

# WES Express

Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Ethical Society

June 2016

## Upcoming Platforms Join us at 10:30am

\*\*\*Please note Summer Platform time\*\*\*

**Sunday, June 5. "Coming of Age-MATT Sunday" Coming of Age Graduates.** Celebrate the teens who participated in WES's unique coming-of-age program this year and hear what they found to be most essential in their journey to adulthood. Coming of Age Coordinator Robyn Kravitz and volunteer Laurel Sheridan will add their reflections on the importance of the program in the context of the adolescent life. Music by Maureen Andary.

**Sunday, June 12. "Decluttering Our Minds" Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader.** Join Amanda for this experiential platform service exploring mindfulness. How do we declutter our minds? What does it mean to operate from the Zen concept of "beginner's mind"? And how does this kind of mental simplicity help us to be ethical people in the world? Music from the WES Chorus.

**Sunday, June 19. "The Not-So-Simple Religion" Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader.** You know exactly how to describe Ethical Culture, right? It's that non-theistic philosophy...well, kind of a religion...and we welcome theists...and it's like a congregation-thing...well, sort of. Join Amanda as she explores the various ideas and labels we use at WES, and offers ways to speak to who we are, simply, at our core. A perfect platform for friends to check out! Music from Orfeia, a women's chorus specializing in traditional music from Bulgaria and Eastern Europe.

**Sunday, June 26. "Paring Away--A Streamlined Path to Meaningful Living" Bart Worden, Executive Director, American Ethical Union.** Step into any supermarket or big box store and you are presented with an overwhelming array of products and services. You would think having so many options would make it so much easier to get what you need, but you may in fact find yourself more confused and stressed by the sheer number and variety of options laid out before you. All this choice-making is very costly on many levels. And one of the costs is to a personal sense of meaningfulness. Join Bart as he explores our theme of Simplicity through the lens of consumption, and imagines an easier, more ethical way forward. Music from Josh Blinder.

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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](http://ethicalsociety.org)**

## Theme: Simplicity

**Amanda Poppei, Senior Leader**

Who would have thought that the theme of Simplicity was the most complicated to program for?

The problem is, so little seems simple to me. Not the state of the world. Not parenting. Not even summertime, heralded as the simpler days of yore, but this year a web of conference travel, summer camps, and family visits.

We are, of course, going to talk about Simplicity this month. We'll approach it from a meditative space on June 12, thinking about what it means to declutter our minds, what techniques we can use, and why we'd want to do it. And on June 26 we'll be joined by Bart Worden, Executive Director of the American Ethical Union, who will share his thoughts on living a simple life and how that enables more life to flourish on earth.

But on the other Sundays, we'll be exploring Coming of Age and our own religious and philosophical tradition and the labels we use: neither of them simple topics! Instead, I've been thinking about them as essential, as core: that which sits at the heart of our complicated natures and complicated lives.

Perhaps that's a way to approach the messiness of life, too. Not to imagine that we reach some state of simplicity (I know I'm not going to achieve a state of simplicity anytime soon), but to keep remembering and reminding ourselves what is core and essential amidst all that busyness. If we can keep those simple pieces at the center of it all, the complication is easier to manage somehow. Wishing you, then, not a simple summer--but one with the essential at the center.



Ways to engage with  
June's theme:  
*Simplicity*

June Platforms

[Explore the Theme:  
Simplicity](#)

Story for All Ages:

*The Girl Who Carried Too  
Much Stuff*

by Marc Boston

Share the Plate:  
*A Wider Circle*

## From Your Board of Trustees:

**By John Mulligan**

The word *Orientation* has been on my mind recently in two different WES contexts. Its etymology goes back to Latin, referring to the sun rising in the East, certainly an ancient observation by all cultures. Orientation expresses a relationship between our inner world and the outer world.

A fundamental purpose of the class I recently taught at WES was to support people in living in the creative orientation, in which they orient to what matters most to themselves. This is a life orientation in which one aligns around one's highest aspirations and values, and being true to oneself. I believe WES strives to be a place where we support each other in this way. I think the Ethical Culture saying of *eliciting the best in others, and thereby in ourselves* is a quick way to remind ourselves of this.

The second context is related to orienting new WES Board members. The meaning here refers to getting one's bearings. One of the Board's current tasks is to prepare an orientation for new Board members. Thanks to the work of past boards, the bylaws set out a process for this, and last year we developed an orientation notebook.

Orientation for new Board members includes an overview of our governing documents, of policy-based governance, and of the consent-based decision making process used by the Board. We also have our Statement of Purpose (as it happens, per our bylaws, up for its five-year review at the June 12 membership meeting), and our Ends and Focus Goals to guide us. Taken together, these provide the basis for aligning WES with its purpose. While we together create this anew each day, each Sunday, each year, we do this within a context, or an orientation, which allows us to coordinate and align our efforts.

