



American Ethical Union

Inspiring Ethical Communities

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Chicago Ethical Humanist Circle
Annual report to AEU 2019
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The Chicago Ethical Humanist Circle was incorporated in 2016 and was admitted to membership in the American Ethical Union at the assembly in that year. The Circle was formed by members with the express intention to maintain engagement with the AEU and its member societies in cultivating ethical humanist values and activities. The focus of the Circle has been to create a caring community that is committed to enhancing the lives of its members and of the larger community. This is manifest in extensive support for individual members and of the broader Chicago community. A major part of this has been the development of a special relationship with the New Foundation of Hope, which offers afterschool and summer programs for youth on the South side of Chicago, provides continuing support and mentoring for students as they move on to college. We have provided funds and volunteers for their programs and we contributed hams and turkeys for their food distribution during the holidays. We have also participated in the monthly produce/mobile food distribution sponsored by the Interfaith Action of Evanston and food distribution with the Night Ministry. We contributed “gifts” for children at a local residential school to give to their loved ones.

The Circle started with monthly gatherings to build community and over the past year has evolved to once a week meetings that focus on: 1. Ethical Dilemmas discussions at the Levy Senior Center in Evanston (Thursday evening); 2. Humanist Salons at the Levy Senior Center (Saturday morning); 3. Colloquies at the Ken Novak’s house or the Levy Senior Center (Sunday afternoon); 4. Board meetings at a member’s home (Sunday afternoon) often with a pot-luck meal. Monthly or bimonthly platforms are on Sunday afternoon at the Levy Senior Center. Recent programs addressed The Underground Railroad, Fair Housing in Evanston, Democratic Socialism, Tips for Aging Well, and One Child at a Time: Changing Lives on the South Side. After several months we felt that varying the meeting places was not as effective as we wished, due to too much noise at some locations or inadequate space and access. This year we have shifted most of our gatherings to the Levy Senior Center, which provides consistency, excellent access, a quiet meeting space and good support. We continue to have a once a month meeting at a member’s home. The Levy Center is available for a modest rental fee. With the support of the AEU, we have had Leader visits with platforms by Anne Klaeyen and James Croft and are scheduled for a visit from Hugh Taft Morales. We had a very effective workshop with James Croft. At each meeting there is a practice to have a go-round, which helps to reconnect us and bring us up to date on the intervening activities and concerns. Participants in our programs include Quakers, Catholics, Ethical Humanists and others. This gives us an opportunity to learn about our common ground, our differences and to build respect for one another. We recently held a

memorial for one of our charter members, Edie Walton, the mother of our treasurer, Scott Walton at the local Evanston Friends Meeting House. Edie contributed to our many ethical action projects and even requested that people donate to them instead of sending flowers in her honor

We currently have 21 members with a mailing list of 80. We produce a newsletter/calendar every two months. Our website is in development. All of our members receive copies of our business meeting minutes. Our members have generously supported our modest beginnings with organizational skills, labor, financial and material support, home hospitality and a sense of joy in working together. We have enough money in the bank from pledges and donations to cover our modest operating expenses which include our meeting space rental.

Members of the Circle have had, and appreciate, the extensive personal and official interaction with AEU staff, programs and with many members of other Societies having been on the AEU board, AEU committees or at Summer School. We look for ways to work with the AEU and other societies to find effective strategies to expand our impact and help others benefit, as we have, from being part of the ethical humanist movement. We will have three members at the AEU Assembly this year: Scott Walton, Sue Walton and Ken Novak the AEU Treasurer.