



American Ethical Union

Inspiring Ethical Communities

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ANNUAL SOCIETY REPORT

Society Report for Washington Ethical Society

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Please provide brief updates on the following areas of your Society that occurred or developed in 2018:

Ethical Action:

- **Climate:** Our Earth Ethics Team changed their name to Earth Ethics Action Team, to better connect with their approach. In addition to continuing their work with Interfaith Power and Light, they worked with our Sunday Ethical Education for Kids program, hosting two stream clean-ups near WES, planting a butterfly garden on the WES grounds, and facilitating an Earth Day platform that featured the voices of our young people.
- **Racial Justice:** Our Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression, Multicultural Team finished and presented to the membership the Assessment (which included a survey of member engagement and opinion, and several small group meetings to follow up) and the Audit, which looked at nearly every aspect of society life from the perspective of systemic racism and other oppressions. The Audit Team is currently in process of revising their report based on comments and additional thoughts from the membership, and it will serve as the basis for a work plan created by the staff. WES also participated in Beloved Conversations, a curriculum for ARAOMC engagement, in collaboration with All Souls Church, Unitarian. WES continues to embody its ARAOMC commitments in the hiring of core staff and other core leadership. To this end, we have hired our first person of color, a Black gender queer/transmasculine woman, to a position of Senior Leadership. We are open to the ways this pushes us further in raising our individual and collective critical consciousness and corresponding action.
- **Economic Justice:** WES shares our collection each month with organizations whose values resonate with our own; this totals to about \$15,000. We are also part of the Washington Interfaith Network, a member organization of the Industrial Areas Foundation, which works on affordable housing and other issues facing the DC area, which has a high rate of income inequality.
- **Development and Peace:** We continue our sister relationship with El Rodeo, a village in El Salvador, which recently completed a solar powered water project which will bring water to homes for the first time.
- **Other:**

Ethical Education (children ages 2-13): Our Sunday Ethical Education for Kids (SEEK) program continues to serve our children, despite some significant challenges and changes in staff leadership. In November 2018, Melissa Sinclair stepped down as Director of Lifelong Learning; this position is currently being filled by L.A. McCrae, who is serving as Interim Director of Lifelong Learning. Our SEEK programming has continued apace, including preschool curriculum, Theme Exploration, a Harry Potter social justice class, and Our Whole Lives comprehensive sexuality education. Our SEEK attendance, which had risen to historic levels in 2016, had been lowering since then, and we continue to work to retain families and welcome new ones. We are experimenting with new programming on Wednesday evenings, Wednesdays at WES, which provides opportunities for further opportunities, more deeply connecting and expanding our outreach.

Youth of Ethical Societies (teens ages 14-18): In fall 2018 we welcomed Ashlee McKinnon as Teen Coordinator. She works with the teens throughout the month, and was one of our chaperones at the Youth of Ethical Societies conference in May, attending with seven of our youth.

Future of Ethical Societies (young adults ages 18-35): Several WES members are part of FES, and will be attending the FES retreat in Baltimore this May. We also have a young adult group at WES itself, which meets about once a month for a social gathering (and whose members serve in volunteer and leadership roles throughout the society).

Communications: Robyn Kravitz continues her work as our Communications and Administrative Coordinator, running our website, internal communications, and social media platforms--including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Our livestreamed platform services continue to draw both WES members who are homebound for the week and visitors from across the country.

Finances: Although our long-term financial health feels in good shape, thanks to a much-reduced mortgage on the building (after the conclusion of a successful Capital Campaign) and participation in a legacy matching gift program that encouraged members to identify planned estate gifts to WES, our short-term finances have been challenged in 2018-19. This is due primarily to a significant drop in rental income, which leads us to expect a deficit that cannot be borne by our reserves. Because of this, we are implementing significant cost-cutting measures for the final few months of 2018-19.

Membership: Our membership has held steady in the range of 330 members. We welcome cohorts of new members several times a year after they have gone through one required and several optional "Path to Membership" classes. We also received a grant from the UUA's Chalice Lighters program to partially support the hiring of a part-time Membership Coordinator; the search for that person is currently underway.

New Developments: We said goodbye to our first UUA intern, Zeb Green, who decided to follow a call to activism on the border rather than finish his internship. In September 2019 we will welcome UUA intern Laura Solomon, who will be with us half-time for two years. We continue to deeply hope that at some point we will be able to welcome an Ethical Culture intern!

WES is also focusing its attention (as you will see in the Focus Goal below) on how we interact as a community. That includes the creation of a new Community Relations Pact (similar to the Brooklyn Ethical Society's Code of Conduct), and work on Board and staff policies around behavior, ensuring a society free from harassment, and similar. Overall these policies will help us to build a healthier culture.

Goals for 2019:

Our 2019-20 Focus Goals (developed by the Board, staff, and a group of lay leaders in January of each year, and going into effect on July 1 of that year) are:

Develop and begin implementing a plan for member stickiness (*sense of belonging*), including a focus on increasing member ownership of the community, and creating opportunities for connection and celebration, in order to inform and engage all WES members and nurture their wellbeing.

Create organizational structures to foster a community where being in right relations is the norm, and conflict resolution is practiced.

Dedicate the time and resources required for WES to become an increasingly anti-racist, anti-oppressive, and multicultural congregation by directly addressing oppression, white supremacy, and privilege.