very survival. And most importantly for us, it allowed us to imagine that Beauty in broad ways, varied and yet deeply personal.

Beauty turned out to be a rich theme for us to explore in our planning. I hope you find it a rich theme to engage with as well--whether you attend a platform in November, experience the Stone Soup celebration this year, or participate in the new month-long small group, Exploring Circle: Beauty. Let us know, on the WES Facebook page or by email or real-time conversation, how you experienced it! And may you find Beauty--whatever that means--everywhere.



Amanda Poppei,
Senior Leader

*Ways to engage with the
November theme:*

All platforms this month
including
Stone Soup Sunday

When we will hear a
"beautiful" story:
Frederick
by Leo Lionni

*Exploring Circle:
Beauty*
sign up with Amanda for
this small group
discussion

Share the plate recipient
Capital Area Food Bank

From Your Board of Trustees

by Ellen Post, Board Member

The 2014-15 Board of Trustees started its first year on the heels of a difficult period at WES. This is my third year on the Board, and I had an “up close” view as the 2012-13 and 2013-14 Boards worked hard to steer the community through some rocky waters towards what we hope will be calmer and more sustainable seas. Through it all, I was impressed with how well Board members worked together. We didn’t always agree completely on everything (although there was a surprising degree of unanimity), but we were able to come to agreements using the consent process (described in the Board column of the September Newsletter). And we tried to live out our ethical culture values – to be in right relationship with each other. Although we didn’t always succeed, we mostly did.

The current Board is a mix of old and new Board members, as is often the case. This presents some challenges. It can take a while for new members to “get up to speed” on how things are done; and sometimes “how things are done” – or how things have been done – isn’t necessarily considered the best way to do things by new Board members, or even by members who had been on the previous Board.

And so, within the framework of our constitution, and keeping in mind our charge, the 2014-15 Board decided to take some time, in special meetings, to develop Board Agreements – thoughtfully considered statements describing how we want to be with each other on this Board. This was our new president Sera Morgan’s idea, and I think it’s a good one.

In developing our Board Agreements, we are using the consent process that the Board uses for proposals. We are addressing issues of smooth governing practices, like arriving to Board meetings on time. We are also addressing issues of how we are with each other – being in right relationship with each other, keeping in mind our ethical culture values as we work together as the WES governing body. Like any group of people, we incorporate differences – we are different ages, we come from different places, and we have different personalities. This can present challenges. I love the fact that we are making explicit our desire to be in right relationship with each other, to treat each other with care and kindness even when we don’t always see eye to eye.

Our Board Agreements are aspirational, but I believe they matter. It’s good to state clearly how we want to be with each other. Perhaps we will revisit our Agreements and read them aloud from time to time, to remind ourselves. More importantly perhaps, the Board, with its written Agreements, thoughtfully considered and crafted, will serve as a model for WES as a whole. After all, being thoughtful and caring about how we are with each other is what ethical culture is all about.

Felix and Friends

The Rhodora

On being asked, whence is the flower.

*In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.
The purple petals fallen in the pool
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array.
Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that, if eyes were made for seeing,
Then beauty is its own excuse for Being;
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask; I never knew;
But in my simple ignorance suppose
The self-same power that brought me there, brought you.*

by Emerson, Ralph Waldo from "Early Poems of Ralph Waldo Emerson".
Thomas Y. Crowell & Company: 1899.



Rhodora, Rhododendron canadense.
Photo by Janet Novak.
www.fs.fed.us.

Historical note: Emerson was a founding member of the *Free Religious Association* in 1867. Felix Adler became the second president of that association and remained a member after founding *Ethical Culture* in 1876.

A View from the AEU

Since its founding in 1889, the American Ethical Union (AEU), the national organization of Ethical Societies in the United States, has helped form new Ethical Societies, supported existing Societies, and worked to provide a national presence for Ethical Culture. A significant part of the AEU's activities are geared toward national conferences, such as the annual Assembly, and toward training for ethical leadership

As a new member of the American Ethical Union Board, I'm excited to report all the wonderful activities we're putting together for our members. This year there will be three conferences in the fall: **1) Workshop on effective annual pledge campaigns, October 24-25** at the Ethical Culture Society of Westchester featuring a professional fundraiser. **2) The Annual Ethical Education Conference, November 7-9**, at beautiful Stony Point in Rockland County, New York featuring Dale McGowan, our new National Ethical Education Director. Dale is a knowledgeable, personable and experienced individual who has published on this subject. **3) YES (Youth of Ethical Societies) Conference November 14-16** in New York. Teens scattered throughout our various locations will get an opportunity to meet and share their views and concerns, both personal and social.

In addition, there is *Lay Leadership Summer School*, a one-week course at a beautiful location in North Carolina. Created almost 20 years ago by Ethical Culture Leaders Joy McConnell and Jone Johnson, this program is underwritten by the American Ethical Union as a way to train individuals in communication, organizational development and ethics. Over 200 members have taken part in it.

Lastly, and most importantly, the 100th Assembly of the American Ethical Union will be held in Stamford, Connecticut in June 2015. On this historic occasion, the AEU continues its vital mission dedicated to the needs of you, its members.

This article is a summary of a longer article written by Linda Napoli, AEU Board Member for the AEU member societies.

WES Immigration Action Of the Month

After attending the Greater Washington Immigration Film Festival, many were moved by the films to taking personal action. Choose one or both actions to start off this new initiative.

- 1. Virgil for the Children** – any Monday, 6:30 – 7:30 pm, Meet at Lafayette Park in front of St. John's Church – Ana Sol Gutierrez, Maryland State Delegate and immigration activist leads group to White House. More <https://www.facebook.com/events/550671965039597/?ref=22>
- 2. Legal Help for the Border Kids** - Many unaccompanied minors are eligible for asylum. Help cover the costs of the volunteer lawyers with a donation to American Immigration Lawyers Association. Go to AILA.org/helpthevolunteers.com .

