

WES Monthly

Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Ethical Society

September 2016

Upcoming Platforms

Join us at 9:30 or 11:30 am

Sunday, September 4 10:30 only. "A Promise Deferred Is a Dream Unmet," Eugene Puryear, Author and Activist.

We make promises all the time, to each other, to ourselves, but primarily as individuals. What are the implications when these promises are broken? On this Labor Day we examine the promises of our social contract. Social justice movements have expanded this contract conceptually, but our society often fails to implement its promises. We ask how communities and societies can create and honor the promises we make to each other. Music from Justina Soto.

Sunday, September 11. Return to TWO Platform Services, 9:30 & 11:30 am. "To You I Give, From You I Receive,"

Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. As she begins her ninth year at WES, Amanda considers what it means to be part of a community and more than a passerby. Is it like being in a family? And why would people spend their free time washing coffee cups for someone they don't know? Join us as we continue our monthly theme of *Promises*. Music from the WES Chorus.

Sunday, September 18, 9:30 & 11:30 am. "I Promise to Tell You the Truth: A Question Box Platform,"

Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. Got questions? Amanda has...well, if not answers, at least a thoughtful response. Send your questions on everything from national politics to ethical dilemmas at home to amandap@ethicalsociety.org. This always popular platform is one you won't want to miss.

Sunday, September 25, 9:30 & 11:30. "The Key to Ending Poverty? You." Mark Bergel, Founder and Executive

Director, A Wider Circle. Since the War on Poverty started 52 years ago, the number of Americans living in poverty has risen dramatically. Anti-poverty programs are started but rarely succeed. Promises are made but rarely kept. In 15 years of serving those in need and responding to the crisis that is poverty, A Wider Circle has proven that the key to ending poverty is human connection - each of us making a true commitment to our brothers and sisters living in unacceptable conditions. This platform will shine a light on these conditions and on the work each of us can engage in to create change. Music from the WES Chorus.

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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

Theme: Promises

Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader

What promises have you made in your lifetime? Which have you kept? Which have you broken? Which ones have meant the most to you?

As we begin our exploration of this month's theme, I've been thinking about the many promises we make over the course of our lives: perhaps to children, to partners or friends, to parents. Sometimes we say those promises out loud. I think of my wedding vows, the vows I made to my children at their baby dedications, and my ordination vows. But we also exist within a web of unstated promises, which allow us to co-exist in any community or even nation. Ethicist Margaret Farley puts it this way in *Personal Commitments: Beginning, Keeping, Changing*:

Civilization's history tends to be written in terms of human discoveries and inventions, wars, artistic creations, laws, forms of government, customs, the cultivation of the land... At the heart of this history, however, lies a sometimes hidden narrative of promises, pledges, oaths, compacts, committed beliefs, and projected visions. At the heart of any individual's story, too, lies the tale of her or his commitments.

This seems especially relevant this fall, as we are part of our nation's decision making about our future. How are we keeping or letting down promises to our children and future generations? Who in our society has had promises kept to them, and who has experienced broken promises?

I invite you to consider these questions as we delve into Promises together this month.

NEW NAME. You have in your hand or on your screen the WES Monthly newsletter publication. Until this month, it was called WES Express but there was nothing express about it compared to the other communications you receive from WES.

In the WES Monthly, your Senior Leader, Board Members, and others share their ideas with you. In addition, you learn about events at WES in the upcoming month. Here is the best part: You can write an article for the Monthly about your group's activities. Just send your submissions to the Editor: plbaker@me.com



Ways to engage with
September's theme:
Promises

September Platforms

[Explore the Theme:
Promises](#)

Share the Plate:
*Washington Interfaith
Network*

We know it's kinda cheesy, but will you go to WES Prom with us?



The theme for the 2016 WES Auction is Prom, but this is not your regular old high school prom...it's WES Prom! So make it your own...wear whatever you want...no date needed...just come and have fun and raise money for WES!

But we can't do it without your donations. Can you sponsor an event or outing? It doesn't need to be elaborate - it could be crafty or musical or outdoorsy or hang-out-y or family-friendly...teach a skill, cook a meal, or share a favorite movie or destination...whatever you are into! Share it with your WES community by hosting an event and we will auction off spots at the table (or trail or whatever).

Please click [here](#) to enter your donation information and mark your calendars for Saturday, October 15 at 6 pm.

Contact Sarah Morris (se.morris@verizon.net) to discuss auction donations.

Please say yes!

