

BESpeak

APRIL 2016

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

Democracy Spring

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

Our democracy is in danger. This month *Democracy Spring* is trying to save it. The Democracy Spring project is supported by a coalition of over 80 organizations including Code Pink, Democracy Matters, Friends of the Earth, Move On, the National Organization of Women, Peace Action, Public Citizen, Get Money Out - Maryland, Pay2Play, and our very own American Ethical Union.

The plan for Democracy Spring is to march from Philadelphia to the U. S. Capitol where participants will engage in a week of media events, public education, and civil disobedience. Democracy Spring demands that Congress, "take immediate action to end the corruption of big money in politics and ensure free and fair elections in which every American has an equal voice." Hundreds of people will risk arrest in a sit-in.

Democracy Spring is up against a lot, from public apathy to media neglect to internal friction. Given the power of corporations, does Democracy Spring have any chance of minimizing the power of money over politics or will it dissipate like Occupy? If history teaches us anything it is that politics is easily corrupted. The Reconstruction Era is a classic example with carpetbaggers lining their pockets with reconstruction money. Ulysses S. Grant, though personally honest, surrounded himself with money-grabbing partisans. Wealthy families like the Vanderbilts and Astors grew in influence and New York's infamous Boss Tweed rewarded friends with inflated government contracts.

Political king maker Mark Hanna brought graft to new heights during the Gilded Age. Hanna was the man who said, "There are two things that are important in politics. The first is money...and I can't remember what the second one is." As chair of the Republican National Committee in 1896, he contributed \$100,000 of his own money to help elect William McKinley. Hanna made a science of fundraising, literally assessing banks and businesses a percentage of their capital and funneling it to the Republican Party.

In my lifetime it was the Watergate scandal that revealed money's corrupting influence. Just before federal campaign disclosure laws took affect, for example, the Texas finance chair for Nixon's campaign filled a suitcase with checks and cash



(continued on page 7)

SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

(details on page 4)

APRIL 3

"Building Our City's Future"

Marc Steiner

Radio Talk Show Host

APRIL 10

"Wonder"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

APRIL 17

"Corporate Hegemony from Cove Point to Japan"

Margaret Flowers, M.D.

Co-director, PopularResistance.org

APRIL 24

"Liberation: Some Jewish Roots of Ethical Culture"

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Every Sunday

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.

All are welcome.

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 458

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

Hugh Taft-Morales *Leader*
Fritz Williams *Leader Emeritus*

OFFICERS & EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

President.....Paul Furth
Vice President.....Janey Solwold
Secretary.....Wayne Laufert (*acting*)
Treasurer.....Karen Elliott
Past President Emil Volcheck
Fred Compton Argentine Craig
Maria Delgado Stephen Meskin
Alan Shapiro Mary Beth Sodus
Mav Vaughan

COMMITTEE CONTACTS

BuildingRay Noemer
Caring Kirk Mullen
CommunicationsKathryn Sloboda
Ethical Action..... Thomas Higdon
Ethical Education Argentine Craig
Film Series Joe Adams
Financial Stephen Meskin
Membership..... Wayne Laufert
 and Janey Solwold
Program.....Greg Corbitt
 and Emil Volcheck
Public Relations.....Paul Furth
Social Events Mav Vaughan
Space Rentals Joe Adams

ACTIVITY CONTACTS

Baking Night..... Karen Elliott
Meditation Karen Elliott
Poetry..... Kirk Mullen
Workshops..... Hugh Taft-Morales

ETHICAL CULTURE/ HUMANIST OFFICIANTS

Ben Busby, Karen Elliott, Paul Furth,
Kate LaClair, Kirk Mullen,
Hugh Taft-Morales, Amy Trauth-Nare

Contacts by e-mail: use President,
VicePresident (one word), Treasurer,
Secretary, or Admin followed by
@bmorethical.org. For general
questions: ask@bmorethical.org.

On the web at bmorethical.org

Open Arms to Open Minds

by Paul Furth, BES President

How did you discover Ethical Culture and find the Baltimore Ethical Society (BES)? Chances are, you found BES through one of many publications or social media. Maybe you came to BES through a newspaper ad, perhaps Facebook or even from Meetup, publicizing many of the events initiated by the efforts of our members. However you found us, thanks for joining! And thanks to our Public Relations Committee (PRC) for being responsible for getting much of that information to the public.

