



LEADER'S MESSAGE; CHALLENGING TIMES

THESE ARE CHALLENGING TIMES FOR RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS. There are a number of factors in our current cultural landscape that make life difficult – even for congregations who have been quite successful.

One factor is a significant shift in personal values and priorities. In the past several decades there has been a move away from individuals' seeing their association with religious organizations as vital to their standing in the community. It wasn't so long ago that people identified themselves through their membership in a church, synagogue or temple and strove to measure up to the expectations and standards of congregations. Along with this identification came an expectation that one demonstrated one's faith through their financial commitment and through regular attendance which was fostered by laws and norms that carved out Sunday mornings for religious expression. Where in the past people were inclined to get their identity from their religious body these days people are much more likely to shop for an organization that reflects and enhances their identity. People look for a group that suits them rather than look for ways to become suitable to a group.

The level of competition for time and attention is remarkably stiffer now than in the past. Growing up in New Jersey in the 1960's I expected that stores would not be open on Sundays, that Sunday morning television would be a lot of religious programming, and that sporting

events, especially local ones, would never happen on Sunday mornings. Much has changed. Now Sunday is much like other days – if you want to shop, recreate, or be entertained there are plenty of options available.

And much had changed in ways that go beyond the amount and kind of things available. In Ana Sofia Joanes' documentary film, "Fresh," Michael Pollan describes a conversation he had with someone who had emigrated to the United States. He asks Pollan, "Do you know what American's are really afraid of?" and answers his own question: "Inconvenience." In the movie while these words are said, grocery items are piling up at the end of check-out cashier's conveyor belt. Boxes and bags of ready-to-eat or quick prepare meals and other highly processed foods pile up with nary a vegetable in sight.

We have grown accustomed to convenience and have become increasingly impatient with inconvenience. And the food, shopping and entertainment industries have responded with ever more options to make for ease and quickness. Staples, the office supply store, has worked to capitalize on this trend with their "Easy" campaign: "Download an Easy Button for your desktop to get everything Staples with one push of the button." EZ-Pass whisks us through toll booths and card swipes speed our purchases stores and coffee shops.

The convenience trend runs counter to the success of religious congregations which are
(Leader's Message, continued on page 4)

"Military Tribunals at Guantanamo,"
Sunday, February 09, Phyllis Rodriguez



Coming soon; check it out!

<http://ethicalsocietywestchester.org/>

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A Humanist Fellowship

SUNDAY PLATFORM & Sunday School 10:30 A.M.

Leader Bart Worden
President Colleen Kapklein
Vice President Stan Snegroff
Officiant Judy Wank
Secretary Richard Koral
Treasurer Maggie Voltaire
Religious Education
Director Lilly Schulz
Office Manager Zo Halton
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The Page Elizabeth Grippe
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Bart Worden, Leader ECSW

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The Page:

Submissions, comments, etc.;
Please contact Liz Grippe
lizgrippe@optimum.net

February 02 “Adventures in Humnism,” Bart Worden
Regular Sunday School

February 09 “Military Tribunals at Guantanamo,” Phyllis Rodriguez
“In January 2013 I was chosen by lottery to spend a week at Guantanamo Bay to witness the tribunals. The lottery consists of victims’ family members, survivors and first responders involved in the attacks of September 11, 2001. The defendants can receive the death penalty if convicted and so sentenced. I was particularly interested in speaking out in opposition to capital punishment while down there, and had many opportunities to do so. In addition, I and the other family members met with the defense teams, as well as with the prosecutors. There were journalists and watchdog organizations represented there. Despite the fact that I knew a fair amount about what’s been going on before and was opposed to the case being handled at this venue, that week opened my eyes to practices of the Pentagon/ Military Prosecutor that are direct threats to so many constitutional rights we take for granted, and that I had assumed were sacred.”
Regular Sunday School

February 16 TBA
School holiday, no regular Sunday School

February 23 TBA
School holiday, no regular Sunday School



About Our Speakers:



Bart Worden

Bart has served as Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Westchester since 1998. Bart also currently serves as the Executive Director of the American Ethical Union. See his bio at: <http://ethicalsocietywestchester.org/leadership/>



Phyllis Rodriguez

Phyllis is a Native New Yorker who’s lived in Westchester for 30 years. Her son, Gregory, 31, worked for Cantor Fitzgerald in IT and perished in the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. She and her husband, Orlando, spoke out soon after in opposition to military retaliation being contemplated by our government.

