

WES Express

Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Ethical Society

May 2016

Upcoming Platforms Join us at 9:30am or 11:30am

Sunday, May 1. Spring Festival – A Multigenerational Event. This May Day, we celebrate and explore May Day traditions from dancing in the streets to marching for justice. We will plant our dreams for the spring and summer ahead, as well as enjoy beautiful music from our chorus and a baby naming. The 11:30 platform will be followed by our special brunch and springtime games and crafts. All attending the 9:30 platform are invited to stay and either help set up for our time together or enjoy the beautiful weather and then join in the party.

Sunday, May 8. "Family: The Gift That Keeps On Giving", Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. This Mother's Day, Amanda will explore the complicated, beautiful, sad, joyful nature of families. How are the ties that bind a gift to us, even when they carry painful histories or when we are not even in the relationships anymore? How do we nurture and honor the wonderful relationships we have? On this more-than-Hallmark day, join our exploration of our monthly theme of Gifts. Music from singer/songwriter LEA.

Sunday, May 15. "Founders Day", Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader. Amanda will explore the gifts of Ethical Culture through the lens of founder Felix Adler's most famous song—what vision did Adler cast for the movement he created? What of that vision do we claim now, and what have we changed so it is our new gift to the world? We will honor 20+ year members at this platform, and also welcome new members to our community. We'll also have some special archive photos displayed throughout the building--a special day, please join us! Music from the WES Chorus.

Sunday, May 22. "Gifts: To and From", WES Teen Group. Join our teens as they share the gifts they've received, engage the community in an interactive game (!), and offer the community a gift of their own. Music from the Teen Group. You are invited to bring a book to donate as part of a project they are working on.

For the Summer months, we will only have one platform which will begin at 10:30am. Sunday May 29, will be the first weekend of our Summer schedule.

Sunday, May 29, 10:30am. "Leaning In to Old Age", Beth Baker, Barry Galef, and Barbara Searle. Like all stages of life, old age brings with it challenges and gifts. Three WES members will share their perspectives on the fullness of aging. Music from Ed Fizdale, cello, joined by Perry Beider, piano.

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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: Gifts

Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader

A few years ago, I went to the launch of the DC chapter of *Sunday Assembly*¹—a new community that focuses on living a good life and helping others without requiring belief in God. Sound familiar? There's lots of overlap between *Sunday Assembly* and *Ethical Culture*. Since this first visit I've been privileged to speak at Sunday Assembly DC and to meet organizers from other parts of the country.

Anyway, at this launch event the founder of the London chapter of *Sunday Assembly* spoke—his name is Sanderson Jones, and he's also a stand-up comic! He talked about gratitude, and how thankful he feels all the time, and what it's like to really notice that gratitude and be explicit about it. He's an enthusiastic speaker, and what I remember most was the moment when he jumped up and down shouting "thank you, steps!" as he recounted using a staircase earlier that day.

Thank you, steps! What if that's how we went through our days? Thank you, steps, for the gift of being there when I needed to walk upstairs! Or, thank you, elevator, for providing an alternative way of getting there! Thank you, sun, for shining! Thank you, car, for working and getting me where I need to be!

In a more traditional theological framework, this would be understood as noticing the gifts of grace: the beauty and wonder in the world that is simply available to us, given to us unearned. I actually think that idea works for us in *Ethical Culture* and other progressive traditions, too. We may have different understandings of where that grace comes from—perhaps it's the earth, or perhaps we sometimes offer it to each other (like the elevator, there when we need it, because someone thought to put it there), or perhaps it's simply part of the amazing-ness of being alive in the world.

What gifts do you notice around you? If you expressed gratitude for everything you encountered in your day, what would be on your list? As we explore our theme of Gifts this month, I invite you to give it a try, even just for an hour—on your commute, or while you prepare dinner, or in a quiet moment of contemplation. Thank you, world!

¹ <https://www.sundayassembly.com/>



Ways to engage with
May's theme:
Gifts

May Platforms

Adult Education
Classes:

*Gifts from World
Religions – May 5*

Gifts of Conflict – May 15

[Explore the Theme: Gifts](#)

From Your Board of Trustees:

By Adam Goldberg

As my year as Board President – and my time on the Board – come to a close, I've been looking back and I'm amazed I've been so fortunate to live through such an exciting time at WES. For instance, not only have we seen real membership and attendance growth, but we've also seen a 100 percent increase in the number of platforms we have every week! It's given me a great deal of personal satisfaction and I'm truly happy that I decided to run for the Board.