PRC is charged with distributing information and teaching the public about the existence of BES, what we do and why we exist. We promote events, and spread ideas and issues supported by BES. In addition, we engage in discussions directly with people on the significance of Ethical Culture, being good based on reason and grounded in humanity. We hope, as a result, to attract people to our Sunday Platforms or any of our many events, and that they find BES the friendly, spiritual, dynamic and thought-provoking community engaged in social justice for which they've been searching.

Most commonly, we make use of social media and combine efforts with the Communications Deliverables Committee that handles traditional print. Our most effective teacher is you, personal interaction and communication. One way we interact directly with people is through public events. For example, the committee decides what street festivals or other public events BES will attend. Some of the festivals and events we have attended include the Baltimore Book Festival, Charles Village Festival, Pigtown Festival, Pride, Bolton Hill Festival, African American Cultural Festival, BaltiCon, Hamilton Festival, and ECOFEST, to name a few. These festivals give us the opportunity to reach people who may have never heard of us, and to talk with them one-on-one. With a booth and banner displaying our logo and motto, and a table filled with information contained in flyers, pamphlets and books, we are the public teachers for BES and Ethical Culture to those who are curious and want to learn more.

We use social media such as Twitter (with over 330 followers), Facebook (with over 630 likes) and Google AdWords. These forms of media are useful to reach large groups of people over a large area.

I found BES through Meetup. The BES Meetup group was launched in May 2011 and now has over 500 members, far in excess of our society membership. These social media members are potential candidates to join the society as they've identified themselves as being interested in face-to-face BES meetings. A member of a Meetup probably has a greater level of interest in physically coming to BES than a Twitter follower or someone who likes our Facebook page. Meetup has a feature to allow bottom-up organization of events allowing any member to create an event.



(continued on page 5)

Ethical Education in April

Throughout the month of April, we will be paying attention to our planet Earth – the house we live in. Our word ecology comes from the Greek word oikos, which means house. No matter where in the world we live, we occupy the same house. We are all people of the Earth who are connected to each other by our mutual humanity, expressed through singing, dancing and storytelling.

So, during the month of April, the pre-K children will be talking about their house/Earth and the new season of Spring. They will plant a seed that can be observed at home over the following days and weeks. They will read books such as *The Earth Book* by Todd Parr and then brainstorm as to how they can take care of the Earth and celebrate our home. Pre-K teacher Jill Gordon will listen attentively to their brainstorms.

The same storytelling/reading about planet Earth will be occurring in the BES Library room for the Toddlers with the loving care of Ruth Schoonover.



The pre-teens (6-12 years) state a core value of BES: "I am part of the earth: I cherish it and all life upon it." Linda Joy Burke guides the group in creating projects that illustrate, demonstrate, and deepen that value.

Celebration of Earth Day (April 23)

Through the NAVIGATORS program, the teens will be involved in

two activities (See Monique Stins):

- Saturday, April 9 — Sensory Friendly Trail Hike
- Saturday, April 30 — Robofest

On Sundays, Teens are invited to participate in a facilitated "Teen Talk" with refreshments (after the platform program in the platform room 103). See Argentine Craig, EEC Chairperson, for more information.

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 Greg Corbitt (co-chair) or any member of the committee: Joe Adams, Uta Allers, Paul Furth, Stephen Meskin, Margie Roswell, Angad Singh, Jayme Smith, Gordon Stills, Hugh Taft-Morales, or Emil Volcheck with your ideas and suggestions.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

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

Mindfulness Meditation

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

Board Meeting

Sunday, April 10, 12:30 p.m.

Between the World and Me Follow-Up Book Discussion

Sunday, April 10, 1:00 p.m.

Charm City Film Series

Wednesday, April 13, 6:30 p.m.

Baking Night at Moveable Feast

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

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, April 17, 12:30 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

Sunday, April 17, 12:45 p.m.

Family Board and Card Games Party

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

Annual Membership Meeting

Sunday, April 24, 12:30 p.m.

Sunday Assembly Baltimore

Sunday, April 24, 2:00 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	April 3
G to L	April 10
M to R	April 17
S to Z	April 24



SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

APRIL 3

“Building Our City’s Future”

Marc Steiner

Radio Talk Show Host

Baltimore’s own Marc Steiner of WEAA and the Center for Emerging Media will be joining us to talk about race, poverty, building our city’s future and to share stories about his work in journalism.