They also opposed the incursions into Iraq and the creation of the Patriot Act. They soon were connected to like-minded victims’ family members who created September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows on February 14, 2002.

<http://peacefultomorrow.org/>

(Continued on page 3)

FEBRUARY 2014 EVENTS

Most Sundays
9:30 A.M.

Colloquy, *self-reflection and meditation on a chosen subject within a nurturing, protected group environment.* Leader's study

Saturday, February 1
9:30 A.M. — 4:00 P.M.

“Walking in Other People’s Shoes”
For Youth ages 11-18, Adults & invited Law Enforcement Professionals.
Reid Castle, Manhattanville College, Purchase, NY. Small group workshops.

Sunday, February 2
12 NOON

Newcomers’ Information Session,
Leader’s Study.



Tai Chi Schedule (weekly)
Saturdays at 9:30 A.M. , \$10/class
RSVP: Lenny Meyerson, 914 720-7092

Sunday, February 2
3:00 P.M.
AT THE SOCIETY

The 10th Annual Interreligious Prayer Service for Peace and Justice
Representatives of Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Baha’i, Christian, Native American and, for the first time, Humanist, traditions will come together to recite universal prayers or statements for peace and justice. The event celebrates World Interfaith Harmony Week, proclaimed by a U.N. General Assembly resolution to promote understanding and tolerance among all religious traditions and beliefs.

Wednesday, February 5
7:30 P.M.

Board Meeting

Friday, February 14
7:00 P.M.

Community Circles, Community Circles are a small and friendly discussion on a subject matter, sometimes philosophical and sometimes ethical. We meet in members’ homes, enjoy light refreshments, and share our thoughts and concerns, experiences and ideas.
Please contact Stan Snegroff, TessSnow@aol.com to RSVP.

Tuesday, February 18
7:30 P.M.

Men’s Night Out, Shukaila Authentic Indian & Lebanese Cuisine
2250 Central Park Avenue, Yonkers, NY 10710, 914 337-2957. RSVP Oliver Swift.

TBA

Book Discussion Group.



Sunday, March 09; 10:30 A.M. WANTED:

Songs! Stories! Jokes! Instrumentals! Painting! Photography! Crafts! Poetry!
Readings! Skits! Dance! Martial Arts Demonstrations! Furniture! Etc! Etc! Etc!
Featuring non-judgmental, supportive, appreciative audience.
More to follow. Arts Festival Chair, Lori Fedio.

What Can You Contribute?

(about our Speakers, continued from page 2) Phyllis Rodriguez

She believes that the military tribunals, in addition to the creation of the prison camps in Guantanamo, are among the many very disturbing consequences of our government’s using the names of victims to justify attacks on other innocent victims in foreign lands, attacks on our constitutional rights, and unjustified military might.
Her motto is “Not In My Son’s Name!”



First Sunday Sharing, Alternatives to Violence

The Alternatives to Violence Project is a grassroots, volunteer program dedicated to reducing violence in our lives, in our homes, in our schools, in our prisons, in our streets and in our society. Violence comes in many forms—from put-downs and dismissal of ourselves and others to the taking of human life. Most people are exposed to some form of violence daily. Often we knowingly or unknowingly inflict violence on others. Interpersonal violence represents failed human interaction. The Alternatives to Violence Project provides a space for us to practice transforming conflict into win-win outcomes. No one loses. Conflict becomes an opportunity for greater understanding, an opportunity to deepen relationship. <http://avpny.org>

(Leader's Message, continued from page 1)

inherently inconvenient – we are faced with having to offer great reasons for people to come out of their homes and participate. Why else would we make the effort rather than stay home and have food delivered to us while we watch TED talks or shop on Amazon?