The move to two platforms is still just an experiment through May, but I'm hopeful, indeed confident, that it'll succeed. As I write this, we've seen average Sunday attendance over our first few weeks stay consistent with recent months. The big difference, at least for me, is it's felt more comfortable at WES on Sundays, and I think there's been an incredible new and different energy permeating the building. It's also made Sunday School much more manageable.

When the (relatively) slower summer months are behind us I'm optimistic that we'll move to two platforms permanently, and the steady growth in attendance will continue. And the experience we've gotten from the experiment will help us improve what we do on Sunday mornings.

It's been a big undertaking, and I'm grateful we have an amazing, dedicated staff who've worked hard to make this work. I know they're pleased with how it's gone, and I think it's improved their Sunday morning experience too, since they're not so harried by an overflowing crowd. Please join me in thanking the entire staff for the effort they've put into preparing for, and carrying out, the first month of this experiment.

I'd also like to thank the volunteers who've stepped up to help. We've had several new volunteers, and that's gone a long way to making Sundays in April great. (Full disclosure, I'm one of those volunteers – I've ushered, as in the past, and now I'm able to volunteer in the Sunday School too, while still attending platform!).

I think the two-platform experiment has been a real success for WES. And for me personally, serving on the Board has been a real success too. It's not just the accomplishments the Board, and WES, have had over the last three years – though there are those. It's the personal growth I feel I've experienced, the relationships I've built and yes, the fun I've had serving an institution I care deeply about.

Why mention that? Because it's now time to find someone to succeed me and others who will be leaving the Board. If you care about WES as much as I do – and I know you do – please consider volunteering for service on the Board. The Lay Leadership Development Committee is looking for nominees. If you're interested, please contact a member of the LLDC, me, or any member of the Board.

Earth Ethics Team

As concerned citizens, we have a special responsibility to speak the truth, especially when manufactured confusion about climate change is endangering the very people we are most called to serve: the vulnerable and the voiceless, and the natural world. Please join with the Earth Ethics Team to view the film "Merchants of Doubt" at 7pm on Sunday, May 15 in the WES Library. Inspired by the acclaimed book by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, this documentary takes audiences on a satirically comedic yet illuminating ride into the heart of conjuring American spin. Filmmaker Robert Kenner lifts the curtain on a secretive group of highly charismatic, silver-tongued pundits-for-hire who present themselves in the media as scientific authorities – yet have the contrary aim of spreading maximum confusion about well-studied public threats ranging from toxic chemicals to pharmaceuticals to climate change.

A discussion will follow the showing. A suggested \$5 donation is requested. Refreshments will be available. For more information and to RSVP contact Rich Reis at rich.reis1@gmail.com or 301-325-8001.

Coming Up at WES

Sunday, May 1

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.

Showing Up for Racial Justice Learning Group, 2pm, Adler Study. WES is forming a learning group in collaboration with *Showing Up for Racial Justice-DC*. Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) is a national network of groups and individuals organizing white people for racial justice. SURJ-DC has developed a six-month curriculum that is being used by learning groups all over the city. The SURJ-DC curriculum of articles, videos, and discussion questions looks at how racism affects both People of Color and White folks and is designed to inspire and encourage us into meaningful conversation, without requiring extensive reading and preparation. The WES-SURJ learning group is open to everyone at every stage of racial awareness and study. We hope you will bring your diverse perspectives, insights and points of view and join us in creating a safe space for discussing racial justice and equity. Please contact Laura Bradshaw or Rachel Alexander to get a copy of the curriculum and ask any questions.

Multi-cultural Family Potluck, 5pm, Bishops' Home. Part of a multi-cultural family? Join the Bishops for a Multi-cultural Family Potluck dinner. Bring a dish and bring yourself and your kids. Contact Sandra if you are interested (saundrabishop@gmail.com).

Monday, May 2

Mindfulness Meeting, 7:30-9pm, Social Hall. 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.

