

BESpeak

MAY 2015

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

My Role as Leader

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

Recently I have been thinking a lot about my life and my role as a Leader in Ethical Culture. Some of the best thinking occurs when discussing with those outside of Ethical Culture the nature of my work. Many of them end up saying, “So, you are a humanist minister?” This term works for me, and is often useful in my public relations efforts.

Certainly, for BES and the national Ethical Culture movement to flourish, Ethical Culture needs better public relations. It needs to be brought more fully out into the public consciousness. That requires networking and seeking forums—written, spoken, and video—to promote our community and our unique brand of humanism. It’s a challenge.

It’s a challenge for me personally. While I am slightly extroverted, and – thanks to 25 years teaching high school—relatively comfortable in front of groups, I did not become an Ethical Culture Leader as a way to hog the spotlight. That was considered “bad form” in my family. The term “Leader” was chosen by Felix Adler 140 years ago as an alternative to traditional religious labels for someone who does my kind of work.

But in my mind the term “Leader” conjures up images of a drum major marching at the head of a parade. High stepping in a big hat, drum majors have always struck me as particularly silly, and, in some ways, unnecessary. But maybe I need to step it up a bit, so to speak.

There are times where I know I should be more of a drum major. I have spoken many times about one of my favorite speeches by Martin Luther King, Jr. It was called “The Drum Major Instinct.” In it, King admitted that often the human ego gets in the way of good works. Behavior that seems like altruism on the surface, is often motivated by self-interest. But King also praised those who were truly drum majors for justice—those who were out in front of parades promoting kindness and care. I accept that as part of my work in Ethical Culture, and pledge to nurture that part of my personality.

But the reason why the term “minister” works well for me sometimes is wrapped up in its Latin roots. Minister derived from the word “servant.” There are many



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SUNDAY PLATFORMS

10:30 a.m.

(details on pages 4–5)

MAY 3

Program to be Announced

MAY 10

“Teaching Good:
Praxis, praxis, praxis”

Hugh Taft-Morales
Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

MAY 17

FIRST UNITARIAN — 11AM

“Separation Anxiety:
The First Amendment at Risk”

Rev. Barry Lynn
Executive Director, Americans United

MAY 24

“Remembrance Sunday”

Hosted by Karen Elliott
and Hugh Taft-Morales

MAY 31

“Hunger, Meat, and
the Banality of Evil”

Dawn Moncrief
Founding Director, A Well-Fed World

SUNDAY SCHOOL

10:30 a.m. – Noon

Separate programs for preschool
children and school aged students.

TODDLER CARE

Separate supervision provided
for children up to age two.

BESpeak

is published monthly
September through June by
the Baltimore Ethical Society
306 W. Franklin St., Suite 102
Baltimore, MD 21201-4661
410-581-2322

Issue 449

Editor: Kathryn Sloboda
Proofreading & Circulation: Judy Katz
Deadline: 10th of the prior month

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Fritz Williams *Leader Emeritus*

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bmorethical.org. For general
questions: ask@bmorethical.org.
On the web at bmorethical.org

Bright Prospects

by Emil Volcheck, BES President



Thank you for the privilege and honor to serve as President of the Baltimore Ethical Society. I've had the opportunity to manage and coordinate a team that produced impressive results. Looking back over the past three years, I see significant growth in membership, activities, and energy. Our membership has reached an all-time high of 84. This is up nearly 45 percent from the 58 members we recorded at the end of 2012. This year we surpassed the previous high of 81 members recorded in 1989. Our pledge drive for the fiscal year 2015-2016 concluded with a modest gain of almost 5 percent over the previous year. This follows a year where we did a "double" pledge drive, compressing two pledge cycles into one year to get us back on schedule. Our Ethical Education program is stronger. Our Sunday School has more children. We have more activities and social events than ever.

Looking ahead, I see bright prospects. I expect further growth in membership based on indicators that include more newcomers and continued growth in our Meetup group (now over 300). I predict that we will reach 100 members by early 2017. Challenges remain. We still have a structural deficit. Suite 103 (the former Flora Teeter space) is beautiful, but its rental is depleting our reserves even faster. I believe outside rentals will cover most of that cost, thanks to the work of the Space Rentals team. Sustained growth in membership (with continued successful execution of pledge drives) will reduce our annual deficits and extend the lifetime of our endowment until our budget eventually breaks even.