And we've also become accustomed to things being free or very low cost. Once you have access to high speed Internet (available for free from public libraries and a good number of coffee shops!) you can access all manner of entertainments and information, communicate with friends and buy all kinds of things and services offered at steep discounts and with free shipping!

If you find these thoughts and concerns discouraging I encourage you to take heart – you have friends and fellow travelers who really appreciate the joys and benefits of being part of a congregation of people who care about you and about the possibilities for bringing goodness into our world. And there are more people like you in our community who would appreciate you and our congregation and would benefit from becoming part of the Ethical Society. Yes, there are challenges but there is also the reality of how vital our Society is to our lives and the potential to expand our circle despite the challenges.

— Bart Worden



**Dale McGowan to serve as
AEU Religious Education Director.**

The American Ethical Union, the federation of Ethical Culture/Ethical Humanist Societies, is pleased to announce that Dale McGowan has been appointed to serve as AEU Religious Education Director. Dale is the author of several books on ethical education without traditional religion including *Parenting Beyond Belief* and *Raising Freethinkers, a Practical Guide*. He was awarded the Humanist of the Year by the Harvard Humanist Community. His own organization is called Foundation Beyond Belief.

Aimee Neumann has retired as RE director after more than ten years in the position. She will remain active, but sought to reduce her responsibilities.

Long Range Planning

Moving into the next phase of the process following the member retreat in the fall, The Long Range Planning committee is beginning to draft of a long-term strategic plan. We're planning to present early results at a short workshop for all interested members in March, both in the interest of keeping the process transparent and, even more importantly, getting more member feedback along the way.

Here's a sneak peak at the strategic plan's likely table of contents:

1. Mission Statement
2. Analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and potential pitfalls
3. Our goals (both short term, covering the next year, and long term, looking about five years out)
4. Measures of Success (how will we measure if we are on track to meeting our goals? Growth in membership? Increase in pledge totals? Number of partnerships with other community organizations? Sunday School enrollment?)
5. Constituents (who are we aiming to appeal to and serve? And what do those people want and need?)
6. Landscape (an "industry analysis" – what's going on in the world of organized humanism, other religions, and society in general as it relates to our Society?)
7. Competitive Analysis (what are we up against in terms of people coming to us vs. doing anything else with their time? Other religions? Kids sports? Volunteer opportunities? And what are our advantages in this arena?)
8. Marketing Plan (how do we get us and our work more known in the world?)
9. Our Team (what are our human resources, both paid and volunteer? Who do we have and who might we need?)
10. Building and Grounds (maintenance needs and improvements)
11. Action Plan (programs and projects we do and want to do, and how we get there)
12. Finances (budget planning, defining mission of finance committee, pledge planning)

If you have interest in any of these areas in particular – ideas, or concerns, or questions – please feel free to get in touch with me to share them (ckapklein@optonline.net or 914-674-4015) or catch me on a Sunday morning). We have a very solid foundation with the work we did together at the member retreat, but are eager to hear what is on your mind as we advance through this process.

— Colleen Kapklein



Sunday School Corner
NEWS FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Day of Deeds project



Pajama Drive

Share the Love This Valentine's Day Collection will continue through Sunday, February 9

What better way than by providing a toasty pair of new pajamas,
a snugly stuffed animal and a Valentine card to a child living in poverty?
Pajama sizes 18 months to size 16
(please check for federal safety regulations)

Sunday School's collection of (new) PJs, stuffed animals and Valentine cards
will be distributed by *Family to Family*,
a national hunger and poverty organization based in Hastings.
(<http://www.family-to-family.org/>)

the collection box, suitably decorated,
is in the lobby of the Society, under the very sparkly poster



Many children living in shelters, or even the profoundly poor living at home,
have never owned a pair of pajamas, sleeping instead in underwear or their
everyday clothes. The bedtime rituals that we take for granted to help our own
children feel special and secure - like cozy clean pj's and reading bedtime sto-
ries are unknown to many impoverished children.



