

WES Express

Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Ethical Society

February 2016

Upcoming Platforms – Join us at 11am

Sunday, February 7. "Eve, the Buddha, and a Piece of Fruit: Desire in World Religions" Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. As we begin our monthly theme of Desire, Amanda will explore how different religious traditions approach the idea of what we want, what we long for, and what happens when we get it. How do we synthesize what we may have learned in childhood and what we have discovered in adulthood to create an understanding of desire now? Music from the WES Chorus.

Sunday, February 14. "Pay Attention to Love Day: Resistance, Love, and What We All Desire" Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. At our annual celebration of love, Amanda will consider how a community like WES can be both a place of resistance—resisting oppression, providing an alternative to the status quo—and also a place of unconditional love or agape. How do we balance our conflicting desires to resist and love? Or do they conflict at all? Music from singer/songwriter Herb Tyson.

Sunday, February 21. "Sexual Desire and Why We Need to Talk About 'it'." Melissa Sinclair, Director of Lifelong Learning. Knowing how your reproductive and sexual pleasure systems work is a start to learning about sexuality, but what about the rest of the questions we have around sex? What we learned in schools, through the Internet, and magazines is an inadequate sexual education, but it's often all we have to rely on for information because of societal taboos and embarrassment. Melissa Sinclair will present the topic of sexual desire and why we need to talk and learn more about "it" in order to become healthy whole beings. Music from the WES Chorus.

Sunday, February 28. "The Perils of Passion" Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life—right? In America we sometimes search for not just a job but a calling, a vocation. But is that always possible? Is it necessary? Amanda will explore the challenges of expecting our passions to be filled by a profession. Music from the Brendan Taaffe Workshop Choir.

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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.

ethicalsociey.org

Theme: Desire

Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader

You can't always get what you want... Bummer, huh? I know I certainly feel that way, and I promise my kids do. Desire—whether we mean our day to day wishes or our deepest hopes and dreams—is a huge part of human experience. In fact, I would say it's a main motivator in how we act. And yet we often discount desire when we think about ethics. Instead, we focus on moral rightness or on consequences.

In reality, much of our action, ethical and otherwise, stems from what we want to do, what we desire. So it behooves us to think about desire, rather than letting it pass unnoticed.

This month, we'll explore desire as it's understood by multiple religious traditions, desire as it relates to justice work and being a community together, desire for a certain vocation or calling in the world, and (of course!) sexual desire. Which desire do you feel pulling on you most deeply? What desires direct your life that we haven't examined?

This month we are also trying to build a new, drop-in small group program, meeting every Wednesday evening, 7-8:30pm, with different leaders each week. If you'd like to be part of the leadership of this program, or if you'd just like to attend, please let me know! The groups will center on explorations of the monthly theme, using the theme packet (available each month online at <http://www.ethicalsociedad.org/article/14/sundays-celebrations>) as a basis for conversation.



Ways to engage with February's theme:
Desire

February Platforms

Feb. 13 Conversation
Hospitality:
A Way to Love

Feb. 28 Adult OWL Class

Explore the Theme:
Desire

Story for All Ages:
The Quiltmaker's Gift,
by Jeff Brumbeau,
adapted

Share the Plate:
Byte Back

From Your Board of Trustees:

John Mulligan, WES Board of Trustees

Our theme for February is Desire. I want to relate this theme to the creative process, which begins with a *Desired End Result* – something you envision – something you love enough, even before it exists, that you want to bring it into being.

The Board organizes an annual Mid-Year Planning Retreat in February, including lay leaders, staff, and the Board. One of the primary purposes is a review of our long-term Ends – our desired end results – and our mid-term Focus Goals which support moving toward our Ends.

I expect that during our retreat we will incorporate all the steps of the creative process cycle. First, we will consider our Ends statements and, more importantly, the deeper vision behind them. Second, we will examine current reality, as it relates to the Ends, including changes over the last year. Third, we will consider action steps to move from where we are to where we desire to be. Because we have already started this, we will include the critical step of evaluating our chosen actions, which include the focus goals, and making changes as needed.

The creative process is always nested for large goals. That is to say, a particular large-scale action step has as its output a subsidiary end result to be created. So for at least some of the focus goals – which encompass subsidiary end results – we may repeat this process of being simultaneously in touch with the end result we desire and with relevant current reality. Out of that, we may sketch broad actions which would move us toward realizing the focus goal. (Specific implementation is under the purview of our Senior Leader during the course of the year.)

