



# Ethical Views

December 2006

Vol. 121, No. 4

Newsletter of the Philadelphia Ethical Society

## December Platforms

**Sunday, December 3**  
**KEEP LOVE IN XMAS**

**Richard Kiniry**, Leader of the Society, offers some ideas on approaches to all the Winter Holidays. Whether it is Hanukkah, Kwanza, or Winter Solstice, the holidays originated as a celebration of community in the dark of winter. As we celebrate the variety of holidays, we can keep our focus on appreciation of family, friends, and neighbors and not get swallowed up in the market-driven approach to love.

**Sunday, December 10**  
**THE POLITICS OF COMMUNITY**

**Ed Schwartz**, Director of the Institute for the Study of Civic Values. In an era of deep political division, how can we build a politics that establishes common ground among people with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints in addressing the problems that we share? What can elected officials at the national level learn from people working at the local level to address this difficult problem?

Schwartz has been a political activist for more than 40 years. He is a 1965 graduate of Oberlin College. He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Rutgers University in 1986. In 1973, he founded the Institute for the Study of Civic Values in Philadelphia to develop new strategies for building community, expanding economic opportunity, and strengthening democracy. In 1984 he was elected as a City Councilman at Large advocating a "Neighborhood Agenda" for the City. Between 1987 and 1992, Ed Schwartz served as the City's Director of Housing and Community Development. Dr. Schwartz returned as full-time Director of the Institute for the Study of Civic Values in 1993.

**Sunday, December 17**

**MANY SUFFER, SO FEW MAY PROFIT: RESISTING WAR, EMPIRE, AND LOCKHEED MARTIN**

**Robert M. Smith**, Staff Organizer, Brandywine Peace Community. In his address Robert Smith will outline and illustrate the underlying economic and cultural assumptions of war and weapons manufacturing and the ongoing institutional roles that the war economy and weapons industry play in a U.S. war policy around the world and in human neglect here at home. As the Brandywine Peace Community approaches its 30th Anniversary, he will give examples of nonviolent campaigns resisting the war and the war economy.

Smith, 56, has spent his entire adult life as peace organizer and nonviolent resister. He was active throughout the Philadelphia area in anti-Vietnam War efforts and, with other Vietnam-era war resisters, a co-founder of the faith-based Brandywine Peace Community. He is the author of many articles on the war economy and the practice and discipline of nonviolent direct action. The Brandywine Peace Community continues its campaign of nonviolent direct action at Lockheed Martin weapons plants in the Delaware Valley as well as its protests of the continued war of occupation in Iraq.

**Sunday, December 24**  
**WINTER SOLSTICE FESTIVAL**

Join us as we use candlelight, poetry, and music to celebrate the Winter Solstice. Our members and friends will come together to honor the essential core of the holiday season — community, love for life together with family, friends, and all humankind. All are welcome.

**Sunday, December 31**  
There will be no Platform.



*Leader's Message*

## *Lessons From Italy*

by Richard L. Kiniry

My recent trip to Italy made me an expert on Italy, or at least that is what I would have you believe. It may be part of the religious Leader experience but I can get serious about almost any subject and even a vacation in Italy required analysis and examination.



Since we are a "this world" religion, it is in living together that we find material for our spiritual and moral journey. Meaning is found in our personal lives but also in the social, economic, and political life of people.

So, I always have my eyes open for clues about underlying values of a society. For me travel is another opportunity to wonder about the life of people: how happy are they, how giving are they? The issue that I search out most closely is the sense of community. Do people feel connected to the entire community?

As I traveled and roamed through churches and ruins I picked up a couple of books on the social and political life of Italy. I wanted to understand Italy and in my travels I decided that

*(Continued next page)*

### ***Leader's Message (Continued)***

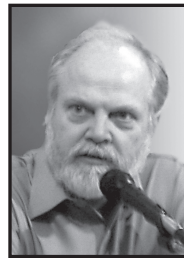
although every country is a bit weird, Italy is weirder than most. Every part of the country has massive monuments and great art, all reasons for pride in Italy as a whole, and yet the country is psychologically divided according to region or town. The Pope is on the news every night and there are priests and nuns everywhere but most of the people don't take the church seriously except as a tourist attraction. The bottom line of Italian life is: Italians are materialistic. Looking good and living well is all important. All of that makes Italy a marvelous place to visit but not a community.