*Captain Luis Carlos Montalván
and Tuesday addressing the
Society. Tuesday and our Sun-
day School children sharing a
lot of love!*

Day of Deeds Follow-Up

MEDICARE RIGHTS

Presented by Judy Wank

Medicare Rights is a nonprofit nationwide organization devoted to assisting persons in making the appropriate decisions in the complex Medicare system. It is separate from Medicare. It's goal is to provide individuals with counseling on a one to one basis about the various components of the government sponsored system. It works with Medicare but is separate from it. Counselors are trained by Medicare Rights and work in libraries throughout Westchester providing information appropriate for that individual. We work explaining the difference between Medicare Advantage programs, traditional Medicare, Part A, B, C as well as Part D, the pharmaceutical program. We help people decide, based on whether they travel, what specific medications they take, whether they have retirement benefits and the benefits as well as the deficits of various programs based on their individual needs. If people travel, are snowbirds then one system is definitely preferable. If their medical needs are minimal, then other programs might be better. Volunteers are trained and have backup assistance available via Medicare Rights in New York City. Some of us also speak monthly at Senior Citizen programs throughout the county about various aspects of the Medicare programs. As well, there are monthly update meetings for all of us to keep us apprised of constantly changing issues.

I have been a volunteer at the Will Library in Yonkers and the New Rochelle Library several mornings a month. I speak once monthly at the Garth Road Senior Center and Lake Isle Senior Center in Eastchester. Business is especially active during the signup and change periods from October through early December.

If anyone is interested in becoming a volunteer, feel free to contact me via phone or email. It is challenging, informative, and especially helpful for a majority of the people we counsel, most of whom are quite confused about the system. judywank@optonline.net, [914 574 5250](tel:9145745250)

RAGING GRANNIES, FORTUNE SOCIETY

Presented by Nora Freeman:

Raging Grannies: Sunny Armer, Lori Fedio and I provided information about the Raging Grannies WOWW gaggle. We were in full Granny regalia and even sang a song. Lots of fun and thanks to all who stopped by to learn about us.

Fortune Society: I had information about the Fortune Society programs to help ex-offenders with re-entry, particularly education and housing.
<http://fortunesociety.org/>

AFYA

Presented by Glenn Babakian



Founded in 2007 by Danielle Butin, Afya has shipped more than 6 metric tons of medical and humanitarian supplies to more than 30 countries.

What you can do:

- Participate in a Sortathon at the Afya warehouse.
- Retired members volunteering Monday – Friday during business hours. Afya is open to receiving adult volunteers any weekday from 2PM on, and also on some Friday mornings.
- Going as a a group after platform.

(Tarsha Herbert is Afya's volunteer program coordinator. Her email is tarsha.herbert@afyafoundation.org. The phone number is [914 920 5081](tel:9149205081).)

- Bring medical supplies to ECSW. Store them in the coat closet, with a label indicating that they're meant for Afya. I periodically gather these supplies and bring them to the warehouse.
- Contribute financially: Donations can be made on Afya's website: <http://www.afyafoundation.org/donate.html>. Or you can write a check to Afya Foundation, 140 Saw Mill River Road, Yonkers, NY, 10701.



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Presented by Oliver Swift



Letter writing at Day of Deeds. This is an example of some of the work done by our local Amnesty USA Group 42. If any are interested, we usually meet the first Monday of each month at 8PM at the nearby Community Unitarian Church.

HIGHLIGHTS OF MINUTES

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING, JANUARY 08, 2014

Google Calendar: We are undertaking to create a perpetual calendar. Board members are asked to submit regular, recurring calendar events to fill it in. The executive committee, Administrator and the Leader should be the managers of the calendar.