WES News

Recap of the AEU and UUA Assemblies

by Amanda Poppei, WES Senior Leader

Ah, summertime. In June, when it stretches out before me, I always imagine summer as a lazy time, with lots of long walks and porch sitting. Now, at the end of August, I look back on my summer and see that instead, I spent the summer preparing to leave (on vacation, on study leave, and on two national conferences) and then catching up when I got back! It's good to be heading into the routine of the "regular" year.

And it's good to reflect on all that I learned, especially at the two national conferences. I attended the Unitarian Universalist Association's General Assembly, held in late June in Columbus, OH, and — along with Melissa Sinclair, Director of Lifelong Learning, and seven WES members — the American Ethical Union's Assembly, held in early July in St. Louis, MO. Although the two events are a radically different scale (GA has about 3500 attendees, while the Assembly welcomes about 150 Ethical Culturists), I was struck by some of the common themes that tied together the two assemblies.

First, of course, both denominations are working to figure out how to respond to the changing religious landscape in the United States — fewer and fewer people are attending traditional churches, and instead are forging their own path. Both Unitarian Universalism AND Ethical Culture have the potential to grow because of that change...if we're able to change ourselves, to let go of some of our traditions or cultural trappings. There's definitely an active conversation within the UU movement as to how much to hang on to vestiges of church life, and how much to try something totally new and different — what UU folks call "entrepreneurial ministries." I like to think we at WES are an example of that kind of experiment, even though the experiment comes out of a 70-year history! I'm hopeful we can be a model for other UU congregations seeking to grow and attract young families who want something different. In fact, I was delighted to be part of a panel presenting about Humanist Voices in Unitarian Universalism, speaking to a packed house and previewing a book of the same name which will be published this year, and to which I contributed a chapter.

Second, both denominations are stepping up to support racial justice efforts and the Black Lives Matter movement. The American Ethical Union passed a resolution supporting racial justice, which you can read about [online here](#). The recipients of this year's Elliott Black Award were the Millennial Activists, a group who are at the forefront of Black Lives Matter protests and grassroots organizing in Ferguson, MO. And the special event of the AEU Assembly was a theater piece titled "Black and Blue," which looked at the killing of Mike Brown and the resulting protests from multiple perspectives. Over at the UU General Assembly, a group called Black Lives of UU led an entire track of programming, centered on how UU congregations can support Black Lives Matter. They brought the Rev. Dr. William Barber to speak and raised over \$80,000 for a special collection to support their ongoing work. It was inspiring to see the organizing happening in both denominations, and I'm hoping there will be lots of work together in the future. As you might have seen, local UU and Ethical Culture clergy are already working together to respond to this unprecedented time in our national history — I shared a letter co-signed by many

of those clergy and we'll be participating in a shared bell ringing on Sundays, as well.

Finally, both conferences ended on a high note for me personally, with really wonderful sermons/platforms delivered by clergy. The UU General Assembly featured the Rev. Nancy McDonald Ladd on Sunday morning, speaking about "fake fights" and real fights. You can watch her sermon [online here](#) and read a blog post I wrote responding to it [here](#). At the AEU Assembly, we traveled to the St. Louis Society (and loved checking out their classrooms, beautiful Main Hall, and moat!) and heard an inspiring platform from Leader Kate Lovelady, about how we can hope and work for justice when it seems far away — you can listen to that [online here](#).

I hope you all will consider attending one of the conferences next year: the UU General Assembly will be in the great city of New Orleans at the end of June, and the AEU Assembly will be right nearby in Baltimore at the beginning of June. In fact, WES will be one of the co-hosts of that Assembly, along with the Northern Virginia Ethical Society and the Baltimore Ethical Society, and there will be lots of opportunities for you to be involved. Let me know if you want to be part of the team!

Waymons Honored at AEU Assembly

Our very own Todd and Lynne Waymon were among those who received the Anna Garlin Spencer Award, given to lay members of Ethical Societies who make significant volunteer contributions. Lynne joined WES in 1968 and Todd became a member eight years later. Together they led the adult education program and developed a relationship-building course that was



immensely popular. Perhaps most significant was their founding of our well-respected Coming of Age Program (COA-MATT), as a lasting testament to their beloved son Matthew, who was killed in a car accident caused by a teenage friend's reckless driving. As Amanda Poppei noted in her nomination, the Waymons "embody the spirit of Ethical Culture." The Waymons have moved to a Quaker retirement community in Pennsylvania but they remain beloved members of WES.

