



# American Ethical Union

## Inspiring Ethical Communities

2 West 64<sup>th</sup> Street • New York, NY 10023 • [www.aeu.org](http://www.aeu.org)  
Phone 212.873.6500 • Fax 212-624-0203 • [office@aeu.org](mailto:office@aeu.org)

## ANNUAL SOCIETY REPORT

### Ethical Society of St. Louis

Report submitted by Stephanie Sigala, President, Board of Trustees. May 6, 2021.

**Leaders:** Kate Lovelady (until May 31, 2020); James Croft (June 1, 2020 to present)

**Presidents:** 2019-2020 Amanda Verbeck (President); Stephanie Sigala (President-Elect); Krystal White (Past President)  
2020-21 Stephanie Sigala (President); Mary Ellen Stanton (President-Elect); Amanda Verbeck (Past President)

**Office Contact:** Nancy Jelinek (Office Administrator)

#### Overview:

The Ethical Society of St. Louis met in person until March 15, 2020. Since that time, the Ethical Society building at 9001 Clayton Rd., St. Louis, MO 63117 has been closed to the public due to COVID-19 concerns. Staff members have been retained, working both remotely and on an alternating in-person schedule. Congregational functions, including regular Platforms, have taken place via Zoom since April 2020. Each week there has been an average of 10 to 15 member group meetings and programs. The Ethical Society Nursery School closed for Spring and Summer of 2020 but re-opened with special procedures in the Fall of 2020.

#### Activities

##### Ethical Action:

##### I. Climate:

##### Addresses and Programs:

August Address: *The Climate Crisis and You* by Jim Rhodes, environmental engineer.

August Address: *Life Expectancy in this Apocalyptic Age* by Brian Vandenberg, professor.

October “We Think Good”: Program: Decolonizing Climate Justice.

##### Other Initiatives:

Rain Garden dedication to Bill Brighoff in June 2020.

*Falter* by Bill McKibben chosen as the ES One Book of the Year.

*Climate Action Now*: Continuing well-attended monthly Zoom programs began in October 2020 with an emphasis on climate information leading to personal



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action. The October 2020 program was on Solar Power and the November program was called “The Climate Casino”.

## II. Racial Justice:

### Addresses and Programs:

January Platform: *Rites of Passage in a Modern Age.*” By Antigone Reed, activist.

February 9:45 Forum: Earth Charter

August “We Thinks Good” Philosophy Program: Racism.

October “We Thinks Good” Philosophy Program: Decolonizing Climate Justice.

July-August Series: *1619 Project Listening Program.*

June Platform: *Griot Museum of Black History* by Lois D. Conley. Museum Director

### Other Initiatives:

Black Lives Matter Vigils: Regular Monthly vigils in front of the Ethical Society building continued through the year with an average attendance of 10-15 participants.

End Racism Team: Met monthly.

Diversity and Inclusion Committee: Ongoing study of ways that the Society can track and improve membership/participation by a wide spectrum of humans.

## III. Human Dignity:

### Addresses and Programs:

9:45 Forum Program: Disability Awareness

International Relations Lecture Series: 4 programs co-sponsored with AAUW.

February Platform: *A Beacon of Hope* by Anna Crosslin, International Institute

February Platform: *Ethical Issues in Making a Living* by Kate Lovelady, Leader.

June Platform: *Metro Trans Umbrella Group* by Sayer Johnson, Director

### Other Initiatives:

*Ethics in Action Award:* Dr. Gary Morse, Director of *Places for People*, given award for advocacy and treatment of mentally-ill homeless population.

Refugee Assistance: The Society was awarded a \$5000 grant from the Refugee Council USA to support food supply to refugee families in St. Louis. The grant covered 6 months of activity by a team of Ethical Society members continuing from December 2020.

Handicapped Accessible Bathroom Installed on Main Floor of ES Building. Summer, 2020.

Four Bariatric (Larger Size) Chairs installed in Auditorium. Spring, 2020.



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#### IV. Other:

Uganda Humanist Schools: The 2020 scholarship fund for the Uganda Humanist Schools raised more than \$25,000 from member contributions.

Christian Hayden began a Leader Internship in September 2020.

#### Functions

##### **Ethical Education (SEEK = "Sunday Ethical Education for Kids"):**

Director of Ethical Education Kat Weir continued throughout 2020. Due to COVID-19 building closures, SEEK was presented virtually via video segments played during Platform. The program's reach grew significantly as it reached every household attending Platform. Despite this expanded access, K-12 attendance was impossible to track because of this delivery method. Formal enrollment numbers were 31 total Sunday School enrollment; 23 families with children enrolled; 9 Youth Group enrollment.

