

WES Monthly

Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Ethical Society

December 2016

Upcoming Platforms

Sunday, December 4, 9:30am & 11:30am. "Showing Up Is Half the Battle," Amanda Poppei, Senior

Leader. Sometimes the world feels pretty overwhelming. Friends go through hard times. The 24/7 media tell us about every tragedy. Our own learning gives us a growing awareness of injustice. What can we do about it all? As we begin our exploration of the theme of Presence, Amanda will explore the idea that what we need to do most is simple: show up. Music from the WES Chorus.

Sunday, December 11, 9:30am & 11:30am. "Embracing Sankofa: Being Here and There — A Humanist's Pilgrimage to Ghana," Christian Hayden, member of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia and Future of Ethical Societies. Join Christian as he explores his year of service in Northern Ghana with the Humanist Service Corps, using reflections and poetry. Join him as he wrestles with spirituality, identity, and his struggle to find presence and peace with an expanded worldview, a broader definition of home. Music from Ghanaian drummer Kweku Owusu.

Sunday, December 18, 9:30am & 11:30am, Main Hall. "Don't Unwrap, Unplug" Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. Join Amanda as she considers what an unplugged holiday season might look like, and what it means to be truly present to the people and the beauty around us. Music from Josh Blinder.

Sunday, December 25, 10:30 am, Main Hall.

"A Gift to Each Other: Our Presence"

Bailey Whiteman, Music Director.

December 25: for some, it's a challenging day, with over-excited children, pets trying to eat the wrapping paper, an inner sense of sadness. For others, it's joyful, full of traditions and merriment. And for millions around the world, it is just another day. Let's be present for each other, listen to stories, sing, and find connection. Join Bailey and member Tony Nam for this multi-generational platform, as we share stories about our traditions, from the silly to the sublime. Stay for a potluck brunch following the platform.

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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.

[ethicalsonline.org](http://ethicalsociety.org)

Theme: Presence

Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader

"Mama, put down your phone!" Every time I hear my daughter make this request, I cringe a little inside. Before I had a smartphone, I couldn't figure out what people kept doing as they stared at their little devices. Now I find it hard not to pick it up and just glance at Facebook, relax over a game of Candy Crush (yes, I'm still playing Candy Crush), or check my email.

I'm not anti-technology — for the most part, I find that having a smartphone gives me more flexibility and a greater sense of connection to others. But I also know that I use it to escape the current reality. It's not that I'm drawn away from the family drama against my will; no, it's that the phone is an excuse to be less present, to be as busy as I want to be, as busy as is convenient, especially when the whining hits a particularly fevered pitch.

Except, of course, that I miss the good stuff, too. This month, as we explore the theme of Presence, I invite you to notice the ways in which you choose to be less present — sometimes a form of self-care! — and the ways in which you slip into non-presence. How can your presence be an intentional choice? What does it mean to really show up?

I look forward to so much during this season. This year, I invite you to truly be there for all of it, with me.



Share the Plate: Leader's Caring Fund

From Your Board of Trustees: Growth!

By Margaret Conway

Nearly everyone I've spoken with in recent days is still processing the election results and the meaning they will have for our country, for our community, and for individuals. The Sunday following the election was one of our highest-attended platforms ever. Clearly our members and others turn to WES as a source of reflection and replenishment during challenging times. Given the packed halls on November 13, we may be seeing more and more people turn to WES in the coming year.



So it was fortunate that the agenda during the Fall Membership Meeting centered on congregation growth. WES is already growing at a remarkable pace. Consider these eye-popping numbers:

- Our attendance has grown 50% over the past two years.
- Our total membership is 307, reflecting a growth rate of 22% per year since 2014.
- Sunday School has expanded from 35 to 80 children in the same period.

You can find more details about our growth [here](#).

WES has already incorporated many changes to accommodate our recent growth. The most apparent of these changes is moving permanently to two Sunday platforms. Other changes have included expanding the sizes of our volunteer teams, "kid flip," and improved digital communications.

During the membership meeting, there was a robust discussion of ideas, approaches, and opinions on growth, including breakout groups on platforms, stewardship, social justice, celebrations, lifelong learning, social connections, and infrastructure. Participants brainstormed questions, concerns, and ideas about what would be necessary to accommodate growth.