Marc Steiner is an American radio talk show host. He currently hosts *The Marc Steiner Show* on WEAA 88.9FM, an NPR affiliate station in Baltimore, Maryland. He previously worked for WYPR (and its predecessor, WJHU) from 1993 until his firing on February 1, 2008. He also operates his own production company, the Center for Emerging Media. CEM produced the Peabody award-winning series “Just Words,” which featured the voices and stories of working people in Baltimore often relegated to statistics. Marc lives with his wife, Valerie, and resides in Sparks, Maryland.

APRIL 10

“Wonder”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

We often take the world for granted, checking off the mundane tasks of our “to do list” without looking up towards broader horizons and open skies. Exclusively focusing on the practical, one can lose touch with the awe, mystery and wonder that we felt as a child. In the words of John Stuart Mill, “It is not understanding that destroys wonder, it is familiarity.” How can we keep the unfamiliar in our lives? What is “wonder” and how can it help inspire us to live more fully?

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.

APRIL 17

“Corporate Hegemony from Cove Point to Japan”

Margaret Flowers, M.D.

Co-director, PopularResistance.org

Dr. Flowers will connect the dots between a Calvert County gas plant and the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). She is a leader of the resistance movements to both. The gas processing terminal planned for Calvert County, the first such facility in the world to be built in such a densely populated neighborhood, endangers health and safety locally, and also globally through the encouragement of fracking with its groundwater and global warming consequences. The plant in Southern Maryland is directly connected to the TPP, an international agreement that gives corporations legal rights to sue governments for enacting policies protecting health, the environment, and human rights, based on possible loss of future profits. Taxpayers would then be required to compensate corporations for these projected losses.

Dr. Margaret Flowers is a pediatrician, co-director of PopularResistance.org, which works to build alternative systems rooted in respect for human rights and democracy. She is co-host of *Clearing the FOG* which airs live on Monday mornings on We Act Radio.

APRIL 24

“Liberation: Some Jewish Roots of Ethical Culture”

Hugh Taft-Morales

Leader, Baltimore Ethical Society

Felix Adler, the founder of Ethical Culture, drew inspiration from many sources. They included Emerson, Immanuel Kant, and the historical Jesus. The deepest and most consistent source, however, was Judaism. Raised in a culture committed to Reform Judaism, Adler carried into Ethical Culture an appreciation of some lofty goals of family tradition, such as a collective duty to heal a broken world and liberate humanity from oppression. In this season of Passover, which honors the ancient liberation from Egyptian slavery, Hugh Taft-Morales explores some of the Jewish and Reform roots of Ethical Culture.

'RADIO BES' PLEDGE LUNCHEON A SUCCESS!



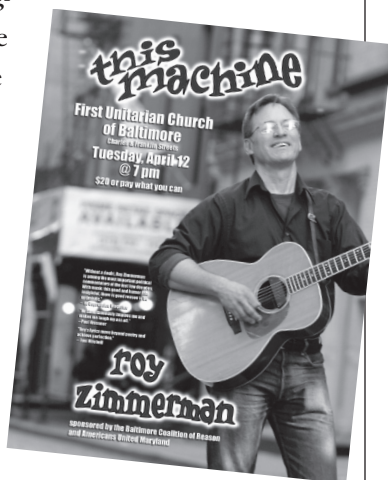
Our annual Pledge Luncheon was a success! Those who came had a great time, schmoozing with friends and new comers, eating (mostly) healthy food, and enjoying some good-nature entertainment.

Roy Zimmerman Concert “This Machine”

Tuesday, April 12, 7:00 p.m., at First Unitarian

“This Machine” is ninety minutes of Roy Zimmerman’s hilarious, rhyme-intensive original songs. The title is a reference to Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger to be sure, but also an acknowledgment that song-writing does good work in the world. “Sometimes I think satire is the most hopeful and heartfelt form of expression,” says Roy, “because in calling out the world’s absurdities and laughing in their face, I’m affirming the real possibility of change.” Roy’s songs have been heard on HBO and Showtime. He’s shared stages with Bill Maher, Robin Williams, Ellen DeGeneres, John Oliver, Kate Clinton and George Carlin. He’s been profiled on NPR’s “All Things Considered,” and he’s a featured blogger for the Huffington Post.

Admission is \$20 (or whatever you can afford). Learn more or RSVP on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/187694008276691/> or Meetup: <http://www.meetup.com/bmorethical/events/229032746/>.