One thing that was familiar was the effects of globalization. Economically Italy is not doing well. They had an economic upturn in the 90s but that has faded and they, like the rest of Europe, are dealing with the pressures of globalization. Jobs are scarce and young people have to stay home and depend on mother to feed them. Immigrants from as far away as Central America give Italian cities an international flavor as they search for economic security. And Italy's response is similar to America's: calls for stricter immigration laws, escape into sports, and self-serving political parties.

I take some perverse comfort from the fact that this ancient culture, one of the birthplaces of Western Civilization, is as confused about their future as we are. The Italians live surrounded by evidence of glorious civilizations, but all that former glory is a slap in the face of the present Italy. They haven't done much since the Renaissance. The Italians live in the midst of enormous wealth in the form of art, palaces, and historic buildings but when you stop for a moment you can start wondering, who paid for all this stuff? Of course the answer is, the people. For thousands of years their lives were spent on all this stuff. Italian history is not a monument to democratic government, nor was Italy

ever a model of economic equality. It is a monument to exploitation from both Church and State.

I had a wonderful time on the trip but I recognized that there is something sad about Italy. There is a feeling that since the country isn't going anywhere you might as well enjoy yourself with immediate pleasures. In that, Italy may have a message for us. A nation that spends its wealth on conquest, palaces, entertainment and churches is in the end left with tourist attractions and a disconnected population. Italy seems stuck in the mistakes of the past. It is a reminder that what a nation understands as its purpose becomes its future. As America sends armies around the world in the name of democracy and neglects long-term social problems, Italy can be an object lesson. ◇



### ***President's Message***

by Howard Peer

Over the years we have talked a lot about handicapped access to the Society. And, as you may recall, at last year's Annual Meeting I reported that we were looking to go forward with a ramp into the back of the building. At that time my hope was that we would be able to have the ramp constructed over this past summer and in operation for the Society's new season. Obviously that did not happen. What did happen was that the architects, Charles Loomis and Chariss McAfee, developed a detailed set of plans and sent the plans out for bid. So far so good. Except that the bids came back much higher than anticipated. We had guessed the price at around \$30,000 to \$35,000. The actual bids came back at about \$100,000. After reviewing the bids with the contractors and discussing the scope of work the estimates were

lowered to about \$95,000. Charles and I were able to identify a few more ways to reduce the cost to \$85,000.

So we needed to sit down, take a deep breath, and reevaluate the situation. We needed to revisit our goal and see if there was a different, more cost effective way to achieve our goal: to make it easier for people to get into the building. We have members who have difficulty getting around and negotiating the front steps. Mostly they are not in wheel chairs and are coming with others who assist them. This is different from the goal of making our building "Handicapped Accessible," which has a legal and technical meaning with a stringent set of standards that we cannot meet.

Our modest goals are appropriate to our situation. We just needed a way to make them doable. So, back to the drawing board. What we found was that we could install an "inclined lift." (Essentially it is a little open elevator that goes up on an angle instead of vertically.) To retain our second means of egress we will have to make some modifications to the interior stairway but not to the extent that we had previously contemplated.

The lift is rated for 500 pounds and can take a wheel chair, a person sitting, or a person standing in a walker. Someone will have to be there to assist the person getting through the door so we will still not be "handicapped accessible" in the legal sense. Charles is going to have to redraw the plan in order to get the permits. And because it is considered an elevator we have to get both City and State permits. But it will meet our goals. The good news is that the lift itself will cost on the order of \$24,000, and we are looking at total cost on the order of \$40,000, certainly less than half of the previous approach. Right now we have about \$22,000 available for the project, so we will have to come up with the balance. Still it is now doable and it gives me hope that we can actually get it done. ◇





## SCHOOL FOR ETHICS

(All in the Weston Room)

### INTRODUCTION TO ETHICAL HUMANISM

The Philadelphia Ethical Society is part of a 130 year old humanist religious tradition. This is a chance to delve into that history and tradition. Interested visitors, newcomers and members are invited to examine the basic ideas of Ethical Culture. Do they make sense and can they make your life better? Using the Eight Commitments of Ethical Culture we will look at our core ideas - the intrinsic worth of every human being, naturalism, nontheism, and ethics as a way of life.

