

Ethical Inspiration

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

The start of winter...bare trees...dark evenings. This is the time of the year we need to remember the potential of rebirth. It helps us get to springtime. As a teacher, before becoming an Ethical Culture Leader, I sensed rebirth with each new group of students. They reminded me of passing time and future promise. In our 60th year at the Baltimore Ethical Society, I feel a sense of rebirth seeing more children visit our Sunday school.



This increase in visitors is greatly due to the warm, creative spirit of teacher Linda Joy Burke. She artistically weaves Ethical Culture values into interactive and enjoyable activities – very different from the rote memorization and stern lectures my generation remembers. Today we don't treat children as rocks we carve into a single shape. We treat them more like seeds that have within them beauty waiting to grow.

It's exciting to see how our Sunday school represents our commitment to "bring out the best in others and thus in ourselves." The founder of Ethical Culture, Felix Adler had faith that the light within everyone can be brightened so that it shines out and encourages the light in others to shine brighter. He writes,

The simile that may be used is that of a ray of light which has the effect of kindling other rays, unlike but complementary to itself. Each ethical unit, each member of the infinite universe, is to be regarded as a center from which such a ray emanates, touching other centers, and awakening there the light intrinsic in them. (An Ethical Philosophy of Life, pp. 118-119)

There is light in everyone, children and adults alike. We need to remember this particularly during December and January. We need to remember the words of Albert Camus: "In the depths of winter I finally learned there was in me an invincible summer."

For millenniums people have gathered for winter celebrations to call for a return of our most reliable source of light – the sun. Please join friends from the Coalition of Reason for "HumanLight," a December 23 event where candles are lit and we celebrate a shared vision of "a future in which all people can identify with each other, behave with the highest moral standards, and work together toward a happy, just and peaceful world." Let's let the light of humanism shine this winter in Baltimore, in our society, and in our Sunday school!

CELEBRATING

60

YEARS

SUNDAY PLATFORMS

10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4-5)

DECEMBER 4

"Living Upstream and Working Downstream"

Eric Schott, PhD

Research Assistant Professor, Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology

DECEMBER 11

"The Meaning of Membership"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

DECEMBER 18

"Maintaining Balance When Responding to a Call"

Bob Buchmeier, PhD

Teacher and Computer Professional

DECEMBER 25

No Meeting

BES will resume on January 1 with a pancake breakfast.

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

WITH LINDA JOY BURKE

Every Sunday (no meeting Dec. 25),
10:30 a.m. – Noon

BESpeak

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Share the Season with BES!

by Rosemary Klein, BES President

Seasonal festivals have always played an integral part in the culture and community of the Baltimore Ethical Society – and they will continue to do so.

These celebrations, originating with BES in the 1950s, have occasionally slipped from the schedule. We didn't fall into fall this year, for instance, with a Fall Family Festival (which in earlier years was termed the Harvest Festival or the Stone Soup celebration). Nor have these commemorative occasions always been celebrated in exactly the same manner.

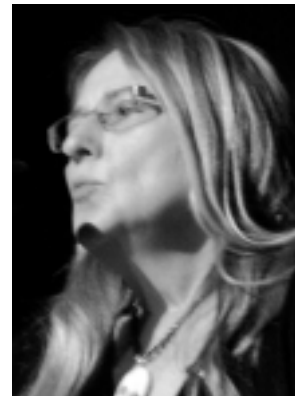
Once upon a time, there was no pancake breakfast. Do not rub your eyes in astonished disbelief! This is true as can be. Nineteen years ago – provided you were then around – you could have attended a New Year's Brunch, advertised as "fun and delicious" and featuring "quiches, crepes, salads, and other epicurean delights!" And had you joined the festivity, you would have been swelling the coffers of BES to the tune of "only \$3.50 for adults and \$2.00 for children under 10." And a mere eight years ago, rather than slipping communally into the new year via a shared breakfast with like-minded folks, you might have attended a potluck dinner "followed by a light-hearted video to keep away the winter chill."

Winter – with its chills – has long provided occasion for a BES festival featuring a mitten tree and sun gifts. Back in 1981 with Marion Banfield coordinating, this acknowledgement of the winter solstice was undertaken as a three-part affair: first, children and adults met together for celebration, then "a more reflective adult meeting" was held, and finally, "a co-op luncheon" cooperatively reunited those of all ages. Sun gifts – exchanged among those attending – were described as "some small thing – an orange, a sprig of parsley or holly, a pretty leaf."