Open Arms to Open Minds

(continued from page 2)

Emil Volcheck (who established our Meetup group and runs our Google AdWords campaign) was Chair of PRC, and oversaw much of the additions and changes that have helped make PRC what it is today. After being elected BES President, he recruited Ken Brenneman (our first BES “Tweetmaster” who once had a program of tweeting inspirational quotes along with events) to take over as Chair. Along with Jayme Smith, PRC was galvanized and actively pursued many street festivals, involving many members of BES in these efforts. I volunteered as Co-Chair about three years ago to assist Ken. We launched an Ambassador Program, for which BES members attend the events of other groups of freethinkers and humanists to reach out to these people.

For the past year, I’ve struggled to keep PRC going without the benefit of Ken. Even though we did manage a few festivals, and to keep up our social media, my focus was elsewhere. So this year, PRC is reinventing itself. Joe Adams has stepped up to be Co-Chair. With his strengths in marketing, he’ll help promotion greatly. Nathan Whitmore and Thomas Higdon have handled much of the social media. We also appreciate the help from Emil, Karen Elliott, Anita Brown, Uta Allers and Greg Corbitt (and Hugh Taft-Morales, ex-officio). I predict that 2016 will be a pivotal year for PRC and BES.

“The office of the public teacher is an unenviable and thankless one.” – Felix Adler

These words were uttered by our founder. Perhaps meant literally, specific to those whose profession is teaching, but the statement may also ring true for those engaged in prodding the public into thoughts of reason, ethics and science. PRC reaches out to those who are eager to question dogma, enjoy civil discourse, and appreciate the values of democracy that nurture freethinking. We at BES are very thankful to our public teachers. At BES, we are all teachers. And we can use your help as teachers. Please consider joining PRC and be a force for good, to reach out to others and invite them to join a growing and vibrant community.

SAVE THE DATE

Reason Rally on Saturday, June 4, 2016

Speak up for Reason at the Lincoln Memorial! Visit ReasonRally.org for details!

CHARM CITY Film SERIES

Wednesday, April 13,
6:30 p.m.

This month, the Charm City Film Series will be screening ***Black Gold – Wake Up and Smell the Coffee.***

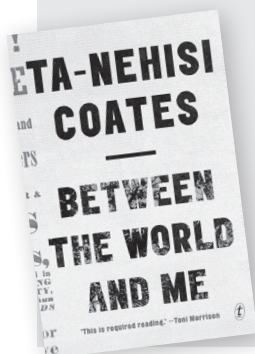
Multinational coffee companies dominate the industry worth over \$80 billion, making coffee the most valuable trading commodity in the world after oil. But while we continue to pay for our lattes and cappuccinos, the price paid to coffee farmers remains so low that many have been forced to abandon their coffee fields.

Nowhere is this paradox more evident than in Ethiopia, the birthplace of coffee. Tadesse Meskela is one man on a mission to save his 74,000 struggling coffee farmers from bankruptcy. As his farmers strive to harvest some of the highest quality coffee beans on the international market, Tadesse travels the world in an attempt to find buyers willing to pay a fair price. Learn more and watch the trailer at black-goldmovie.com.

The film is free and open to the public. Donations are suggested.

BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME FOLLOW-UP BOOK DISCUSSION

Sunday, April 10, 1:00 p.m.



Thanks to Kirk Mullen for holding a book discussion last month focusing on the #1 *New York Times* bestseller, *Between the World and Me*, by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Due to snow and schedule, Hugh and some others missed that discussion, so Hugh is offering a second round of discussion of Coates important work. Email Hugh at leader@bmorethical.org to sign up!

SUNDAY ASSEMBLY BALTIMORE

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

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 tea and cake (well, in Britain anyway!) to encourage people to stay and mingle with one another. Visit us on Facebook at fb.com/sundayassemblybaltimore.

The Sunday Assembly is a global movement for wonder and good. It is an international not-for-profit that helps people start and run their own godless congregations. Our motto: Live Better, Help Often and Wonder More.

Our mission: to help everyone find and fulfill their full potential. Read more at sundayassembly.com.

S
U
N
D
A
Y
A
S
S
E
M
B
L
Y

CELEBRATE ANOTHER YEAR OF BES AT THE ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING!

Sunday, April 24, 12:30 p.m.