BES carries out its work through committees. We had some success in recruiting leadership for our committees and improving how they function. I promised Paul that when he took office, he would not need to chair any standing committees. I didn't achieve that goal, but we continue to recruit and develop leadership. I believe the new Executive Board will experience a smooth transition of leadership because I've been working closely with Paul and because the new Board will have three former presidents serving on it.

I'd like to congratulate the newly elected leadership team and express my deep gratitude to them for continuing the progress of our society. Congratulations to President Paul Furth, Vice-President Janey Solwold, Secretary Amy Trauth-Nare, Treasurer Karen Elliott! Congratulations to the new Members-at-Large Stephen Meskin, Alan Shapiro, Mary Beth Sodus! Let us appreciate the service of those continuing on the Board: Fred Compton, Argentine Craig, and Mav Vaughan! Let us also thank the Board members who are concluding their service: Ken Brenneman, Kirk Mullen, and Angad Singh.

I look forward to working with all of you to advance our society and pay forward all the benefits we reap from our wonderful community.

VISIT US AT BMORETHICAL.ORG!

Values Proving Valuable

In March BES began a pilot Sunday school program for prekindergarteners aged 3 to 5. Values are the focus of its curriculum. Sharing and cooperation will be spotlighted during the five weeks in May. Helping and responsibility were the themes in March and feelings and self-awareness in April.

During each Sunday of the summer months—beginning on June 7—activities designed and lead by BES parents and members will replace formal classes, which will resume in September. Last year these activities were very popular. For instance, wanting the children to learn a most basic element of critical thinking, Emil Volcheck and Brian Dorsey lead a game of Fact or Opinion. Mav Vaughn explains that to get across the concept that science is an important way to

view the world, she explored air pressure, engaging them with simple, fun experiments such as microwaving an Ivory soap bar to observe its air bubbles expand and “bloom” and using a hair dryer to float ping pong balls. She also put together activities that illustrated the importance of practicing the Golden Rule.

The Ethical Education Committee (EEC) will continue to convene throughout the summer and will evaluate the pilot preK program in order to determine what will make it as educationally rich and strong as possible when its fall classes begin.

Look for a future issue of *BESpeak* to provide a comprehensive overview of the programs for tots to teens that the EEC will continue or undertake in the coming months under the direction of chair, Argentine Craig.

THIRD ANNUAL AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN'S BOOK FESTIVAL

Saturday, May 9, 12:00–4:00 p.m. at the Lewis Museum, 830 E. Pratt St.

A rare chance for children to experience the world of kids' literature focused on African Americans and people of other ethnicities. The event is fun-filled, while exposing children to their diverse world, and kids who look like them, through childrens' books and illustrations. Enjoy author readings, illustration workshops by illustrators, cultural performances, and craft activities. Purchase hard-to-find titles in the Book Village. Free children's books will be distributed while supplies last. Special guests include poet Eloise Greenfield. Celebrity reader is Dr. Gregory E. Thornton, CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools. This program is presented in partnership with Baltimore City Schools and the Enoch Pratt Free Library. Free museum admission 12:00–4:00 p.m. For all ages!

RSVP and more information at <http://ur1.ca/k7jm7>. If you are interested in attending, please see Argentine Craig or Emil Volcheck.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

Sunday, May 3, 9:30 a.m.

Board Meeting

Sunday, May 3, 12:45 p.m.

African American Children's Book Festival

Saturday, May 9, 12:00 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, May 10, 9:30 a.m.

Bioethics Discussion

Sunday, May 10, 4:00 p.m.

Towson SSA End-of-Year Party

Monday, May 11, 5:00 p.m.

Baking Night at Moveable Feast

Thursday, May 14, 5:45 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, May 17, 9:15 a.m.

BES Eatery Social

Sunday, May 17, 1:00 p.m.

Family Board and Card Games Party

Sunday, May 17, 3:00 p.m.

BES Film Series

Wednesday, May 27, 6:30 p.m.

Memorial Weekend Picnic

Sunday, May 24, 12:00 p.m.

Sunday Assembly Baltimore

Sunday, May 24, 2:00 p.m.

Family Game Night and Potluck Dinner

Saturday, May 30, 5:30 p.m.

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, May 31, 12:30 p.m.