Led by Richard Kiniry.

Wednesday, December 6, 7:30 PM

### THE HISTORY OF ETHICS

This is a lively discussion group. We have been examining the evolution of ethical systems through history. This year we are discussing what passes for Humanist Philosophy. We began by asking what is wrong with Sam Harris' book, *The End of Faith* and now we move on to Postmodernism with Richard Rorty's, *Philosophy and Social Hope*. In December we will read Craig Eisendrath's book, *At War with Time*. All are invited.

Third **Thursday** of the month,  
December 21, 7:30 PM,

### ETHICS FOR CHILDREN

Our children's program is growing quickly. We now have a staff of three with our new lead teacher, **Josh Bickford**. We strive to challenge the child's understanding of right and wrong and not brainwash them. If you know of any parents who might be interested, we can send them our Ethics for Children brochure. Call the office with the information, 215 735 3456.

## Welcome a New Member

By David Ralston

**Josh Bickford**, 31, is one of our new members and is currently making a major contribution as Director of our Ethics for Children Program.

Born in Waterville, Maine, Josh grew up amidst the woods and lakes. His mother was an educator and his father a preacher at many Adventist Congregations. Josh has two brothers, Micah and Nathaniel. Micah is currently attending Westminster Theological Seminary in Montgomery County, and Nathaniel is currently considering Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary in Boston, Ma.

Growing up, Josh enjoyed hiking, snowshoeing, and swimming. He earned his Bachelors Degree in Music Education at Houghton College in Houghton, New York. He studied Brass (euphonium, baritone-horn, and woodwind) along with choral conducting, and voice. His first job was music teacher. He traveled the winding moose-populated roads of Maine to teach students in five schools, many only one-room school houses.

Before coming to Philadelphia, Josh spent time in Lancaster County working in a bookstore, and contemplating his next career decision. He spent time singing in a choir at Westminster Church and worked as a soloist at Reformed Episcopal Church in Harrisburg, PA and at St. Timothy's in Roxboro.

After coming to Philadelphia in 2002, he taught music in the school district. He started at Waring Elementary in North Philadelphia (visited by former President Clinton). Josh also taught music at Stoddard-Fleischer (where the 6th Sense was filmed), Mc Daniels, and Vare School in South Philadelphia.

Currently Josh is working at Conwell Elementary School at 10th and Linden in Camden New Jersey. He and his students have performed and recorded a musical for the local television station along with numerous concerts.

Please welcome Josh to the Society. Some of his favorite things to do are concerts, reading fiction, and eating chocolate, and he prefers vegetarian dining. He also enjoys hanging out in Rittenhouse Square, writing, and new age.

Photographs by Janice R. Moore











**Josh Bickford** in his role as Director of the Ethics for Children Program

# DECEMBER 2006



Birthdays

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
<b>3</b> 10:45 a.m. - Weston Room <b>Ethics for Children</b>  11:00 a.m. Platform: <b>Richard L. Kiniry</b> <i>Keep Love in Xmas</i>	4	5	<b>6</b> <b>Meeting - Weston Room</b> 6:30 p.m. Community Committee  <b>Class - Weston Room</b> <b>Intro to Ethical Humanism</b> 7:30 p.m.	7	<b>8</b>  Jesse Zelnick  Dale Drews	9
<b>10</b> 10:45 a.m. - Weston Room <b>Ethics for Children</b>  11:00 a.m. Platform: <b>Ed Schwartz</b> <i>The Politics of Community</i>	11	12	<b>13</b> <b>Meetings</b> Weston Room 6:30 p.m. Ethical Action Committee  7:45 p.m. Education Committee	<b>14</b>  Richard Kiniry	15	16  Roberta Wood
<b>17</b> 10:45 a.m. - Weston Room <b>Ethics for Children</b>  11:00 a.m. Platform: <b>Robert M. Smith</b> <i>Many Suffer, So Few May Profit: . . .</i>	18	19	<b>20</b> <b>Meeting</b> Weston Room - 6:30 p.m. Executive Committee  7:30 p.m. Board Meeting	<b>21</b> <b>Class</b>  <b>The History of Ethics</b> 7:30 p.m. Bertha Waters	22	23  Bob Moore
<b>24</b>  <i>Winter Solstice Festival</i>	25	26	27	<b>28</b>  Carole Ann Riddle	 <b>29</b> <b>Before New Year's Dinner Dance</b> 7:00 p.m.	30
<b>31</b>  There will be no Platform.						