For an organization, one of the main advantages of working with Ends and Focus Goals is alignment of effort so that we work effectively toward creating what we, as a community, have decided most matters to us right now.

By bringing together lay leaders, staff, and Board we work to build a shared understanding of what we want to bring about. Further, with multiple people with multiple perspectives, we can together develop a more complete and accurate shared understanding of relevant current reality, providing a strong base for action.

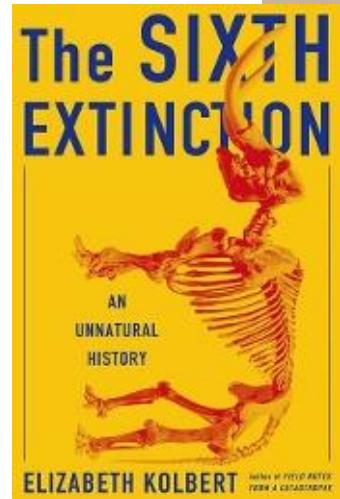
Let me be more concrete. Our annual Winterfest is a beautiful example of the creative process, during which many people join together to bring about a shared vision of a wonderful production. You can particularly see the delight in this process in the faces of the children who participate. I believe that sources of this delight include their sense of accomplishment, and the joy of involvement in creating something together.

May we all have our heart's desires, those things that most matter to us, even the really big ones we must work together on. As our statement of purpose says: *as we work for a world where love and justice cross all borders.*

WES News

Biology Reading Group/Earth Ethics Team Joint Book Reading - The Sixth Extinction

Next month, March 20, the Biology Reading Group will join with the Earth Ethics Team to explore *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* by Elizabeth Kolbert. The Earth has suffered through five mass extinctions, including the one that killed the dinosaurs. This book shows how climate change is now causing a sixth mass extinction. All are welcome. It is not necessary to read the book, though it helps. Bring your Schmoozapalooza plate or brown-bag lunch. For more information, contact Barbara Searle, bsearle70@msn.com. (Note, the WES Book Club will also be reading *The Sixth Extinction* for July 2016. Please see their schedule on page 7.).



Summer Delegation to WES sister community - El Rodeo, El Salvador Wednesday, June 22 - Sunday July 3, 2016

What are you doing this summer? Why not consider joining the WES delegation to El Rodeo? Whether you are a teen or an adult, traveling to this small remote village will expand your mind and open your heart. You will experience the breathtaking beauty of the rural highlands and the generosity of the subsistence farmers who live there. Through in-country training and cultural immersion, you'll learn about the history, the politics, the economics of poverty and the tenacity of the human spirit. This is truly a meaningful experience and opportunity to spend time in our sister community. Just ask anyone who has been before.

Activities in El Rodeo include:

- Daily life activities - work in the milpa (corn field), help prepare meals, assist with the laundry, help in the school, play soccer!
- Assist Dr. Susan Runner at the dental clinic
- Work with the community on a trash pick-up or trail restoration project
- Work with community youth on a mural or art project
- Assist community with work on the solar water project expected to begin in June.



The delegate fee is \$800, plus airfare (typically \$600- \$700). Many past participants have successfully raised funds to offset the cost of the trip. Spanish language skills helpful but not required.

Applications are due on March 1 with a \$100 deposit. For more information and a copy of the application please [click here](#) or contact

Peggy Goetz at peggykgoetz@gmail.com or Ross Wells at RossWells@starpower.net.



Coming Up at WES

Monday, February 1

Mindfulness Meeting, 7:30-9pm, Double Classroom. This group meets monthly (first Mondays) 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 annlouisebaker@gmail.com.

Sunday, February 7

Newcomers' Q and A, 12:30pm, 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.

Doug Dancis Memorial Sing, 1:30pm, Main Hall. Members of WES and the Folklore Society of Greater Washington will join together to remember Doug Dancis and his love of music.

Working for Racial Equity, 12:30-3:00pm, Double Classroom. Have you been learning about anti-racism work and Black Lives Matter, and wonder 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.