Thursday, May 5

Flourish! Class: The Gifts of World Religion to Humanism, 7pm, Library. Join Senior Leader Amanda Poppei for a class examining the way that many religious traditions have shaped—and continue to shape—modern humanism and Ethical Culture.

Saturday, May 7

The New and Improved "Board Games," 4pm, Brigid Monaghan and Jen Watson's home. There are still spots open in a great auction event offered this year by the Board of Trustees. That's right folks, once again this year the WES Board of Trustees is throwing a picnic-style food fest with interactive "Board" games (outdoors, weather permitting). They won't be games played on a board, and we promise you won't be bored. So come prepared to eat, laugh, play games, and most of all have fun! Geared toward adults, \$30 donation to WES. To sign up, email Board president Adam Goldberg at adam_goldberg@hotmail.com.

Sunday, May 8

Teen Waffle Bar, 10:45, Lobby. Every second 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.

Biology Group, 1pm, Library. The Biology Group will meet to conclude discussion of *The Serengeti Rules: The Quest to Discover How Life Works and Why It Matters*, by Sean B. Carroll. All are welcome. Reading the book is not a requirement. For more information, please contact Barbara Searle, bsearle70@msn.com. In June we will begin reading *How the Leopard Changed Its Spots: The Evolution of Complexity* by Brian Goodwin.

Board of Trustees Meeting, 12:45pm, 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.



The teens have some great surprises in store for the community. They are working very hard prepping for their platform scheduled for May 22.

Thursday, May 12

Working for Racial Equity, 7-9pm, WES Social Hall. 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.

Friday, May 13

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 May 15

Schmoozapalooza, 1 pm. 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, during Schmoozapalooza. Please join us for conversation and connection. The book this month will be *Kimjongilia: A True Story of Romance and Sacrifice in North Korea*, by Victor Fox.

Flourish! Adult Education Class--Transforming Conflicts as a Present to Ourselves (Theme of Gifts), 1:15-3:45pm, Social Hall. Whether it be in a relationship, between nations, or on a committee at WES, conflict is part of life. And although conflict might be a source of discomfort, it can also be a huge opportunity! This workshop will examine how to transform our relationship with conflict by exploring the issues that shape it and how to find creative ways to accommodate all parties involved. Not dealing with conflict often leads to a disintegration of relationships. Learning to openly address conflict can strengthen relationships, shape a more supportive community, and benefit every aspect of our lives.
Facilitator: Danna Pope

"Merchants of Doubt", 7pm, Social Hall. The Earth Ethics Team will show this documentary inspired by the acclaimed book by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway. This documentary takes audiences on a satirically comedic, yet illuminating ride into the heart of conjuring American spin. A discussion will follow the showing. A suggested \$5 donation is requested. Refreshments will be available. For a longer description, see page 4. For more information and to RSVP contact Rich Reis at rich.reis1@gmail.com or 301-325-8001

Monday, May 16

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.

Thursday, May 19

Flourish! Adult Education Class—Healthy Leadership 101 (online and in person), Social Hall. This is a reminder for the participants who registered for this course in March. Facilitator: Danna Pope

Friday, May 20

Still Thirsty After All These Years, TBD. 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, May 22

Aloha Ice Cream Social, 1pm, on the lawn. Share your aloha spirit with singer/songwriter and WES member Doris Justis before she heads off to Hawaii for a grand adventure—and say mahalo for the incredible gifts of music she has shared with WES for so many years.

Earth Ethics Team Meeting and Potluck Dinner, 5:45pm, a member's home. The EET meets to exchange information and develop plans for WES and WES members to waste less and contribute more to improving our environment. Contact Terry Smith (tlsmt@msn.com) for details.

Thursday, June 2

Ethical Culture Leaders Meet-and-Greet, evening time TBA, Main Hall. Meet some of the other clergy Leaders in the Ethical Culture movement (in town for the Reason Rally), including Hugh Taft-Morales, Leader, Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia and Baltimore Ethical Society; Anne Klaeyen, Leader, New York Society for Ethical Culture, and American Ethical Union Executive Director Bart Worden. Hear their vision for the future of the movement and the power of Ethical Culture, and enjoy some snacks!

Flourish! Adult Education Class--Healthy Leadership 101 (online and in person). Social Hall. This is a reminder for the participants who registered for this course in March. Facilitator: Danna Pope

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:

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