SUNDAY SNACK SCHEDULE

All are invited to bring snacks for our coffee hour following platform. Snacks are especially welcome from those whose last names start with:

A to F	May 3
G to L	May 10
M to R	May 24
S to Z	May 31

MAY 3

Program to be Announced

MAY 10

**“Teaching Good:
Praxis, praxis, praxis”**

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

Today crumbling neighborhoods, budget cuts, overwhelmed teachers, and “teaching to the test,” hamper our educational system and put our nation at risk. In the 19th Century many reformers saw public education as the best way to create a just society. In founding Ethical Culture, Felix Adler put education at its heart. Embracing aspects of Rousseau, Froebel, and Dewey, Ethical Culture supported innovation and created free public kindergartens and the Workingman’s School. To help students and society flourish today, Hugh Taft-Morales suggests we emphasize some important elements of Ethical Humanism’s approach to education: faith in the natural goodness of children, and “praxis,” an educational theory emphasizing the continuous cycle of reflection and action – testing theories by applying them to the social and civic world.

Hugh Taft-Morales joined the Baltimore Ethical Society as its professional leader in 2010, the same year he was certified by the American Ethical Union as an Ethical Culture Leader. He also serves as Leader of the Ethical Humanist Society of Philadelphia. His presence in Ethical Culture has been termed “invigorating.” Taft-Morales lives in Takoma Park, Maryland, with his wife Maureen, a Latin American Analyst with the Congressional Research Service, with whom he has three beloved children, Sean, Maya, and Justin.

MAY 17

**SPECIAL PROGRAM – 11:00 AM
AT FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH**

**“Separation Anxiety:
The First Amendment at Risk”**

Rev. Barry Lynn

Executive Director, Americans United

Rev. Barry Lynn will provide updates about the newest events in church-state separation. Some of the topics he will cover are same-gender marriage license refusals, upcoming

Supreme Court cases, memorials on public grounds, and, of course, his interactions with the Religious Right.

Since 1992, the **Rev. Barry W. Lynn** has served as executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, a Washington, D.C.-based organization dedicated to the preservation of the Constitution’s religious liberty provisions. In addition to his work as a long-time activist and lawyer in the civil liberties field, Lynn is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, offering him a unique perspective on church-state issues. Learn more at <http://au.org> and visit the Maryland Chapter at <http://au-md.org>.

This is a special Baltimore Coalition of Reason program hosted by our Coalition partner, First Unitarian Church of Baltimore. First Unitarian is located at the NW corner of Charles and Franklin. Learn more at <http://firstunitarian.net/>. Thanks to Rev. David Carl Olson and First U. for hosting us.

MAY 24

“Remembrance Sunday”

Hosted by Karen Elliott and Hugh Taft-Morales

Memorial Day Sunday offers BES members and guests a chance to celebrate people who have died but left us with gifts that enrich our lives. Whether the person was a family member or a historical figure, we owe so much to those no longer with us. We miss their living presence but take solace in the work, ideals, friendship, and love they offered to the world. In our quest to live more meaningful and ethical lives, we can turn to those who have gone before for inspiration, guidance and strength. During this platform program, members and guests will be offered a chance to honor someone important in their lives. It can be in honor of a relative, friend, mentor, or historical figure.

MAY 31

**“Hunger, Meat, and the
Banality of Evil”**

Dawn Moncrief

Founding Director, A Well-Fed World

Dawn Moncrief, founder and executive director of *A Well-Fed World*, will discuss some of the ways in which the use of animals for food increases global food insecurity by wasting and redistributing crops, fueling climate disruptions, and nor-

malizing atrocities that bolster other forms of systemic violence and injustice.

Dawn Moncrief has been a social justice advocate for more than 20 years. She has two master's degrees from The George Washington University: one in International Relations, the other in Women's Studies, both focusing on economic development. Her work highlights the ways in which high levels of meat consumption in the U.S. and globally exacerbate global hunger, especially for women and children. She also draws attention to the negative consequences of animal agriculture on climate change and the deceptiveness of "humane" marketing. Learn more at <http://awfw.org> or @AWellFedWorld.

BES SUMMER ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

Beginning June 7 Sunday school will go on vacation. Instead every Sunday throughout the summer, BES will offer children's parent- and member-led activities for the children. For more information on this series that was such a success last year, talk with Argentine Craig, chair of the Ethical Education Committee.