WES Global Connections Delegation's Summer Visit to El Rodeo, El Salvador

by Lola Skolnik and Peggy Goetz

Going to El Rodeo involves a bit of time travel. San Salvador, our entry point, is a large city dominated by modern day problems, including air and noise pollution, violence, and urban poverty. But as we leave the city behind, we move through a landscape of incredible green outlined by looming volcanos and mountains receding to the horizon. Towns become smaller, less noisy, and the air cleaner. By the time we reach El Rodeo, we have traveled back to a time when men and women walk to their fields carrying their holstered machetes, shaded from the sun by their peaked hats, as they have done for hundreds of years. That is not to say that the modern world does not reach our sister community, but that in many ways, the days of the residents of El Rodeo resemble those of their antecedents. Lives are dominated by the weather, the agricultural cycles of sowing, growing, and harvesting life-sustaining crops by hand, carrying water, cooking on wood fires, raising families, and participating in community. The past may appear to be present, but the future is our focus.

The arrival of the WES delegation marks a change from the typical routines and begins a concentrated week of activities that support the community in its quest for a better future. With advance planning by the ADESCO (town council) and community involvement, we were able to accomplish an impressive list of activities.

A centerpiece to every delegation is dentist Susan Runner's annual clinic. Word traveled quickly and Susan and her assistants were constantly busy. Susan said that she can clearly see the impact of her yearly dental clinics, particularly in the improved health of the children's teeth.



Thanks to generous donations of reading glasses, sunglasses and cases from WES members, Lola Skolnik and her team were able to match 44 community members with 52 pairs of glasses and cases. Villagers soon put the glasses to use for reading and sewing.

Ross Wells and David Keely collaborated with the men in the community to resurface the uneven floor and stone benches of the newly built kiosk. The kiosk provides a small sheltered, centrally located space that has quickly become a meeting spot for young and old.

The Little Library project spearheaded by Pam Williams and supported with many book donations by WES members has been a great success. Stocked with books in Spanish, the bibliotequita provides reading materials for all ages. At weekly story times, children can also check out books. Maia Pramuk led an exterior upgrade to the library cabinet, which is now decorated with children's multicolored handprints.

Another ongoing project is trail improvement on the erosion-prone community pathways. In collaboration with El Rodeo's Environmental Committee (a group composed mostly of children), Kye Keely, Russell Corbin, Caroline Russell, and Maia

helped remove loose rocks, dig deeper steps, and form rock steps into the steeper parts of the main trails.

At the ADESCO's request, we purchased materials for a peace pole and many hands contributed to painting "peace" in 18 languages. The pole will be installed next to the kiosk as a beacon of hope for the future.

While the water project has yet to break ground, actions such as coordinating the project's funding sources, purchasing the spring and surrounding land, and finalizing the construction plans are all in motion. With the help of ADESCO members, we were able to place signs at the future sites of the solar operated water pump and the water distribution tank, as well as at the existing spring.

Our amazing WES teens Kye and Maia organized and led afternoon games and art activities with the children focused on improving self-esteem. Russell Corbin's excellent Spanish skills were extensively utilized for translation during community meetings, activities, home visits, and conversations.

Lastly, the community requested a field trip to San Salvador to visit sights important to their history: the church where Archbishop Romero was assassinated in 1980, the tomb of Romero, and the Wall of Remembrance (listing the names of 30,000 citizens murdered during the country's civil war 1980-92). A full bus of community members and WES delegates left El Rodeo in the early morning for a memorable and emotional day. Parents and grandparents shared their memories with youngsters. Former combatants found names of lost friends and family. Tears were shed and perhaps some healing occurred. Many delegates felt that accompanying community members on this journey of remembrance and reverence was one of the most meaningful activities of the delegation. Many friendships developed and deepened during this time.



It is these relationships that carry us into the future. The people of El Rodeo know that we are with them, that we will show up to support them, and that their dreams are our dreams. They tell us they feel valued, loved, honored, respected. We are in it together, committed. Walking side by side, shoulder to shoulder, learning together what it means to be fully human.

This year's delegation included: Russell Corbin, Emily Glazer, Peggy Goetz, David Keely, Kye Keely, Maia Pramuk, Susan Runner, Caroline Russell, Lola Skolnik, Karen Storms, Ross Wells, and Pam Williams.

Aging with Intention Discussion Group Tackles Ageism

—October 9, 3-5 pm

Do you ever feel you've encountered ageism—whether in the workplace, in daily life, or in your personal relationships? In our quarterly discussion group, we'll discuss ageism and why it's not only a matter of fairness—ageism can also affect our health and wellbeing. Research shows that negative attitudes and stereotypes about growing old can affect our memories, our stamina, and our mental health. Join us for a stimulating discussion of ageism and help brainstorm strategies (ethical ones, of course) for dealing with it. Thanks to Isabelle Schoenfeld for suggesting this topic. As always, the gathering will be held at John and Julie Campbell's, 2601 Klinge Rd., NW. Please RSVP to Beth Baker, bethbaker@starpower.net, so that we will have enough seating and refreshments.