This year our winter festivities will again be a three-part arrangement – but with a sprig of difference or two. Last year Emil Volcheck introduced us to the Human-Light Festival, an original humanist-oriented winter holiday created and founded in 2000 by two members of the New Jersey Humanist Network. This holiday, which includes a candle-lighting, definitely caught fire with the many who attended last year, and so this year we will again celebrate HumanLight with our Baltimore Coalition of Reason partners. See the article at right for more information. The next two parts will play out when January 1 rolls in with impeccable authority. On that first day of the new year, we will join together for what has become our annual pancake breakfast, which will be enlivened by the Winter Festival traditions of "decorating" the mitten tree with our contributions of mittens, gloves, scarves, caps, or other warm objects (child or adult size) and of sharing sun gifts (a little, inexpensive, wrapped item capable of delighting either child or adult).

These Societal traditions uniting adults and children in celebration are engaging affirmations of the joy and love to be found within our community. As such, both the December 23 and January 1 events are meant to be attended by all – BES members,

(continued on page 5)



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 4:00-6:00 P.M.

The Day the Universe Changed

An engaging video and discussion series!

Come view and discuss a video series by James Burke, *The Day the Universe Changed*. Burke explores with wit and wisdom links



between knowledge and daily life through stories about the history of western civilization. Join Ethical Culture Leader Hugh Taft-Morales for the fourth installment on Sunday, December 11, from 4:00-6:00 p.m.: *A Matter of Fact: Printing Transforms Knowledge*. Open to the public.

Celebrate HumanLight on December 23rd!

Please join us for a celebration of HumanLight on Friday, December 23 from 7:00-9:00 p.m.

HumanLight is a celebration of the winter season conceived by the New Jersey Humanist Network as a secular or humanist alternative to traditional religious celebrations.

HumanLight includes lighting three

passion,
and Hope.
Human -



Light was first celebrated in 2001 in New Jersey and has since spread throughout the country. This year is the second celebration of HumanLight in Baltimore, sponsored by the Baltimore Coalition of Reason. To learn more, visit the HumanLight website at www.humanlight.org.

This year our coalition partner First Unitarian Church of Baltimore will host the celebration. We will have a potluck dinner and desserts, music, and the candle lighting. At this family-friendly event, children are welcome.

There is no charge for the event, but you are invited to bring a dish for the potluck dinner. First Unitarian is at the corner of Charles and Franklin. Enter the church hall on the Charles Street side.

If possible, please RSVP by email to BmoreCoR@gmail.com, by joining the MeetUp at meetup.com/bmorethical or by talking to Hugh Taft-Morales or Emil Volcheck.



Rev. David Olson of First Unitarian sings during HumanLight 2010. To his right are the three candles symbolizing Reason, Compassion, and Hope.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, December 4, 9:30 a.m.

Participants should bring poems which emotionally move them.

Ethical Action at Moveable Feast

Thursday, December 8, 5:45 p.m.

Moveable Treats

Sunday, December 11

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, December 11, 9:15 a.m.

Board Meeting

Sunday, December 11 12:30 p.m.

Video and Discussion Series

Sunday, December 11, 4:00 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, December 18, 9:30 a.m.

Newcomers' Meeting

Sunday, December 18, 12:30 p.m.

HumanLight

Friday, December 23, 7:00 p.m.
First Unitarian Church of Baltimore

SUNDAY SNACK SCHEDULE

Last names starting with:

A to F	Dec. 4
G to L	Dec. 11
M to R	Dec. 18
S to Z	Anytime!

SAVE THE DATE

On the first day of 2012, come to BES to enjoy pancakes and other breakfast goodies, beginning at 10:30 a.m. and made all the cheerier by our winter festival mitten tree and sun gifts. Check with Rosemary for more information.

DECEMBER 4

“Living Upstream and Working Downstream”

Eric Schott, PhD

Research Assistant Professor,

Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology

The Chesapeake Bay – the country’s largest estuary – is home to some of the most recognizable (and delicious) aquatic life we know: blue crabs, oysters, and striped bass. The Bay has a 64,000 square mile watershed inhabited by a growing population of over 16 million people. Whether historical, recreational, economic, or ecological, the value of the Bay for us is immense. Keeping it healthy will require clear-headed thinking on the part of every one of the 16 million of us living upstream of it. Working both upstream and downstream in the Chesapeake Bay are interests that Dr. Schott will touch on in this talk.