The Board hopes to facilitate many more discussions before any specific plans are developed or decisions are made. Our role is both to monitor growth and to ensure we are well positioned to accommodate it. Last year we conducted "Board Linkages"—a set of structured and intentional conversations—to keep us connected with members. This year we plan to continue Linkages, likely in the form of listening groups about growth. Whether or not you are part of a Linkage, please keep in mind we are always open to one-on-one feedback.

We all want to foster the inviting, thriving community that we know at WES. At the same time, we hope to offer its riches to all who want or need its nourishment. As Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader, said in her membership report, "If we believe, truly, that Ethical Culture improves people's lives and helps to make the world a more just place...then we cannot live our mission without seeking to grow."

WES News

Earth Ethics Team

Earth Ethics December 4 potluck: Why not “450.org”?



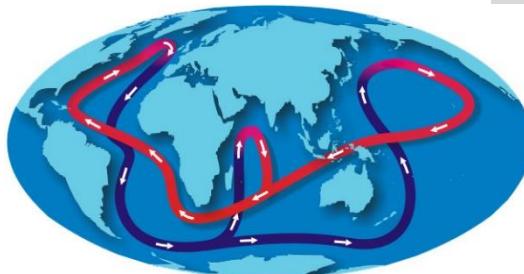
You are invited to a WES Earth Ethics vegetarian potluck on Sunday, December 4, at the Silver Spring home of Carol and Ken Rawie. We eat at 5:30, followed by a presentation, “Why not 450.org?”

In his 2009 book, *Storms of My Grandchildren*, climate scientist James Hansen told how environmentalist Bill McKibben was thinking of calling a new web site “450.org.” That number referred to the target limit for parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that would avoid the worst consequences of climate change. Carol draws from Dr. Hansen’s book to explain why the number came down to 350 ppm.

After the discussion, you are welcome to leave, or stay for the EET business meeting, starting at about 7 pm. Contact Carol Rawie (kenrawie@erols.com) for information or to let her know you are coming.

Last month: What if the “Ocean Conveyor Belt” stops?

At our November meeting, Bob Grumbine, WES friend and oceanographer, explained the “ocean conveyor belt.” This system of currents moves water around the globe; it takes 500 to 1,000 years for a complete circuit. Global warming could slow it down. For example, a pulse of fresh water in the North Atlantic from melting Arctic ice could keep cold, dense, salty water from sinking and being replaced by warmer water, which is essential to keeping the global flow going. One effect would be to cool Europe and the Northeast United States, as happened in the 1970s.



Other November meeting topics included energy saving projects for the WES building, the recent election, upcoming environmental legislation, plans to show a documentary *Before the Flood* (with Leonardo DiCaprio) in early 2017, and a Peoples’ Climate March planned for DC April 29-30, 2017.

(The polar bear photo is from NASA. The ocean currents illustration is from NOAA.)

WES Building Team

Are you interested in improving our home (the WES building), lowering operating costs, and greening WES?

Join the Building Team!

We help identify building needs, plan improvements, and in some cases apply our hands-on skills fixing problems.

To learn more about the Building Team or to join the team, contact Rich Reis rich.reis1@gmail.com 301-325-8001



Aging with Intention – Workshops to Increase in 2017

Thanks to the enthusiastic participation of WES members and friends age 55+, we will continue our *Aging with Intention* discussion series in 2017. In fact, we will increase their frequency from quarterly to bimonthly.

We will also mix up the venue, holding at least two of the events at WES, with the others at members' homes. Dates and times have not been pinned down, but they will continue to be held on Sunday afternoons.

We will likely return to issues such as finding meaning and purpose in later life, fighting ageism, and exploring end-of-life concerns, including introducing a Death Café (see deathcafe.com to learn more). We also hope to add some new topics, such as sexuality and older adults and perhaps a relevant film and discussion. Members also hope to have opportunities for discussion with younger adults on key topics.

If you'd like to participate or help with planning, please contact Beth Baker, bethbaker@starpower.net, or Julie Campbell, juliecampbell@aol.com. Stay tuned, for more!