Nascent Building Team Needs Your Ideas and Energy

Rich Reis is forming a building team to help identify facility needs and projects. For each item, we will estimate costs, benefits (e.g., reduced utility bills), and priorities. Building team members can also help in fixing problems in and around our building within our skills and time available. Our first meeting will be during the second half of September at a mutually agreed time and date.

If you'd like to lend your ideas and skills for WES upkeep and improvement, please contact Rich (301-325-8001, rich.reis1@gmail.com).

Save the Dates!
October 20-23



IMMIGRATION FILM FEST

Coming Up at WES

Friday, September 2

First Fridays, 12:30-2 pm, Social Hall. Join WES members and friends who are retired or have a flexible work schedule for our monthly lunch discussion group. Are you outraged by the demonizing of refugees by certain politicians? Join us to discuss potential WES opportunities to assist with refugee resettlement programs in this area. Sue Smith will provide updates from recent interfaith social action and refugee resettlement programs and discuss options for WES supporting a refugee family. Please bring your own lunch. We'll start promptly at 12:30 pm, to have plenty of time to hear from Sue and to discuss this important topic. Questions? Email Katherine O'Kester, okesterkat@earthlink.net.

Thursday, September 8

Path to Membership Class, 7-9:30 pm, Library. If you've been visiting WES and would like to learn more about membership in our community, this is the class for you! Senior Leader Amanda Poppei will teach a little about WES and Ethical Culture, and talk about what membership means. Please contact Amanda, amandap@ethicalsociety.org, if you are interested. [Class will also be offered Saturday, September 10.]

Saturday, September 10

Path to Membership Class, 9:30 am-12 pm, Library. If you've been visiting WES and would like to learn more about membership in our community, this is the class for you! Senior Leader Amanda Poppei will teach a little about WES and Ethical Culture, and talk about what membership means. Please contact Amanda at amandap@ethicalsociety.org, if you are interested.

"Confronting Our Whiteness: #WhiteFolkWork in the Movement for Black Lives," 2 pm, at WES. Led by Megan Kenny, anti-racist humanist activist based in Baltimore. The Washington Area Secular Humanist chapter will join the American Humanist Association and WES for this co-sponsored event. For details, see below.

Sunday, September 11.

WESstalks, 11 am, Social Hall. WESstalks, offered once a month between our two platforms for half an hour, will feature a speaker on a contemporary topic, with the goals of increasing our knowledge and proving a way to connect both to the topic and to others. Stay tuned!

Farewell to Lindsay Lucke, 12:45 pm. Immediately following the second platform, join us for cupcakes and a chance to thank Lindsay for all she has brought to WES—for almost 30 years—before she heads off to Boston for her next adventure!

WES-SURJ Study Group Session, 1-3 pm, Double Classroom. This is a reminder for members of the Stand Up for Racial Justice group.

Biology Reading Group, 1 pm, Library. We will be reading *Life Ascending: The Ten Great Inventions of Evolution*, by Nick Lane. It is not necessary to do the reading to attend the meeting, though it helps. For further information get in touch with Barbara Searle, bsearle70@msn.com.

Monday, September 12

Board of Trustees Meeting, 7 pm, Library. All are welcome to attend meetings of the Board of Trustees. Agenda and materials are available in the Members' Access section of our website.

Friday, September 16- Sunday September 18

Jubilee Anti-Racism Workshop, All Souls Church, Unitarian, 1500 Harvard St NW, Washington, DC 20009. This 2½-day workshop is open to members of any congregation in the Joseph Priestley District. Do you wish to nurture your congregation's multicultural future in the face of opposing cultural currents? Do you wish to deepen your understanding of how race and ethnicity play out in our institutions and our daily lives? Jubilee Anti-Racism Training helps participants understand what is involved in nurturing a multicultural community and working against racism in all of its forms. The workshop requires a weekend commitment; and it is worth every minute of that commitment. Register online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/jubilee-anti-racism-training-all-souls-september-2016-tickets-26469768791>

Sunday, September 18

Tai Chi, 11 am, front lawn. We invite you to join us on the front lawn (or in the Social Hall if weather doesn't cooperate) for a 20-minute session of Tai Chi. No experience necessary, and perfect for all ages and abilities.

Part 1 of 3: Introduction to Social Media, 11 am, Library. Ever wondered how in the world that Facebook thing works? Curious about why we are tweeting like little birds? Confused by a smart phone with no buttons? Then this is the class for you! Join us for an introduction to technology class. This will be a three-part series that takes you from turning on a computer to eventually being able to participate with our Sunday School teaching teams on Trello. Part I taught by Robyn Kravitz (robynk@ethcalsociety.org).