Eric Schott earned a PhD in genetics from Harvard Medical School, then came to Baltimore to study yeast genetics at the Johns Hopkins University. Seeking to participate in Bay-related research and restoration, he joined what is now the Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology (IMET) in downtown Baltimore. At IMET (part of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science), he studies health and disease of blue crabs and oysters. He also serves on state commissions and has provided expert testimony to legislative committees dealing with Chesapeake Bay issues. Ten years ago, he began to volunteer with the Jones Falls Watershed Association (JFWA), where he later served as board member and officer. In 2010, the JFWA merged with four other watershed groups to create Blue Water Baltimore, which has become a highly effective, multifaceted restoration and advocacy organization.

DECEMBER 11

“The Meaning of Membership”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

What does it mean to join an organization? What does it mean to join an Ethical Society? Membership means different things to different people. Some will join just about anything! Others, as did Groucho Marx, say “I don’t care to belong to any club that will have me as a member.” Come listen to Leader

Hugh Taft-Morales explore what’s so great about becoming a member of the Baltimore Ethical Society. Learn why it is a membership with *meaning*.

Hugh Taft-Morales serves as Leader for both the Baltimore Ethical Society and the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia and also works with the Ethical Society Without Walls (ESWoW). He taught philosophy and history in high school for twenty-five years, graduated from Yale College in 1979, and earned a Masters in Philosophy in 1986 from University of Kent in England. Taft-Morales, who lives in Takoma Park, Maryland, received a certificate in Humanist Leadership from the Humanist Institute in 2009.

DECEMBER 18

“Maintaining Balance When Responding to a Call”

Bob Buchmeier, PhD

Teacher and Computer Professional

In considering our service or call in life, moral systems come into play. Three types of moral systems will be considered in today’s talk: morality based on relationships, morality based on an objective set of norms, and morality based on a balance of both relationships and objective norms. To live out a morality of balance, we must be attentive and responsive to our inner voice—we must learn to collaborate with our call. Doing so may not be easy; responding to one’s call is dangerous – the typical fate of a prophet is not a happy one. But there is something in our culture that now calls everyone to step into his or her prophetic role. Building our moral life totally around relationships is no longer sufficient. We must engage in changing the systems that shape the moral landscape, rather than believe it to be sufficient when it no longer is to simply work on creating new systems that provide for the least among us. We must have relationships with all that is alive in our lives. That means that as difficult as it might seem, working to understand and to ground ourselves in our own story enables us to respond to our call or purpose with balance. This talk hopes to provide listeners with insight into finding grounding within their own stories based on a moral order that is balanced so that they will be enabled to confidently live out their purpose or call.

Bob Buchmeier’s life has been a journey led by a call and influenced by opportunities. His abilities in mathematics and

PLATFORMS *(continued)*

talent for spatial visualization led him to pursue mechanical engineering until a call to service took him into high school teaching and then beyond into the racial divide of the 1960s and reform of education. Within the venue of Chicago's west side, Buchmeier was led to seek grounding by the random nature of the explanations given by many of his colleagues about what would constitute the future of education reform. In 1976 he received a PhD in curriculum and philosophy from the University of Chicago. Since that time he has chaired a college education department, led the faculty of a community college in improving instruction, sold computer-managed instruction software, worked as a computer professional, and led a database consulting business. Even as he undertook technical, income-generating work, his call to service was transformed when he realized a desire to write – and not just to write anything but to develop a clear explanation for the culture shift that was at work in his own journey. Now in his retirement he has earned the ability to write what comes from his call and gives him enjoyment, an effort not purely personal as he seeks to make an impact and obtain the validation that comes from serious discussion of what he has written. He believes that his journey, though unique, will resonate with many who are looking for grounding in our present chaotic time. Buchmeier currently serves as president of the Board of Directors for Bridges to Housing Stability, whose mission is to empower Howard County families to maintain stability in their homes and through community partnerships to prevent homelessness in Howard County.

DECEMBER 25

No Meeting

BES resumes January 1 with a pancake breakfast.

MINDFULNESS meditation

Sunday, December 18, 9:30 a.m.

Mindfulness is a tool we can use in our daily lives to act in a more ethical way. We practice mindfulness meditation so that mindfulness comes naturally in stressful times. Join us as we sit (on chairs) and breathe (just the way it comes naturally) and listen to some words from Thich Nhat Hanh, one of the world's best-known teachers of mindfulness.

Share the Season with BES!

(continued from page 2)

friends, acquaintances, passersby, droppers-in. They are a time for remembering that sharing may well be one of the easiest, simplest ways to bring out "the best in others." (Remember the exhortations you were given as a child to relinquish sole, precious ownership of anything dear or prized as assurance that you could consider others?) So come prepared to share your "offerings" of holiday warmth" with others by bringing a mitten tree gift, a sun gift, and food contributions – something to eat that day (being mindful of the diabetics and allergic among us) and something for Moveable Feast's pantry – to the Pancake Breakfast.