Leaders Report:

- Web site - The new format is being populated with photos. Bart is experiencing frustration in developing a calendar and up-coming events portions. Terry Karp, web site developer, is moving pages over from the old site. We are hoping to be on line by the end of the month, even if it is not 100% complete.
- Bart needs one computer device for his various jobs, a notebook tablet for business applications. James moves that we budget up to \$800 to contribute towards 1/3 of the cost, Stan seconded. Passed unanimously.
- Anti Racist Alliance is organizing discussion groups to discuss the New Jim Crow. Bart was asked to lead a discussion group, and Maggie will participate. Four events will take place in March in our Building.
- Anti poverty campaign, Bart is involved in a planning meeting.
- Raise the Age is also planning for future action.
- Inter-religious prayer meeting, sponsored by the Islamophobia group, to take place in our Building on February 2.
- Planning for Lay Leadership Sunday School 2014 begins this weekend.

Treasurers Report: Pledge receipts totaled \$26,548 by 12/31. Concern expressed for extra fuel costs that may be incurred because of the frigid weather.

MLK Jr Institute for Nonviolence will have an event on February 1, *Walking in Other People's Shoes*.

It is planned for a teens conference on the topic, Ending Violence. MOTION by Oliver and James seconded, unanimously approved, to contribute \$150.00 for the event as cosponsor.

Welcome Gerry to ECSW!



Query raised concerning our policy for deciding to support other organizations in their activities, and in sponsoring events or projects. Recognized the difficulty in setting an advance policy. The Board will have to assess each particular instance and decide which cause is worth supporting.

Day of Deeds: Ethical Action Committee is in charge of planning for it. The format will be tables for separate groups to describe their cause and activities. Colleen's note suggests that the ECSW itself can offer a project for ethical action - cleaning the Building.

Phone Tree: The phone tree was not invoked on a recent weekend to notify members that the Platform was cancelled due to a Saturday night snow storm. Email notices were distributed instead, and several people were not informed and showed up. There was a request to up-date the list to change the people at the top of the tree, but it was decided to simply add the new members who were not included yet.

Nursery School: Motion by Stanley, Nora second that Richard Koral be designated as the principal representative for the NS, for purposes of NYS Department of Labor administration.

Linked In account for ECSW: decided to de-register from Linked in because we do not participate actively and the Administrator was getting annoying messages and unnecessary reminders.

Respectfully Submitted,
— Richard Koral, Secretary



Day of Deeds Follow-Up

PLAYING FOR CHANGE

Presented by Jeff Grippe

Playing for Change is a multimedia movement created to inspire, connect, and bring peace to the world through music. The true measure of any movement is what it gives back to the people. The Playing For Change Foundation is dedicated to building music and art schools for children around the world, and creating hope and inspiration for the future of our planet. As of today there are 9 programs in Africa and Asia, 700 students, and 153 jobs created.



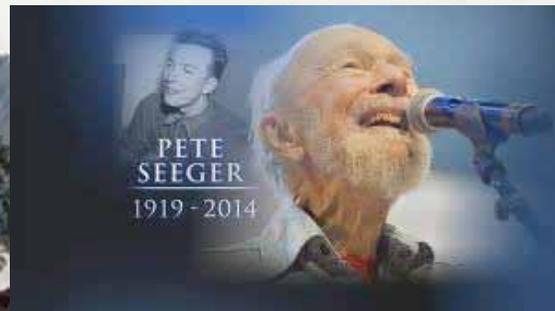
*Bizung School of Music and Dance,
Tamale, Ghana*

A Humanist Fellowship

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Ethical Culture Society of
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*“If there’s a world here in 100 years,
one of the main reasons will be music.
It can leap over barriers of politics,
and leap over barriers of religion and race,
and people who never thought
they’d be doing the same thing together,
will be listening in and
joining in to the same song.”*

— Pete Seeger