Schmoozapalooza Lunch, 12:45 pm, Social Hall. WES continues our lunch on every third Sunday for all who want to hang out after platform and gab with friends. Gather around tables in the Social Hall and keep on talking. Nosh on a great brunch, with vegetarian options always available. Requested donation \$5. Schmoozing with your friends and licking your fingers—what better way to parse the platform and catch up! (If you plan to attend the 9:30 platform, why not help out the Shmooze team and then join in the good food? Contact Julie Grimes at jwellergrimes@gmail.com to get involved.)

Book Group, 5:30-7 pm, Rachel Hartig's Home. Let's craft a book group we can't resist! Come to Rachel Hartig's home to give your input. Our thoughts are to

have all the books we choose (still one a month) focus on ethics and for that theme to be the central one in all of our discussions. Our preliminary title for this year is "Ethical Issues in Literature." We can read novels, biographies, essays, short stories, and poetry. The more variety the better! Are the characters moral, or otherwise? Do they grow in kindness or lose their humanity? In a biography, who has influenced the subject in his career? Was it a happy influence? Come with a book to suggest or ideas to discuss. Sit and reflect while munching on refreshments provided by the hostess, and join your WES friends in discussion. Planning meeting at 4707 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC (#308) Tel: 202-362-7517. Please RSVP to Rachel by September 12. (Adults only, please.)

Sunday, September 25

Ethical Living Lab, 11 am, Social Hall. Join the Community Relations Committee for a chance to connect with others and practice what it means to live ethically.

Part 2 of 3: Introduction to Social Media, 11 am, Library. Taking a deeper look into social media, how WES is using social media, and how you can help WES! Even if you were not able to attend Part I, you are welcome to attend Part II & III. Part II taught by Robyn Kravitz (robynk@ethicalsociety.org).

Know Your Neighbors Potluck Dinner, 5 pm, Main Hall. Join WES's many faith community renters in a get-together...simply so we can get to know each other! This event is presented as part of the White House's Know Your Neighbor Campaign. Contact Amanda Poppei, amandap@ethicalsociety.org, if you'd like to be involved.

Thursday, September 29

Young @ WES, 7 pm, Mamma Lucia. Young @ WES will gather for happy hour at Mamma Lucia, 1302 East-West Hwy, Silver Spring, MD 20910. If you have any questions, email Laura DiSciullo (ldisciullo@gmail.com).

Sunday, October 2

Teen Waffle Bar, 10:45 am, Lobby. On the first Sunday of every month, between platforms, the Teens cook and serve waffles with an assortment of toppings. Bring your appetite! Funds raised support Teen Group service trips. Freewill donation.

Part 3 of 3: Introduction to Social Media, 11 am, Library. This will be the third class in the social media series aimed at helping you become familiar with Trello, the website that our Sunday School teaching teams use to plan and prepare for class. Attendance at Part I & II is not required to attend. Part III taught by Melissa Sinclair (melissas@ethicalsociety.org).

WES-SURJ Study Group Session, 1-3 pm, Double Classroom. Reminder of monthly meeting of Stand Up for Racial Justice group.

Health Day! CPR Training and Mental Health First Aid, 1 pm, Main Hall and Social Hall. Please join us to learn a short and easy version of CPR that saves lives--and almost anyone can do successfully. In addition, mental health professional Bryan Pashigian will share an overview of mental health and how to support those in crisis. Presented by the Pastoral Care Associates.

Confronting Our Whiteness:
#WhiteFolkWork in the Movement for Black Lives



Join us at the Washington Ethical Society on **Saturday September 10th at 2pm** for a talk followed by a Q&A with Megan Kenny.

The talk will focus primarily on Megan's personal experience growing up in a white, liberal, suburban California household and, decades later, becoming a visible Black Lives Matter activist in Baltimore - how this journey unveiled some painful truths about herself, the white community, and how whiteness has operated and continues to operate in 2016 America.

Bridging the Divide Between
Humanism and Feminism



Join us at the Washington Ethical Society on **Sunday November 20th at 1pm** for a talk followed by a Q&A with Sandra Kim.

While humanism and feminism share many overlapping values, each have their own distinct histories and movements and both have been smeared by dominant society. This has left many humanists with either a lack of interest or understanding of how feminism, particularly intersectional feminism, can strengthen and deepen their social justice analysis. Sandra Kim will highlight some of the common factors in this division and how to bridge the two so humanists are better equipped to work for a more just world.