##### **Communication/Outreach:**

Throughout the year, social media tracking and web activity logging occurred monthly. In addition, Outreach Director/ Ministry Team Leader James Croft provided many options to promote the Ethical Society and humanism. Here is a sample of some important efforts.

*January:* *Ethics and Chill* podcasts begin with over 15 eventually produced. This podcast was nominated to be one of the best new podcasts in St. Louis. Croft appeared on "St. Louis on the Air" (KWMU public radio). Croft produced *Star Wars and the Heroes' Journey* program.

*March:* Croft participated in Carnegie-Mellon University's Darwin Day event. He also was on the *Science and Spirituality*" panel at Washington University Medical School.

*April:* *Humanism at Home* YouTube channel program. American Humanist Association panel.

*June:* *Embrace the Void* podcast for the Secular Student Alliance. Helped write an Interfaith Partnership statement on the death of George Floyd.

*September:* Wrote an editorial for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch about COVID-19 policies in St. Louis. Presented for the Ohio Humanist Association. Participated in Interfaith Partnership Anti-Racism panel. Participated in a Comparative Religions class for B'nai Amoona congregation.

*December:* Produced *The Magic of Humanism* E-book.

##### **Finance:**

As of May 31, 2020, the Society had total assets of \$7,867,086, including \$1,858,342 in the Endowment Fund, \$8554 in cash, and \$1,122,716 as the book value of our real property, though its market value is much greater. As of 31 January 2021, the liquid assets were \$7,466,869 compared to \$6,268,164 as of May 31, 2020. The book value of our real property on January 31, 2021 was \$1,143,335.



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The Gift Annuity Fund increased in value from \$435,925 on May 31, 2020 to \$441,645 on January 31, 2021, due to stock market appreciation, even though \$44,253 was taken out to pay for the new family bathroom. Payments on the 19 active contracts to annuitants will amount to \$16,359 annually. No contracts were added or completed during this year.

Pledge payments for the year 2019-20 amounted to \$322,845, a 4% decrease from the prior year. This covered 62% of our operating expenses. Rental income of \$42,214, which was well under budget due to the building closure, covered 8% of our operating expenses. Income to support our operations included \$125,019 taken from various funds, notably the Endowment Fund and the Stuckenberg Program and Development Fund.

The budget approved at the annual meeting in May 2020 was in balance. Expenses have been under budget due to the building being closed. Pledge income has been steady and we are likely to end our fiscal year in May 2021 with a surplus. [*Finance report condenses a full report from Society Treasurer Steve Harris prepared for the ES 2021 Annual Meeting*]

### **Membership:**

Membership in the Society dropped by 27 members over the course of 2020. In December 2019, the membership roster stood at 365 members. At year's end, total membership was 338.

### **Goals for 2020:**

#### **Board Goals 2019-20. (Applicable January-May 2020)**

- Create and Execute a new contract with James Croft.
- Conduct triennial Leader evaluation of James by the membership.
- Research and obtain 3 estimates for a financial audit/review in preparation for next year.
- Monitor progress on the strategic plan and communicate progress with the membership.
- Develop and adopt a consistent process for monitoring Ministry Team goals on a methyl basis.
- Communicate progress on these goals to the larger membership on a regular basis. Conduct a search for and have a second Leader in place by June 1, 2020.
- Implement the Increase Revenue Plan, approved in 2019.

#### **Board Goals 2020-21 (Applicable June-December 2020)**

- Actively support prudent Society operations.
- Simplify and streamline Board documents and procedures.
- Improve communication and expectation setting from the Board to the Board committees.
- Cooperatively guide the Society's pandemic response.
- Ensure effective Board communication to the membership.

#### **Ministry Team Goals 2019-20 (Applicable January-May 2020)**

- Document programs to develop leadership skills within the Society membership.
- Develop and implement strategies to increase membership retention among individuals who have been members for less than 5 years.



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Make the Ethical Society building and programs fully accessible for adults and children with disabilities.

Develop and Emergency Preparedness Plan and a Child Protection and Abuse Response Plan. Implement both plans that are related to the safety and protection of our Ethical Society community.

Increase SEEK enrollment, attendance, and satisfaction.

Explore additional outreach and marketing responsibilities in the St. Louis metro area, taking into account the public relations funds specified in the budget. Evaluate opportunities in terms of their potential to increase awareness of Ethical Culture and bring potential members to the Society.

Create transitional materials for various parts of the current Ministry Team Leader for a new leader.

## **Ministry Team Goals 2020-21 (Applicable June-December 2020)**

Increase accessibility of our buildings and programs.

Implement mentorship program in an effort to increase new member retention.

Strengthen SEEK program.

Encourage communal activities.

Focus on transitioning Ministry Team leader and any new staff or interns into their new roles effectively.