Refugee Resettlement Team

Susan Smith

A big *Thank You* to all the people who have stepped up to serve on the Refugee Resettlement Team and who have offered furnishings for the family's apartment. Thanks to you, we have found most of the essential pieces for a comfortable home. You make me so proud of our community.

We are organizing a support network for our family. All volunteers who would like to mentor, teach, coach, accompany family members to appointments, or advocate on their behalf will be provided a Volunteer Training by our partner organization, Lutheran Social Services, who will share the benefit of years of experience resettling refugee families, and answer any questions we may have about our roles. LSS also has a social worker who will counsel us and facilitate our success. Many passionate volunteers have expressed interest, but there are a few important positions still open, so I encourage you to consider if you have the skills and time to help out in the following areas:

- Finance - requires knowledge of basic family finances and banking procedures, tasks: teach banking, budgeting (sample budget provided), and basic finance to the family as required, assist in the preparation of income tax forms and savings account management, collect monetary donations (which go directly through LSS/NCA), account for distributions, and ensure family is financially prepared to reach self-sufficiency. Suggested team: leader, plus 2-4 supporting team members, hours per week: 2-4 hrs.
- Transportation – qualifications: driver's license, current vehicle insurance, availability during day & evening hours at least one day per week, tasks: coordinate with other teams to arrange for initial transportation to and from job interviews, stores, and social events, assure small children use car or booster seat, instruct family in the use of public transportation, assist the family in obtaining state identification cards, if necessary. Suggested team: leader, plus 2-4 team members (team already has 2, but needs a leader), hours per week: 2-4 hrs.

For all teams, the greatest need will be immediately following arrival.

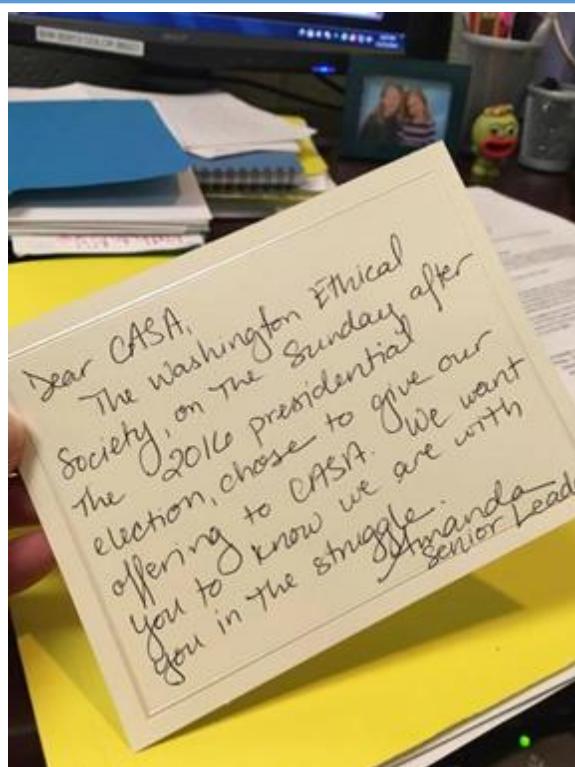
The Volunteer Training is now scheduled for January 12 at 7:00pm at WES. There will be only one training, so please sign up for one of the above mentioned teams or another specific activity as soon as possible to make sure you are included. We will have an RRT table between platforms through December, so come and check in with us for more info. We'd love to talk with you one-on-one about your interests and availability. As Monthly News goes to press, RRT will meet Thursday, Dec. 1. All are welcome. Contact Sue Smith at suzhome2@verizon.net, 240-281-0102.

For the Latest — Check in with WES's Facebook Page

If you'd like to keep up with the latest news from WES and see photos and videos not published anywhere else, check in regularly with our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonEthicalSociety>). This is open to everyone, and you do not need to have a Facebook account. You can also watch each Sunday's platform talk, either in real time or later. Just click on the Videos tab on the left of the Facebook page. Enjoy!

Amanda Poppei on ABC-Channel 7 News

On November 21, Amanda Poppei was one of three panelists invited to discuss how to have difficult family conversations during the holidays. Along with John Crestwell, a UU minister from Annapolis, and Jane Hall, a professor at American University, Amanda discussed how to get through gatherings that may be painful, both politically and ethically. You can watch it here: <http://wjla.com/news/news-talk/surviving-thanksgiving-dinner-tensions> . Way to go, Amanda!