☞ Together, we'll make it as warm as August in Baltimore (but not as humid) as we celebrate the season in our new home. – *BESpeak* December 2002

☞ We promise sunshine – inside the building, if not outside. – *BESpeak* December 1981

**HELP
HOPE
HOUSE**

On Saturday, December 17, a couple of cars driven by BES members will bring needy families to and from the Hope House holiday party. Hope House is a DC-based, small, but inspiring organization that helps keep children connected with fathers serving time in prison far away from home. Check out their website at www.hopehousedc.org. And – to help make the holiday season brighter – please consider buying and donating some gifts for distribution at the party. Until Hugh collects them on December 11, gifts may be placed in a box marked HOPE HOUSE in the lobby. Hugh will distribute and post a complete list of suggested gifts, including board games, jewelry, craft kits, paint sets, winter scarves and gloves, back packs, bath sets, pen sets, books, and frames.

The First Universal Races Congress of 1911

The following article written by Emil Volcheck, BES Secretary has been reprinted from the Fall 2011 AEU Dialogue.

One hundred years ago, the First Universal Races Congress was held at the University of London. The Congress met July 26-29, 1911, and was called to focus attention on the problems of relations between nations and races of the world. The Congress had about 2,100 members, including official representatives from at least 17 governments, including Brazil, China, England, France, Germany, Haiti, Persia, South Africa, and the USA, as well as officials of colonial possessions (including present-day India). Dr. Felix Adler served as the US delegate, officially representing the United States Bureau of Education. While Leader of the New York Society for Ethical Culture, Adler was also a professor of Social Ethics at Columbia University and was recognized for his innovations in education. The Congress grew out of a proposal he advanced in 1906 at the meeting of the International Union of Ethical Societies in Eisenach, Germany.

The Congress was the first event of its kind and was considered a success by participants at the time. In the annual report of the US Bureau of Education for 1911, Adler wrote "The ends of the earth came together for the purpose of considering how the antagonisms and antipathies that breed hate between different races might be lessened and eventually overcome." Reporting in the journal *Science*, Prof. A.C. Haddon of Cambridge University called the Congress "a new departure

in the history of the world." Writing in *The American Journal of Sociology*, Prof. Ulysses Weatherly of Indiana University said "That the present Congress has justified itself is beyond question." The proceedings of the Congress contain about 60 papers and were published as *Papers on Inter-racial Problems Communicated to the First Universal Races Congress*. (The Internet Archive has a scanned copy.)

One goal of the Congress was to disseminate scientific research on races. Adler reported that most, but not all, of the anthropologists at the Congress advocated a "monogenetic" theory of races, holding that there is no biological basis for inherent differences between races, and that any observed differences are more likely explained by environmental influences. Another focus of the Congress arose from members reporting on racial oppression. Dr. W.E.B. DuBois presented a paper titled "The Negro Race in the United States of America." His presentation was praised by Prof. Weatherly as "forceful and perfectly truthful." Similar papers addressed the conditions of indigenous peoples of Africa and America.

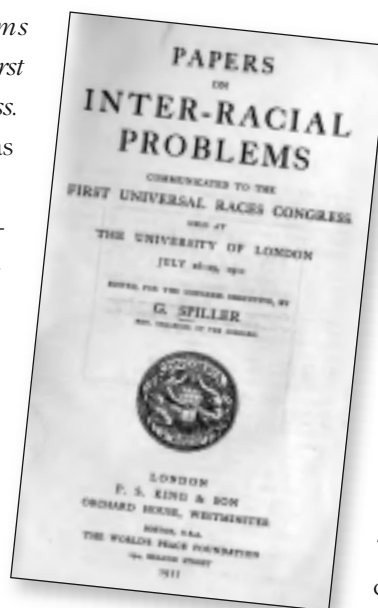
Felix Adler presented a paper titled "The Fundamental Principle of Inter-racial Ethics, and Some Practical Applications of It." Prof. Haddon said that Adler offered a practical reconciliation of different points of view ex-

pressed at the Congress. Adler stated that the fundamental principle is the "organisation of humanity," which has two parts. The first is to "promote the utmost differentiation of the types of culture, the utmost variety and richness in the expression of the fundamental human faculties" and to

"avoid the universal prevalence of a single type." The second is that "the flaws, as well as the excellent features, of any type of culture may be best detected in the effect it produces on other types." Both parts generalize principles of Ethical Culture from individuals to nations. The first generalizes the concept of inherent worth: every nation or so-

ciety has value in its uniqueness. In the annual report, Adler adds "the same essential faculties are present in all... [but] Every group is capable of contributing to the common stock something uniquely its own, something that in the full fruition of civilization can not be spared." The second part is closely related to the Ethical Maxim, in that a nation should be regarded favorably when it brings out the best in other nations.