Superb Owl Party, 6:30-9:30pm, home of Mibi Leuvelink. Join other football-loathers at the first annual Superb Owl Party! What's a Superb Owl Party, you ask? It's a rollicking get-together that happens at the same time as the Superbowl. Do you have to actually hate sports? No! But this social gathering will be devoid of them. We will have festive beverages and delicious foods (none football-shaped) and of course the entralling company of other WESians. Let's make a new tradition together! \$20 donation goes to WES. RSVP to Mibi by email mibi109@yahoo.com or call 301-593-7379

Thursday, February 11

Board of Trustees Meeting, 7pm, 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.

Saturday, February 13

Hospitality: A Way to Love, 2-5pm, Main Hall. Join Amanda, the Welcome Team and Ushers, and our special guest Judith Bauer to explore the many aspects of hospitality—as a way of being and as a practice on Sunday morning. All are encouraged to join in this conversation about how we at WES continue to spread our welcome as broadly as possible.

Parents' Night Out, 6-10pm. The Teen Group is hosting a Parents' Night Out in the double classroom. There will be crafts, games, and pizza. (If your child has dietary restrictions, feel free to pack a sack lunch for them.) The cost is \$30/child (+\$10/sibling). To reserve your spot, email Robyn Kravitz (RobynK@ethicalsociety.org).

Sunday, February 14

The Biology Reading Group, after Platform, Library. This month the group will continue to explore Life on the Edge, by Johnjoe McFadden and Jim Al-Khalili. All are welcome. It is not necessary to read the book, though it helps. For more information contact Barbara Searle, bsearle70@msn.com.

Young@WES Brunch, after platform, Busboys and Poets, Takoma Park. Join other young(ish) adults (most attendees range between early 20s and late 30s) for a chance to connect, chew on the day's platform, and eat some brunch. Contact Thomas Allen at thomas8allen@gmail.com with questions.

Monday, February 15

Adult Education Meeting, 7 pm, Adler Study. We meet monthly to discuss upcoming Adult Education classes and workshops. Come help us plan what we can offer in the future and when. We are also open to multi-generation classes.

Friday, February 19

Still Thirsty After All These Years, Austin Grill in Downtown Silver Spring. 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. Please contact Nancy McGuire (nkmontheroad@yahoo.com) or Shan Evans (sevans4406@yahoo.com) for more details.

Sunday, February 21

Flourish Our Whole Lives (OWL) Sexuality Education for Adults

Introductory class, 1-3pm, Social Hall. Using values, communication skills and spirituality as starting points, this introduction to the program explores sexuality issues for adults of all ages. Builds understanding of healthy sexual relationships, affirms diversity and helps participants accept and affirm their own sexuality throughout their lives. (Also offered on February 28)

Schmoozapalooza, after platform. 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 Main 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!

WES Book Group, after platform during Schmoozapalooza. Please join us for conversation and connection! We will discuss the book *Girl Waits with Gun* by Amy Stewart.

Sunday February 28

Flourish Our Whole Lives (OWL) Sexuality Education for Adults

Introductory class, 1-3pm, Social Hall. See February 21 above for the full description.

Neighborhood Potlucks, 5pm. Neighborhood potlucks give us a chance to get to know those who live nearest to us and in a smaller group than at Platform. Bring a dish to share. Members should be contacted by their Neighborhood Coordinators--but friends and visitors are welcome to join as well! Please contact Lindsay Lucke at ldeflukke@gmail.com to be matched with your neighborhood and with any questions.

The Book Club Schedule

The Book Club meets the third Sunday of the Month at WES after Platform during the Schmoozapalooza.

These are the books we will discuss:

January - *Cold Mountain*, Charles Frazier

February - *Girl Waits with Gun*, Amy Stewart

March - *Go Set a Watchman*, Harper Lee

April - *Hunger Games* (first book), Suzanne Collins

May - *Kimjongilia: A True Story of Romance and Sacrifice in North Korea*, Victor Fox

June - *Romantic Outlaws: The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft And her daughter, Mary Shelley, Charlotte Gordon*

July - *Sixth Extinction*, Elizabeth Kolbert

After a very rewarding year of leading the bi-monthly *Recollective Awareness* meditation group at WES, Sigfried Gold is ending it due to low attendance. He would be happy to work with individuals or to restart the group if there is renewed interest. Contact him at sigfried@sigfried.org.