THANK-YOU to **Benjamin Blozan** (left) and **Jeremy Gill** (and friend) for performing for us during **Tim Ribchester's** absence.

Photographs by Janice R. Moore

## Our Ethics in Action

The Ethical Society has been very ethically active during the past couple of months. We began with **Carole Erb** and several other supporters having a voter registration table in front of the building for three Sundays. While there were only a few people that still needed to register, Carole got many compliments from passers-by for the Society's having the table. Along this same line, quite a few of us as individuals got involved in campaigns for progressive candidates during the months before the election.

As in past years, we purchased, put bookplates in, and delivered dictionaries to third graders in the Robert Morris School in North Philadelphia. There were about 75 this year. **Temma Fishman** coordinated the effort and with **Pat Leopold** made the delivery. Several others helped by fixing the bookplates in the front of the dictionaries — Irene, Helena, Naomi, Bertha, and Nick.

**Ron Coburn** has become the liaison with the local Amnesty International (AI) group that meets monthly at the Society, and in that capacity, Ron has provided opportunities for members and attenders to participate in the monthly letter campaigns that AI researches and develops. For two Sundays this fall, he has had 6-8 copies each of three AI letters that people have signed after the platforms.

Also during the past couple of months we have done some needed work at Camp Linden — some leaf gathering and deck and gutter cleaning on October 14 and November 13 — with Jean, Saul, Henry, Nick, and Loretta.

Several Sundays, too, **Jim Cummings** has taken some frozen meals donated by **Jesse Harmath** (via Temma) to the Peoples' Emergency Center in West Philadelphia.

Finally, on the financial side, the Ethical Society provided part of an honorarium for the University of Pennsylvania presentation by Vicki Schrieber (mother of a murdered University of Pennsylvania student) against the death penalty. And the Society also conducted

a special collection during the Humanist Thanksgiving platform for the "Fast for World Harvest" of the poverty-ending international organization Oxfam. <>

## Ethical Society Hosts Project for Nuclear Awareness Program

An estimated 75 persons attended the October 15 forum, *What in the World is George Bush Doing — And What Can We Do About It?* at the Ethical Society. Highlighted at the event were Craig Eisendrath, as Chairman of the Project for Nuclear Awareness, and Bob Edgar, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches. The tone of the forum was set by Craig Eisendrath, who reviewed how the Bush Administration has mishandled so many international issues. He began by saying that the current crisis with North Korea could most likely be solved by dealing directly with that country's major concerns, including its desperate need for food and fuel. Instead Bush has refused bilateral negotiations and persists in threatening North Korea. And all this is done while Bush undermines the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, ignoring our responsibility to reduce our nuclear stockpile. After pointing out a number of other affronts to international security perpetrated by Bush — including not signing the Kyoto Protocol or the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, not pledging no first use of nuclear weapons, and not seriously pursuing the efforts to reduce Russia's nuclear stockpile — Eisendrath considered most ominous the moves by the Bush Administration toward militarization of outer space. Bob Edgar's part in the program focused on what we might do about such concerns. He urged us to think beyond the occasional demonstration and even beyond civil disobedience to longer term strategies. Among these were working to have cooperative themes in the education of young people, becoming more outspoken in support of positive international organizations such as the United Nations, and clarifying that as a superpower, we have the responsibility of lessening the suffering in the world.

In all of these, he stressed the need to "deep frame" the issues from a humane, progressive position — an orientation he has developed more fully in his recent book, *Middle Church: Reclaiming the Moral Values of the Faithful Majority from the Religious Right*. The Ethical Society cosponsored the forum with Project for Nuclear Awareness, whose Executive Director, Ed Aguilar, arranged for the visit by Bob Edgar and for a reception after the forum. <>

## New Lunch Plan



We're trying something new and exciting in the New Year! Beginning in January, we will be asking each member to help provide lunch once a month. In this way, everyone can pitch in and take the burden off the few who have been doing it for so long. The meal doesn't have to be elaborate.