Coming up at WES

Saturday, November 1

Annual WES Auction, Join your friends and community at this always fun, always delicious, always exciting event--and support WES' mission while you're at it!

Thursday, November 6

The Young and the Thirsty, 7pm, Olive Lounge in Takoma Park, MD. All young(ish) adults are welcome to join this casual get-together to talk about topics philosophical and otherwise!

Friday, November 7

First Friday Discussion Lunch, 12:30-2:00 pm, Social Hall. Bring your foliage photos, your leaf collection, your funny story about Thanksgiving when you were a child, your favorite fall poem, or just the joy you've had on some bright, cool day, for we'll all be Giving Thanks for Fall. Also bring a sandwich and any lunch extra you might like to share. And please arrive early enough so that we can begin lunch and go-round at 12:30. Contact: Marty Brockway (ewbrocs@rcn.com).

Friday, November 7 – Saturday November 8, Regional Racial Justice Conference - Inclusivity Through Joy and Creativity, UU Congregation of Sterling, VA.

Sunday, November 9

Earth Ethics Meeting, 1 pm, Members will discuss the upcoming Home Energy Efficiency Workshop on November 16th, our energy efficiency work for the WES building, and our upcoming December strategic planning meeting. Bring your own lunch. All are welcome, call or e-mail Carol for further information (301-649-4990 or kenrawie@erolths.com).

Fall Membership Meeting, 5:30pm, Main Hall. Join moderator Julie Drizin for a fun-filled and ethics-filled annual fall membership meeting. We'll look at partnerships in the community, hear reports from the Senior Leader and Board President, and share a potluck meal together first. Please bring a dish to share and your own plates and cups, and please contact Melissa at melissas@ethicalsociety.org by November 5 if you'd like babysitting.

Tuesday, November 11

Flourish! Class: Religious Humanism, 7-9pm Ethical Culture didn't emerge from nothing—and it doesn't exist in a void now! Learn about the history of religious humanism around the world and especially in America, with an emphasis on how Ethical Culture is similar to and different from other humanistic movements. This class will include a romp through history, with pit-stops at the Enlightenment, Buddhist thought, and the Industrial Revolution. Curious how that all fits together? Join us! Instructor: Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. Childcare may be available; please request it at least one week in advance. Please register by e-mailing WES@EthicalSociety.org

Thursday, November 13

Board Meeting, 7pm, WES Library, All WES members are welcome to attend monthly Board meetings. Every other month, they are held on Sundays after platform to encourage guests! Agenda and materials may be found before the meeting in the

Members' Access section of the website, www.ethicalsociety.org.

Sunday, November 16

Schmoozapaloosa, after platform, Main Hall. Gather around tables in the Main Hall and keep on talking. Nosh on a great lunch, with vegetarian options always available. Requested donation \$5.

Biology Discussion Group, 12:45-2pm, Library. The meeting, facilitated by Barbara Searle, will discuss *The Mystery of Metamorphosis* by Frank Ryan. There will be no meeting in December. For more information contact Barbara: bsearle70@msn.com.

WES Book Group, 2pm, home of Shelby French Home. Please join us as we discuss *The Girls of Atomic City*, by Denis Keirnan. This meeting will be hosted at the home of Shelby French in Silver Spring. For meeting location or more information about the book group, please contact Tony Nam, tonyknam@yahoo.com.

Home Energy Efficiency Workshop 1 to 3PM, Social Hall. The Washington Ethical Society Earth Ethics Team presents a Free workshop. See the description on back page.

Sunday, November 23

Flourish! Class: Ethical Parenting Practices for Your Daily Life, 9-10:30am. Are you interested in practicing ethical parenting? How does one do that given the challenges of balancing work and family, homework, chores, and/or bedtimes (both for parents and kids)? One of the most important roles many of us serve in life is being a parent. And yet we often "play that part" without the benefit of training, education, or practical experience. This class is an opportunity for parents and caretakers to discuss how to elicit the best from ourselves and our kids and to share the challenges of raising responsible, resilient, and loving children in today's world. Facilitated by WES member and parent educator Linda Keely. Child care will be provided for this class.

Sunday, December 7

A Grand Bazaar 2014, after platform, Social Hall. Come one. Come all. The Washington Ethical Society invites members, friends, and neighbors to A Grand Bazaar 2014. Open for one day and one day only, Sunday, December 7, 2014, 12:45 p.m. until 3:00 p.m. or until all merchandise is sold. Hand-crafted items, large and (mostly) small, and any remaining Auction items will be available for purchase.

Thursday, December 11

The Young and the Thirsty, 7pm, Olive Lounge in Takoma Park, MD. All young(ish) adults are welcome to join this casual get-together to talk about topics philosophical and otherwise!

Board Meeting, 7pm, Library. All WES members are welcome to attend monthly Board meetings. Every other month, they are held on Sundays after platform to encourage guests! Agenda and materials may be found before the meeting in the Members' Access section of the website, www.ethicalsociety.org.

Home Energy Efficiency Workshop

Our environment

is important to our wellbeing,
our community, and the world.



The Washington Ethical Society Earth Ethics Team
presents a **Free** home energy workshop.

When: **Sunday, November 16th** at 1 to 3 PM

Where: **Social Hall, 7750 16th Street NW**, Washington DC 20012

There will be representatives from

Learn

- DC Sustainable Energy Utility, *how* saving energy helps the environment.
- Interfaith Power and Light, *where* your home is likely wasting energy
- as well as our own team members. *about* incentives for home energy efficiency

There will be time for discussion,
questions and answers.

- about* sustainable wind power
for both District and Maryland residents