



American Ethical Union

Inspiring Ethical Communities

*2 West 64th Street • New York, NY 10023 • www.aeu.org
Phone 212.873.6500 • Fax 212-624-0203 • office@aeu.org*

ANNUAL AFFILIATE REPORT 2020-2021: National Leaders Council

AEU Representative(s): Anne Klaeyesen, president, and Je' Hooper, vice president

Other NLC Officers: Kate Lovelady, secretary; Richard Koral, treasurer; and James Croft, dean

Please provide brief updates on the following areas of the AEU participation in or with the Affiliate that occurred or developed during 2020.

Affiliate's Description: The certified Leaders of the American Ethical Union, with Leaders-in-Training participating. Our meetings are intended (1) to support the Ethical movement with ideas and projects, (2) to share ideas to bring back to our societies and make our work there more effective, (3) to develop our skills and consider ideas, (4) to build deeper relations within the NLC, and (5) renew our energy to serve.

Meetings (business and retreats) held (all on Zoom):

- Business meeting on Saturday, November 7, 2020
- Behavioral covenant sessions in December 2020 and January 2021
- Business meeting on Saturday, March 13, 2021
- Spring Retreat gatherings on Saturdays, March 27 and April 10, 2021

Sampling of activities at each meeting:

In addition to electing our current slate of officers at the November 7th meeting, we discussed clarifying the role of dean, as well as the role that our representatives should play on the AEU Board. We addressed the areas of concern raised at our fall retreat and scheduled sessions to work collaboratively on a behavioral covenant. (The other areas were continuing anti-racist work, documents organization, and a future philosophy conference.)

Our meetings throughout December and January, in both plenary and small group sessions, were devoted to a process of carefully examining our values, sharing our different perspectives and experiences, and finding answers to the question of how we behave toward one another as professional leaders serving today's Ethical Movement.

At our business meeting on March 13, we discussed the success of dean James Croft's monthly sessions on our "clergyess," the impact of COVID-19 on our societies and hopes for future "hybrid" programming when we can again meet in person, the consulting leader program, outreach for the Revolutionary Love concert, and the AEU All-Society platforms and summer assembly.

We also confirmed the following liaisons to AEU committees:

Assembly – Randy Best

Board Development – Jone Johnson Lewis

Communications – Louise Jett

Ethical Action – Lisel Burns, Curt Collier, and Hugh Taft-Morales

Ethical Education – Anne Klaeyesen



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Finance – Bart Worden

Fundraising – Richard Koral

Leadership and Training – Bob Berson, Anne Klaeyesen, Kate Lovelady, and Joy McConnell [Randy Best, staff]

Membership – Greg Bonin, James Croft, Je' Hooper, and Jone Johnson Lewis

National Ethical Service – Jone Johnson Lewis

Rapid Response Team – Randy Best, Joe Chuman, James Croft, Jone Johnson Lewis, and Anne Klaeyesen

Alas, because we were still unable to meet in person, our annual Spring Retreat met via Zoom on March 27 and April 10. The first session was dedicated to discussing our work on a behavioral covenant. We agreed that this would continue to be a work-in-progress, taking various forms and expressions, to which we would return at every future meeting, including this, among other, aspirational statements: “Gathering together as a clergy group, we Leaders pledge to attribute inherent worth and dignity to ourselves and others, to act lovingly toward each other, to center our mutual love and relationship, and to hold each other accountable for our impact. We acknowledge that this pledge is made in the context of overlapping systems of dominance and oppression that affect people differently, regardless of intent. We strive to name, challenge, and dismantle these systems so as to make room for greater diversity, plurality, and belonging. This may require us to pause in curiosity and introspection so as to learn from one another and nurture greater humility, curiosity, and creativity. We recognize that we and others will fall short, and we will strive to seek repair and reconciliation. We strive to balance support for others as they grow into their authentic and evolving uniqueness with forms of accountability that allow for increasing our interconnections and mutual trust.”

On April 10, we formed a working group, co-chaired by Joe Chuman and Jone Johnson Lewis, to develop a philosophy conference and apply for budget funds to implement it in the near future. We also discussed the Revolutionary Love conference (held April 15-18) and ongoing anti-racist work. Kudos to James Croft for his presentation at that conference on “Lessons from Ferguson”! Several AEU members participated, providing overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Goals for 2021-22:

- All-Society Platform hosted by NLC on Sunday, August 8, 11 am Eastern time
- On-going anti-racist work, including another series of book discussions
- Conference on Ethical Culture/Humanist philosophy