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS FOR SUMMER SUNDAYS

During the summer months, BES Sunday morning meetings feature talks that are less formal than platform addresses. These talks run 10–30 minutes in length and are commonly offered by BES members or friends. The speaker usually invites discussion following their talk. The Program Committee encourages BES members and friends to suggest topics for talks they'd like to give and invites you to contact Joe Adams, Angad Singh, Jayme Smith, Hugh Taft-Morales, or Emil Volcheck with your ideas and suggestions.

FAMILY GAME NIGHT AND POTLUCK DINNER

Saturday, May 30, 5:30 p.m.

Our next game Family Game Night and Potluck Dinner will be Saturday, May 30, at 5:30 p.m. at BES. Join us for a fun evening of food, drink, and games!

Sign up on this Google Doc to say what you're bringing: <http://goo.gl/tYjdgh>. Speak to our Social Events Committee (Mav Vaughan, Thomas Higdon, Ruth Schoonover, Nathan Whitmore) if you have any questions or would like to come.

VOLUNTEER AT THE CHARLES VILLAGE FESTIVAL!

**Saturday, May 30, and Sunday, May 31,
Wyman Park Dell (29th and Charles St.)**

BES will represent at the Charles Village Festival! Please volunteer to staff our table and tell the public about our community. Contact Paul Furth to sign up. The festival is free. Festival details and music schedule at www.charlesvillagefestival.net.

FAMILY BOARD AND CARD GAMES PARTY

**Sunday, May 17, 3:00-6:45 p.m.
at the home of Marjeta Cedilnic**

Join members of the Baltimore Parenting Beyond Belief Meetup for a board and card games party at the home of Marjeta Cedilnic in Howard County. Feel free to bring a game or play one of the many there. Please bring a snack or drink to share (or a small monetary contribution for the host instead). Come when you can, while the party lasts. Ms. Cedilnic is the lead organizer of the Maryland Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Address and directions provided when you RSVP.

For questions, please call her at 301-642-1065. Join the Meetup at <http://meetup.ps/2HcW20>.

BES
film
SERIES

**Wednesday, May 27,
6:30 p.m.**

The film *The Internet's Own Boy* follows the story of programming prodigy and information activist Aaron Swartz. From Swartz's help in the development of the basic Internet protocol RSS to his co-founding of Reddit, his fingerprints are all over the Internet. But it was Swartz's groundbreaking work in social justice and political organizing, combined with his aggressive approach to information access, that ensnared him in a two-year legal nightmare. It was a battle that ended with the taking of his own life at the age of 26. Aaron's story touched a nerve with people far beyond the online communities in which he was a celebrity. This film is a personal story about what we lose when we are tone deaf about technology and its relationship to our civil liberties. View the trailer at www.takepart.com/internets-own-boy. Pizza will be ordered and available for purchase by the slice.

Would you like to help select films or join the Film Series Committee? Contact Dr. Joe Adams at joeadamsm@gmail.com.

SUNDAY ASSEMBLY BALTIMORE

Sunday, May 24, 2:00 p.m.

Come to the next Sunday Assembly Baltimore! What happens at a Sunday Assembly? A Sunday Assembly service consists of songs (pop songs mainly) sung by the congregation, a reading (usually a poet), an interesting talk (that fits into live better, help often or wonder more), a moment of reflection and an address, which sums up the day and hopefully gives a take home message. Afterwards we have snacks to encourage people to stay and mingle with one another. Visit us on Facebook at fb.com/sundayassemblybaltimore.

**S
UN
DAY
ASSEMBLY**

**TOWSON SECULAR STUDENT ALLIANCE
END-OF-YEAR PARTY**

Monday, May 11, 5:00–6:00 p.m., Hawkins Hall 113

Meet and greet Towson Secular Student Alliance members. Help them celebrate the end of the academic year and talk with them about Humanism and Ethical Culture. Come on out and be an ambassador for BES! Let them know about the opportunities to connect with nontheistic and secular communities wherever they go. Pizza will be served. The event is free, but there is a charge for parking in the Campus Garage.

BIOETHICS DISCUSSION

Obamacare, Health Care Mandates and Rationing

Sunday, May 10, 4:00 p.m.