The membership list will be divided into the following groups by last name, which will be assigned one Sunday per month to make lunch:

**1st Sunday of the month - letters A-D**

**2nd Sunday of the month - letters E-K**

**3rd Sunday of the month - letters L-O**

**4th Sunday of the month - letters P-Z**

This new plan will start on Sunday, January 7 with the First Sunday folks (A-D) and will continue through May. Please check your membership list for those in your group. We think it will be most efficient, fair, and enjoyable for everyone if group members consult and work together.

The cost of lunch will be \$4 and will continue to benefit our Handicap Access Fund.

Reimbursement for expenses is available. For questions or concerns contact Temma or the Society office at 215-735-3456.



## Platform Summaries



Photographs by Janice R. Moore

**Richard L. Kiniry**

**October 1, 2006 - Richard Kiniry - Personal Honesty:** Our sense of honesty is based on cultural 'should not's' from the Ten Commandments, which evolved from ancient Mediterranean tribes. These Commandments came from our gut level sense of fairness, the universal morality that speaks to how we treat others and how others treat us. What happened to gut level fairness versus the laws we actually live with? In America, for instance, "Thou shalt not steal" has become "be careful what you steal and from whom."

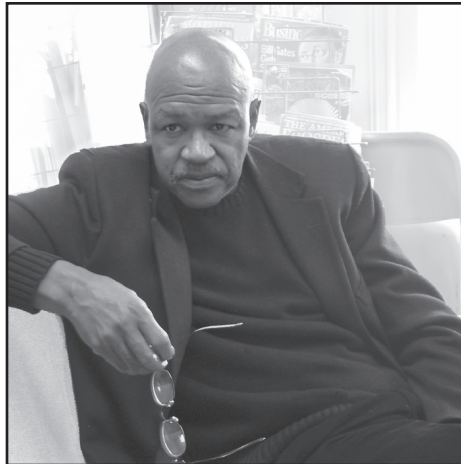
The economic free-for-all in our society has changed our sense of reality and honesty. Distance (aided by technology) has lowered our sense of moral responsibility -- physically and psychologically. America is about achieving, not about living in a society with shared values. A survey by Who's Who of America discovered that acceptance by students of cheating increases every year. Public focus is on "Do whatever it takes."

Two points:

*Negative:* Globalization and mass media has dumped us into a larger community. Our outside world is more impersonal. And we are fettered to present-day rules by advanced surveillance. We must live with those expectations.

*Positive:* But we do have control of our personal honesty. There is a breakdown of faithfully obeying rules. It has been replaced by a focus on doing good because it looks good. But personal honesty is not about obeying rules, it is about living values according to what you believe and acting with intention, despite consequences.

The approach of being totally honest in a world of far too many dishonest people makes you vulnerable. At times you must protect yourself and your way of life. --Janice R. Moore



**Dr. Elijah Anderson**

**October 22, 2006 - Dr. Elijah Anderson - Urban Violence and the Inter-City Poor:** Philadelphia has tallied up more than 300 murders in the past year, mostly in poor and black communities. In his October 22 address, "Violence and the Inner City Poor," ethnographer Elijah Anderson explored the reasons why rising urban violence is associated with the urban poor and black community. The globalization of our economy has had a harsh impact on the inner city poor where the American poor compete with the global poor for service sector jobs that

pay considerably less than the manufacturing jobs that in the past supported working class families.

According to Anderson, urban violence arises out of shifts in the local economy of poor neighborhoods that leaves so many without resources or money. Faced with a declining and increasingly competitive low wage job market, declining welfare benefits, the underground economy which includes the drug trade becomes more important in making ends meet.

Violence escalates in the drug community through various levels beginning with the young who sell on street corners who must have guns to defend their supply because their lives are on line if successful attacked. On Saturday nights in these neighborhoods, guns are sold or rented from backs of trucks.

Violence spreads to "decent people" in poor black communities because many believe that the wider system has abdicated its responsibility and that they are on their own. Decent people can only get things accomplished by walking the line just right. Street credit requires doing deeds and willing to be violent.

--Betsy Lightbourn



Here are some scenes from the Philadelphia Ethical Society's Halloween Party on October 27th, hosted by **Doris Leicher** and **Howard Peer**. The photographs were provided by **Margaret Downey**, Leader of the Freethinkers Society. If you look closely, you may be able to spot Margaret, as well as Howard and Doris, **Saul Machles** and **Jean Bradley**, **Temma** and **Arnold Fishman**, **Ken Greiff**, **Bill Jones**, **Bob Kaye**, other unidentified attendees and several lovely bats.