Adler offered two practical consequences from the application of inter-racial ethics. First, he called for agricultural and industrial training for developing nations. He cautioned against exploitation, writing "What is now needed is humane treatment of the backwards races for the benefit of



those races themselves – that is, in the long run for the benefit of humanity in general.” Second, he called for colonial administrators to be educated on the culture of the people they governed, writing “only those who sincerely appreciate the excellent qualities of foreigners can help them overcome their deficiencies and lead them along the path of further progressive development.”

The Congress resolved to continue as a quadrennial event but – with the start of World War I in 1914 – the 1915 Congress never came to pass. The First Universal Races Congress was also the last. The greatest value of the Congress may have been the face-to-face networking that arose from what Prof. Haddon called its role as a “central coordinating body of a great nexus of effective peace-promoting agencies.” This unique event made a lasting impression on many members. Adler described the effect on himself as “exceptionally deep” and wrote “Merely to find oneself a part of such a body of human beings was a most impressive experience.”

IRONWEED film CLUB

**The BES Ironweed Film Club
will not meet in December.**

Meetings will resume on January 25, 2012 and then continue on the 4th Wednesday of each month.

HEAR BES ON THE WEB!

Would you like to hear a platform address that you missed? BES now offers podcasts of a few platform addresses on our website – bmorethical.org. There's a podcast player at the bottom of each platform address article as well as a link on the home page to our new podcast RSS feed. In order to get more recordings online, we need some help. Would you like to learn how to edit audio files on your computer? Ask Emil, and he'll teach you.

Moods, Minds, and Multitudes

Book I - Somewhere Between There and Here

Poems and Photographs by Linda Joy Burke

A review by Kirk Mullen, facilitator of BES's Poetry Sunday

Our Sunday School teacher, Linda Joy Burke, has produced a chapbook composed of seven poems and eight accompanying photographs. In reading the poems, I had to stop after the first two – to psychologically catch my breath. It was as though a vein had been opened up and my life was slowly ebbing away. The only remedy was to put the poems down and come back to them later in the day.

After finishing the poems later that day, I told a friend about how good they were. The poems are disturbing, because they easily take root within your affective domain and those roots are nourished by the images and

thoughts that you, the reader, have had to suppress in order to get your mundane and necessary activities of life accomplished. Ms. Burke's photographs complement her poems. The two, (photographs and poems) chronicle that which is happening around us at this very moment, and yet half of the poems were written between two and five years ago.

If you desire to read well-written socially conscious poems that make you think and reflect on our times, then I suggest that you contact Ms. Burke. Good poetry does not always bring a smile to your face.

Copies of *Moods, Minds, and Multitudes* are available for \$15.

BAKING NIGHT AT MOVEABLE FEAST

Thursday, December 8, 5:45–8:00 p.m.

Join BES members and other volunteers for an evening of baking for a great organization. The goal for this month is to have enough volunteers from several groups to turn the Moveable Feast kitchen into a “cookie factory.” Email Lisa Alderson at lialderson@gmail.com by Monday, December 5th if you would like to participate. Moveable Feast is located at 901 N. Milton St. in Baltimore. Parking is available on the street in front of the building.



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

306 W. Franklin Street, Suite 102, Baltimore, MD 21201-4661

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

NEWCOMERS' MEETING

Sunday, December 18, 12:30 p.m.

New to the Society and interested in learning more? Attended a meeting or two? Thinking about joining? Come to the Newcomers' Meeting, held following the last platform of every month, and learn more about Ethical Culture and about our Society – its history, its philosophy, and its organization. Meetings last about one hour and attendance is recommended before becoming a member. See John Reuter or Hugh Taft-Morales for more information.

**MOVEABLE TREATS MOVES
TO SECOND SUNDAYS!**

Baked Goods – Sunday, December 11

Other Items – Every Sunday

Support Moveable Feast in their work to feed people with AIDS, blood cancer, or breast cancer and their families. Guidelines for donations are posted at the Society. For more information about Moveable Feast and their many additional programs, visit them on the web at www.mfeast.org.



ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, December 11, 9:15–10:15 a.m.

Come help plan the ethical action strategy for the Baltimore Ethical Society!

bmorethical

**www.bmorethical.org – Look for us on
Facebook, Twitter, and MeetUp.com @bmorethical**

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