It made me happy to write this note today. We raised \$820 for CASA de Maryland that morning (and another \$820 for Pact, an Adoption Alliance Family Camp, our regular November share the plate recipient--we gave our half to CASA that day). Amanda, Senior Leader.

Coming Up at WES



Winter Festival

Sunday, December 4

1pm -- Deck the Hall

Saturday, December 10

4:30pm -- Winter Festival Performance

6pm -- Cookies and Punch Reception

7pm -- Winter Festival Performance

The WES 2017 Follies –



hereby called WES Tonight! – will be an exciting, entertaining, and high energy variety show developed and performed by our beloved WES community. For years, the Follies were a proud WES tradition that showcased the creative interests and energies of WES adult members. We are proud to bring back the Follies on **Saturday March 11, 2017**. It will be an evening that aims to bring people together to think, laugh, and feel connected with each other, particularly as we enter into a significant political transition across the nation.

This is an adult-only variety show. We invite all of you to participate as performers, supporters, and/or audience members. There will be multiple ways for interested members to participate including but not limited to:

- Showcasing your favorite skills and interests – singing, dancing, acting & improvisation, musical performance, juggling, sword swallowing, stupid pet tricks, strange and unexplainable performance art, etc.
- Participating in the WES Tonight House Band & Performance Troupe
- Skit writing and general comedic creation and support of our WES Tonight frame
- Back stage support including stage management, lighting, sound, and effects
- Supporting the promotion and publicity of the Follies to WES and the larger community
- Serving on our house management team to welcome the audience

Thursday, December 1

Refugee Resettlement Team Meeting, 7:30pm, Library. The Refugee Resettlement Team is organizing volunteer mentors and donations of furnishings to support a family, physically and emotionally, for 6 months while they are adjusting to their new lives here. See article on page 5 for more information.

Friday, December 2

Teen Group Duckpin Bowling, 6:30pm, White Oak Duckpin Lanes. The #WEStoons are going bowling! Join us at White Oak Duckpin Lanes (White Oak Shopping Center, 11207 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring) for a fun night out... and it's completely free! Contact Mike Kravitz for more information, mikek@ethicalsociety.org.

Sunday, December 4

Teen Waffle Bar, 10:45 am, Lobby. Every first Sunday of the month the Teens will offer waffles and an assortment of toppings for WES members and friends. Waffle ingredients and toppings are purchased through waffle bar proceeds. Remaining funds go to the Teen group for Service trips. Free will donation. #WEStoons

Newcomers' Q and A, 10:45am & 12:45pm, Library. New to WES? Join us for this informal gathering to learn a little about who we are and what we do here, and to get your questions answered.

WES-SURJ Study Group Session, 1-3pm, Double Classroom. This is a reminder that this group will be meeting.

The Sunday Book Club Schedule

The Sunday Book Club meets the third Sunday of the Month at WES after Platform during the Schmoozapalooza. These are the books we will discuss:

December — *The Lottery* by Shirley Jackson. Discussion leader: Rachel Hartig.

January — *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalinithi. Discussion leader Kate Lang.

February — *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz. Discussion leader: Rose Imhof.

March — *What We Talk about When We Talk about Anne Frank* by Nathan Englander. Discussion leader: Vicki Fang.

April — *Paul's Case* by Willa Cather. Discussion leader: Vicki Fang

Board of Trustees Meeting, 1pm, Social Hall. All are welcome to attend meetings of the Board of Trustees! Agenda and materials are available in the Members' Access section of our website.

Deck the Halls, 1-4pm, All Around WES. Join your fellow WESians to deck the halls in preparation for Winter Festival! If you're available, please contact Amanda (amandap@ethicalsociety.org). All ages are invited.

Earth Ethics Team Meeting, 5:30pm, Carol Rawie's home. The Earth Ethics Team Meeting begins at 5:30pm at the home of Carol Rawie on Sunday, December 4. Carol's address is 11715 Nairn Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20902. Please see the description on page 4. For further information, contact Terry Smith at tlsmt@msn.com or [814-450-8768](tel:814-450-8768).