GALA EVENT

# BEFORE NEW YEAR'S PARTY

*with*

JAZZ QUARTET - THE HALF OF IT

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29, 7:00 PM

*Dine, dance, and mingle under the stars (well, chandeliers)  
at the Ethical Society of Philadelphia, 1906 S. Rittenhouse Square.*



*Celebrate the season in the best of company with a delicious dinner, scrumptious desserts,  
wine, beer, and music for your dancing and listening pleasure.*



*Bring friends, family, or come alone, but be there!*

*\$30 per person, children under 8 - free! What a bargain!*

*Discount parking will be available at Parkway Corp, 1845 Walnut Street.*

*To save your place, call 215-735-3456. R.S.V.P. required by December 24th.*

*For more information, contact Temma or the Society office at 215-735-3456.*

## THE HALF OF IT



Highly recommended by our own Tim Ribchester, THE HALF OF IT is: Tony Peebles - sax / effects; Dan Paul - keyboards; Dave Munch - bass; and Josh Orlando - drums / percussion.

Just 2 years after its inception, the Quartet has a reputation in its hometown of Philadelphia for stunning live shows, genre-bending songwriting, and spectacular musicianship. THE HALF OF IT is a leader in the new jazz fusion, a sound that incorporates elements of modern popular music (funk, hip hop, neo-soul, heavy metal, art rock), along with classical and world music, into the harmonic and improvisatory framework of the jazz idiom. *Heads up: It's hot to dance to!*

With the September 2005 release of its debut album, *Drop*, (Reel 2 Real Records) under its belt, THE HALF OF IT is turning heads from the first note to the last. This group has proven itself to be highly accessible to a broad range of audiences. Comprised of freelance composer-instrumentalists, this group performs regularly from New York to DC and holds a residency at Philly jazz hotspot Cafe Habana ([www.cafehabana.com](http://www.cafehabana.com)).

---

*Ethical Views* is published monthly  
except July and August.

*Editor*, Richard L. Kiniry  
*Layout and Photo Editor*,  
Janice Moore  
*Grammarian*, Ellen Rose  
*Distribution*, Jean Bradley  
*Web Master*, Bob Moore

**Philadelphia Ethical Society**

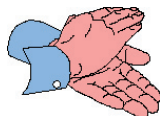
Richard Kiniry, Leader

**Board of Trustees**

Howard Peer, President  
Temma Fishman, Vice President  
Jeffrey Dubb, MD, Treasurer  
Jean Bradley, Secretary  
Carole Erb  
Arnold Fishman  
Saul Machles  
Bob Moore  
Lyle Murley  
Irene Putzer

---

(215) 735 - 3456  
philaes@prodigy.net  
[www.phillyethics.org](http://www.phillyethics.org)



## SUNDAY MORNING VOLUNTEERS

**Ushers** - Arnold Fishman, Head Usher

December 3 - Bob Moore  
December 10 - Gian Polizzi  
December 17 - Jim Erb  
December 24 - Joe Monte

**Flower Dedications** - Ken Greiff, Chair

December 3 - Henry Pashkow: In honor  
of the friends made at the Ethical  
Society.  
December 10 - Tom Carroll: In memory  
of his Aunt Ethel. She lived a good life  
and died at age 104.  
December 17 - Irene Putzer: In honor  
of Ethical Culture.  
December 24 - Doris Leicher: In honor  
of "Peace on Earth."

**Greeters** - Saul Machles, Head Greeter

December 3 - Saul Machles  
December 10 - Madeleine Suringar  
December 17 - Irene Putzer  
December 24 - Saul Machles

**Coffee Hour Hosts** - Harry Thorn, Chair

December 3 - Doris Leicher  
December 10 - Harry Thorn  
December 17 - Saul Machles  
December 24 - Scott Cox

**Coffee Hour Lunch**

December 3 - Doris Leicher and  
Howard Peer  
December 10 - Jean Bradley  
December 17 - Ken Greiff  
December 24 - Community Committee

**Philadelphia Ethical Society**  
1906 South Rittenhouse  
Square  
Philadelphia, PA 19103