Is the Affordable Care Act good in principle? How do we balance health care mandates and personal autonomy? Should individuals be required to have health care and receive inoculations? Do people have an ethical or legal responsibility to stay healthy? How much government rationing and regulation should there be of medicines and organs for transplant? Should the government defend "ownership" of life forms or genetic codes?

SOMEONE GETTING MARRIED?

The Baltimore Ethical Society has a Leader and a team of officiants who are trained and licensed to conduct weddings, memorials, and other life passage ceremonies. For more information about our ceremonies or to make arrangements, please contact our Officiant Team Coordinator, Kathryn Sloboda, at weddings@bmoreethical.org.

ETHICAL ACTION VOLUNTEER OUTINGS

Baking Night at Moveable Feast

Thursday, May 14, 5:45–8:00 p.m. at 901 N. Milton Ave., Baltimore

Join BES members and others for this enjoyable outing at a great organization. Park in front of building and enter through the door closest to Ashland Street. Let Karen Elliott know if you are coming (KarenSElliott@aol.com) and, if you'd like to carpool, she'll try to match you up with another BES participant.

Volunteer Day at Real Food Farm

Saturday, May 16, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. at 2801 St. Lo Dr., Baltimore

We are volunteering with Real Food Farm throughout the year, contributing to a self-sustaining community and to the elimination of food deserts and food insecurity in Baltimore. All ages welcome! Please dress for the weather.

My Role as Leader

(continued from page 1)

secular uses of the term to indicate such service orientation, such as ministers to foreign countries who serve our nation as official or unofficial ambassadors. Or think of all those who “ad-minister”—civil servants who support our public services and infrastructure. This appeals to my family heritage of serving society through government and law.

Also, it's verb form (“to minister to”) means “to serve,” “to nurse,” or “to attend to.” It's about responding to people who come for help or for inspiration. I, myself, am deeply inspired by people who come to me in search of ways to live closer to their ethical ideals. It's so easy for any of us to fall prey to cynicism and fatalism. When people ask for support in living more engaged and idealistic lives, I want to be there to support them.

Bringing Ethical Culture out to the public, however, can require me to spend time outside of 306 W. Franklin Street. While networking and outreach

is meant to support our community, it's always a difficult decision to divert my limited leadership time away from our community home. Thankfully there are many wonderful volunteers at BES attending to the details that build community. But we still need more help. If you are not already serving on a committee, consider where your time and expertise might be most needed!

In the meantime, I will continue supporting our national Ethical Culture movement by serving as Vice President of the National Leaders Council, a member of two American Ethical Union committees (Ethical Education and Ethical Action), and taking on ad hoc responsibilities as strategy dictates. But starting in the fall, I will also recommit myself to bringing Ethical Culture out to Baltimoreans. If such efforts draw more resources to 306 W. Franklin Street, we could be more effective in serving people and living closer to the ideals we share.

MEMORIAL WEEKEND SUNDAY PICNIC

Sunday, May 24, 12:00 p.m.
at the home of
Dianne and Stuart Hirsch

Join us for food, fun, and fellowship following the Remembrance Sunday program at BES, which will end earlier than usual at approximately 11:30 a.m.

Members Dianne and Stuart Hirsch have graciously agreed to open their home (and yard) to us once again and so we will gather for our annual Memorial Sunday picnic from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The picnic is potluck so please bring a dish to contribute. Directions will be handed out and/or provided on request.

BES EATERY SOCIAL

Sunday, May 17, 1:00 p.m.

Members and friends are invited to go out together for lunch. We'll gather in the lobby at about 12:45 p.m. following post-platform snacks to decide what restaurant to visit.

Everyone is encouraged to wear their BES shirts or other items to help promote the society.

If you have any questions, please contact Nathan Whitmore at nww10@hampshire.edu.

BESpeak

BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, May 17, 9:15–10:15 a.m.

Come help plan the Ethical Action strategy for the Baltimore Ethical Society!

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, May 31, 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 Wayne Laufert or Janey Solwold for more information.

MINDFULNESS

meditation

Sunday, May 10, 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 it comes naturally in stressful times. Join us as we sit (on chairs) and breathe (just the way it comes naturally) and listen to the words of Thich Nhat Hanh, one of the world's best-known teachers of mindfulness.

bmorethical

Visit bmorethical.org and look for us on Facebook, Twitter, and MeetUp.com @bmorethical

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