

## **Background – Ethical Culture and the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia**

### *History*

The Ethical Culture Movement was founded in 1876 by Felix Adler as a purely ethical religion focusing on deed before creed. The movement established the country's first Settlement Houses and the Visiting Nurses Association. The Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia was founded in 1885 – the third society founded in the denomination and a founding member of the American Ethical Union, the national organization. The Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia helped initiate free legal aid for the poor and served as a sanctuary to European refugees during World War II. It has been located in its historic building at 1906 Rittenhouse Square since 1929 which has served as not only the Society's home but as space for a variety of community and cultural organizations. With societies from Boston to Los Angeles, the guiding principle of Ethical Culture remains the primacy of ethics in daily life.

### *Beliefs*

Ethical Humanists believe in the dignity and worth of each person. Each person is unique and can foster uniqueness in others.

Ethical Humanists believe that humankind is part of nature. By paying respect to all that surrounds us we can experience awe and gratitude, and deepen our ethical commitments. We understand that the welfare of the natural community depends upon responsible human effort.

Ethical Humanists have faith in the transformation of the human condition through personal and community efforts. We believe that a good person is a person learning to become more sensitive to the joy and suffering of others. Members join together in the struggle for social reform, a healthy environment, and a peaceful world.

Some members consider Ethical Humanism their religion and others consider it their philosophy of life. We are legally a religion, but are not limited by this label. We embrace everyone who strives to honor the worth of everyone, nurture ethical relationships, and build social justice. All members celebrate life together as an ethical experience.