I had questions when I first joined WES about why the Ethical Culture movement was called that, or what was meant by it. When I heard an explanation that it was because its overall goal was to bring about an Ethical Culture generally, something clicked...I was more oriented. My difficulty had been this: did Ethical Culture refer just to individuals, to our Society, to those within the movement, or to something more? I think it is all of those, but that it is the largest goal of an overall Ethical Culture that provides the orientation.

I want to conclude by encouraging you to think about what you want your own life orientation to be—about how you want to orient your life's energy. I also encourage you to think about how our joint efforts at the Washington Ethical Society are oriented toward bringing about an Ethical Culture and how together we might do even more.

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## WES News

### WIN Actions--Preserving and Creating Affordable Housing

The Washington Interfaith Network, of which WES is a member, supports replacing the homeless shelter at DC General with temporary (90 day) family housing in each of the District's eight wards. There must then also, however, be affordable housing for temporarily-housed families to move into. The two events planned for June aim to preserve and create such housing.

First, on **Thursday, June 2**, the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development holds an open meeting at 7-9 pm at the Raymond Recreation Center, 3725 10<sup>th</sup> Street, to discuss the former Hebrew Home. The District government now owns this property and is planning the development of the site. WIN seeks to include as much affordable housing in the plan as possible. Please add your voice to this effort.

Second, on **Tuesday, June 7**, at St. Stephen and the Incarnation Episcopal Church, 1525 Newton Street, NW, beginning at 7 pm (seating at 6:45), WIN holds an action with Brianne Nadeau (Ward 1 Councilperson), Brandon Todd (Ward 4 Councilperson), and a representative from Clark Realty (developer of affordable housing at Columbia Heights Village). The goal is to obtain a commitment to preserve and create affordable housing. Help us pack St. Stephen's with supporters. For more information, contact Terry Smith, [tlsmt@msn.com](mailto:tlsmt@msn.com).

### Reading Glasses Collection for El Rodeo

Once again the WES Global Connections committee will be collecting reading glasses to take to our sister community in El Salvador. Please bring reading glasses and/or cases in good condition to WES on Sunday morning and deposit them in the Global Connections basket. Collection ends June 19. Contact Lola Skolnik [L.skolnik@verizon.net](mailto:L.skolnik@verizon.net) if you have questions.



**Day Trip to Jug Bay Wetlands, Sunday, June 5, after platform.** Those who love nature care for it. For love of nature, Earth Ethics is sponsoring a field trip to Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary. Bring binoculars and field guides of any kind (birds, mammals, flowers). Jug Bay, which is located on the Patuxent River, is the only location in the DC region on the American Bird Conservancy's list of the 500 most important bird areas in the U.S. It is one of the largest freshwater tidal wetlands





on the East Coast. It has a variety of habitats, well-maintained trails, and several boardwalks. **Carpool from WES at noon**, arriving at Jug Bay between 1 and 1:15. Meet at the Observation Deck behind the Wetlands Center. **Please use the following address in your GPS: 1361 Wrighton Road, Lothian, MD 20711 (Some GPS databases list a "Jug Bay" at an annex that is NOT where we will meet).** **Parking at the Jug Bay lot is \$6 per car, paid at the Wetlands Center.** There is no food concession at the Center, so you may wish to pack a lunch. Insect repellent, water bottle, and sunscreen recommended. Several paths near the Wetlands Center are accessible by wheel chair or stroller, including the

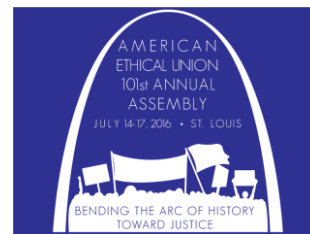
Observation Deck, but most trails are not. For more details about the site, go to [www.jugbay.org](http://www.jugbay.org) or call 410-741-9330. If the weather is questionable, call Terry Smith between 11:30 and noon that day at 814-450-8768 for a decision about cancellation.

### **Annual Assemblies Convene in June and July**

WES holds dual affiliation with the American Ethical Union and the Unitarian Universalist Association. Both hold their annual gatherings in the summer:

#### **American Ethical Union 101st Assembly**, St. Louis City Center Hotel, July 14-17

"Bending the Arc of History Toward Justice." Ethical Humanists believe that the arc of history is shaped by our collective actions. The Ethical Society of St. Louis, Ethical Society Mid Rivers, and American Ethical Union invite you to engage with critical contemporary issues of justice and learn how we can be part of creating a more just future for all humanity. The Assembly is an opportunity for Ethical Society members and activists from across the nation to build relationships, strengthen communication, and experience the Ethical Movement in a larger context.