Monday, December 5

Mindfulness meeting, 7:30-9pm Library. This group meets monthly on the first Monday of the month for people interested in practicing meditation and living with mindfulness — or for anyone wanting to find out more about these topics. We explore both practices and ideas. Contact Trish Weil at trishweil@juno.com or Ann Baker at bakera@gao.gov.

Tuesday, December 6

WES People of Color (POC) Group Meeting, 7pm, Susan's House. Contact Susan Runner for more information.

Saturday, December 10

Winter Festival, 4:30 & 7pm Performances.

Sunday December 11

WEStalks — Being Present, 11am, Social Hall. Explore this month's theme of presence with a skilled practitioner. What does it mean to be present? Learn to see the seemingly subtle yet very powerful effect of having your attention in the present moment and present surroundings as you navigate the activities of your life. Increasing our ability to be present is especially powerful in relationship—being present when in conversation with another is a gift to them, to ourselves, and to the relationship. Led by Antoinette Kranenburg. Antoinette is a certified Alexander Technique teacher since 1988 who is interested in dance, yoga, tai chi, performing arts, physical challenges, injury prevention and recovery, parenting education, and aging well.

Biology Reading Group, 1pm, Library. For December, January, and February the Biology group will be reading the book "I Contain Multitudes: The Microbes Within Us and a Grander View of Life", by Ed Yong. For further information get in touch with Barbara Searle, bsearle70@msn.com.

Working for Racial Equity, 1-3pm, Adler Study. Have you been learning about anti-racism work and Black Lives Matter, and wondering what the next step is for you and for WES? Join us to vision together! We will continue our

discussion of plans for shorter term and longer term projects, including Restorative Justice, Muslim solidarity, and deepening our existing work. If you aren't on the WRE listserv or have any questions, please email Danna Pope (dannapope@gmail.com).

Friday, December 16

Still Thirsty After All These Years, Scion Restaurant, 1200 East-West

Highway. This group is for WES adults beyond the demographics of the "Young and Thirsty" group, but still thirsty for connections, entertainment, and new experiences. We will meet for Happy Hour on the third Friday of every month. Contact Nancy McGuire (nkmontheroad@yahoo.com) or Shan Evans (sevans4406@yahoo.com for more details.

Sunday, December 18

Tai Chi, 11am, front lawn. We invite you to join us out on the front lawn (or in the Main Hall if weather doesn't cooperate) for a 30-minute session of Tai Chi. No experience necessary and perfect for all ages and abilities.

Schmoozapalooza Lunch, 12:45pm, 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 lunch, with vegetarian options always available. Requested donation \$5. Schmoozing with your friends and licking your fingers — what better way to keep on talking, 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).

Sunday Book Club, after lunch, downstairs classroom. Rachel Hartig will be leading a discussion of "The Lottery," by Shirley Jackson. For more information, contact rachel.hartig@gallaudet.edu.

Solstice Soundscape, 6pm, Main Hall. Join international award winner percussionist Tom Teasley for an experience unlike any other — an immersion in sound and spoken word, drawing us into the quiet of the coming winter solstice. This promises to be a relaxing and connecting experience. Friends and family are welcome to join for this exceptional opportunity!

Informational Meeting for the WES

2017 Follies, 1:30pm. The Follies are coming to WES Saturday, March 11, 2017, bringing you an exciting, entertaining, and high energy variety show developed and performed by our beloved WES community. Want to learn more and join in on the fun? We invite you to join us at around 1:30, at the end of Schmoozapalooza, when we'll explain the Follies concept and how you can be involved. If you have any immediate questions please email Sera Morgan (SMorgan@hrsa.qov) or Shelby French (shelbyfrench2@yahoo.com).



Sunday, December 25

Ethical Living Laboratory, 11am, Social Hall. Join the Community Relations Committee to explore the principles of ethical culture and how we live them in our daily lives. This will offer an opportunity to connect with others in a small group setting.

Potluck Brunch, 11:30 am, Main Hall. After platform, let's enjoy a meal together. We'll set up some tables, and share food and conversation.