Please stay after the platform address on April 24th for our Annual Membership Meeting. At this meeting, we celebrate a year of success by reporting on our growth and achievements over the past year. We welcome the new leadership team when we announce our election results. We renew our commitment to the society and to each other when we review and approve the society's budget and pledge campaign goal for the next fiscal year July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017. We encourage questions, comments, suggestions, and volunteering. This is democracy in action, folks, so please attend this important meeting! We hope you can join us!

Democracy Spring

(continued from page 1)

laundered through Mexican banks and delivered it to the Committee to Re-Elect the President, otherwise known appropriately as CREEP. Hugh Sloan, CREEP's treasurer, received a secret "avalanche" of cash that led to a brief flurry of reform and the creation of the Federal Election Commission.

In the nineties the Democratic Party went too far. Bill Clinton spoke at over 230 fundraising events in the 10 months leading up to the 1996 elections. The Democratic National Committee garnered \$122 million in "soft money," money not explicitly given to a specific candidate and thus avoiding many regulations. John Huang, vice chair of finance for the DNC, was caught laundering almost a million dollars from an Indonesian company, showing how easily foreign governments can influence our government.

The public condemned this and, in 2002, John McCain and Russell Feingold pushed through the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act that prohibited unregulated contributions or "soft money." But McCain-Feingold was nullified by *Citizens United* and money once again dominates!

Now Democracy Spring is demanding *any* serious proposal for legislative action to address this crisis that is consistent with the imperative of citizen equality." There's plenty to choose from. How about Senator Sarbanes' *Government By the People Act* giving every voter a \$25 refundable tax credit to spur small-dollar contributions to candidates and encouraging them to refuse Political Action Committee cash? Or Alabama's Rep. Sewell and his *Voting Rights Advancement Act* empowering the attorney general to place federal observers at the polls and

monitor state changes in voting laws? Or Sen. Durbin's *Fair Elections Now Act* that would use voluntary public financing to blunt the influence of the rich and special interests? Personally, I like Rep. Deutch's *Democracy for All Act* allowing for "reasonable limits on the raising and spending of money by candidates" and allowing legislatures to "distinguish between natural persons and corporations" – a direct attempt to nullify *Citizens United*?

It's possible that by the time you read this column we will know if Democracy Spring had any impact on the system. But even if it doesn't, I think it is worthy of my time as an Ethical Culture Leader. The founder of Ethical Culture, Felix Adler, viewed creating a more perfect union as sacred. He wanted us to live up to our motto, *e pluribus unum*, out of many one. Balancing individual integrity and group needs democracy was what Adler called "the spiritual end of citizenship."

George O'Dell who embodied the national office of the AEU for thirty years expressed a similar sentiment: *Democracy is something more than a pulling of a lever in a polling booth. It means the appeal to think in social terms, to belong consciously in a community, to share intelligence with others, to do one's work in the world so as to enhance the working power and achievement of others, to recognize that class barriers and economic distinctions are an insult to the human soul, that in all persons there is the possibility of decency...."*

Does Democracy Spring ask too much of our fragile mode of governance? Can it overcome the many forces that batter our ideals? Can we protect democracy against corporate power and the politics of hate? Is this a springtime for Democracy, or are we just fooling ourselves? Time will tell.

IGNITE BALTIMORE

Thursday, April 21,
7:00 p.m. at MICA

At every Ignite Baltimore, 16 artists, technologists, thinkers and personalities get 5 minutes and 20 slides to spark new conversations and collaborations across cultures and disciplines. Join friends from the Baltimore Coalition of Reason for this exciting event! Tickets have not yet been announced for sale, so watch the Members list for an announcement or visit ignitebaltimore.com.

FAMILY BOARD AND CARD GAMES PARTY

Sunday, April 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. Feel free to bring a game or play one of the many there. Please bring a snack or drink to share (or make a small monetary contribution to 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: to do so or to have questions answered, please call 301-642-1065.



BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

Sunday, April 17, 12:45 p.m.

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, April 17, 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, April 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

Welcome to BESpeak, the newsletter of the Baltimore Ethical Society. Donations from readers like you help us keep it in production. Send checks payable to Baltimore Ethical Society to: BESpeak, 306 W. Franklin St., Ste. 102, Baltimore, MD 21201. If you would like to subscribe to the online version of this newsletter, sign up at bmorethical.org. Thank you.