Register online or download a paper registration from [aeu.org/event/aeu-101st-annual-assembly](http://aeu.org/event/aeu-101st-annual-assembly). **Early bird discounts end June 15.**

#### **Unitarian Universalist General Assembly**, June 22-26, Greater Columbus (Ohio) Convention Center

"Heart Land: Where Faiths Connect." People are crossing borders of religion and spiritual practice to create wholeness in their lives individually and collectively. Leaders and communities of many faiths will gather to learn from one another and

to create a new vision of faith that no longer divides us, but connects us to an interdependent future that works for all. [Register now](#).



## **Save the Date! WES Auction October 15**

Plans are already underway for our annual auction—a highlight of the social season! If you'd like to be part of this fun team, there's a job for you! We are also looking for items to be sold. Watch WES Happenings for more information, or contact Sarah Morris [se.morris@verizon.net](mailto:se.morris@verizon.net).

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## **Coming Up at WES**

### **Thursday, June 2**

**Ethical Culture Leaders Meet-and-Greet, 7-8:30 pm, 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 Klaeysen, 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

**Washington Interfaith Network Action on affordable housing.** See WES News, above.

### **Friday, June 3**

**First Fridays Lunch and Discussion, 12:30-2 pm, Social Hall.** Join WES members and friends who are retired or who have a flexible schedule for our monthly discussion group. Please bring a bag lunch and a snack or dessert to share. If you have questions, need transportation to the meeting, or would like to be added to the email reminder list, please contact Cindy White at [crwhite712@gmail.com](mailto:crwhite712@gmail.com).

## Sunday, June 5

**Newcomers' Q and A, 11:45 am, 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!

### **Social Justice Book Discussion: "Doing Good Better," 1-2:30 pm, Library.**

Please join us in finding out about an exciting new way of looking at how we can best improve the world. We will be reading *Doing Good Better*, by William MacAskill and then discussing it after the platform. There are some copies in the WES library that you can borrow. Please feel free to show up and discuss even if you haven't read the book. "*Doing Good Better* should be required reading for anyone interested in making the world better."—Steven D. Levitt author of *Freakonomics*. Will Grover will facilitate the discussion.

**Working for Racial Equity.** This month we strongly encourage people to attend the "Do Good Better" discussion (above) in lieu of our monthly meeting. If you have any questions, please email Danna Pope [dannapope@gmail.com](mailto:dannapope@gmail.com).

**Day Trip to Jug Bay.** See WES News, above, for details.

## Tuesday, June 7

**Washington Interfaith Network Action** to hold Councilmembers accountable for creating and preserving affordable housing. See WES News, above, for details. RSVP to Terry Smith at [tlsmt@msn.com](mailto:tlsmt@msn.com). We are hoping to bring a large team from WES to this action.

## Thursday, June 9

**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.

## Saturday, June 11

**Volunteering at Luther Place, 6:45-8:30 pm.** WES brings dinner one night a month to Luther Place Night Shelter, a transitional facility providing food, shelter, and supportive case management for up to 30 women. We bring a prepared meal, serve the women, and clean up. Typically two WES families work together. Visit the [Act for Justice link](#) on our website for more information. If you'd like to volunteer, please contact Naomi Goldstein, [ncg1@aol.com](mailto:ncg1@aol.com). **Please note we need volunteers for Saturday, July 9.**

## Sunday, June 12

**Spring Membership Meeting, Potluck lunch at noon, meeting to follow.**

## Friday, June 17

**Still Thirsty After All These Years, 5:30-7 pm, place 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](mailto:nkmontheroad@yahoo.com)) or Shan Evans ([sevans4406@yahoo.com](mailto:sevans4406@yahoo.com)) for more details.

## Sunday, June 19

**Schmoozapalooza, Noon, Main Hall.** This is our monthly time to hang out and gab with friends after platform. Gather around tables and enjoy the lunch our loyal volunteers provide (including vegetarian option). Requested donation of \$5.

**Board Games, 1-4 pm, Main Hall.** As you finish your lunch, settle into a board game—either bring your own or play one provided. Multigenerational event!

**WES Book Group, after platform during Schmoozapalooza.** Join us for a discussion of *Romantic Outlaws—The Extraordinary Lives of Mary Wollstonecraft and Her Daughter Mary Shelley*, by Charlotte Gordon.

## Monday, June 20

**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 multigenerational classes.

### The Book Club Schedule

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

**July** – *Go Set a Watchman*, by Harper Lee.