

# BESpeak

JUNE-AUGUST 2016

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

## Reflections on “Godless Spirituality”

by Hugh Taft-Morales, BES Leader

On Thursday, April 21st, I spoke for five minutes at Ignite Baltimore, an event that brings 16 speakers on stage for five minutes each to share their questions, vision, stories, and personality with an audience of 400. The goal of Ignite events is “to spark new conversation and collaborations across cultures and disciplines.”

I was lucky enough to be invited to speak and I chose as my topic, “Godless Spirituality.” Five minutes for a topic like that – I must have been crazy! But, at least I had a BES contingent there to cheer me on which included Margie Roswell, Lisa Alderson, Lane Berk, Ray Noemer, Janey Solwold, Kathryn Sloboda, Thomas Higdon, Kathleen Wilsbach, Emil Volcheck, Maria Delgado, Paul Furth, Nathan Whitmore, Greg Corbitt, Anneke Houge and Jon Tomas. (I apologize if I missed anyone!)

This brief presentation was backed (literally, in this case, since the images were behind me) by twenty slides advancing every 15 seconds. My son Justin helped me put together this my first (*yes, my first!*) PowerPoint presentation. It became clear as I practiced that timing was everything. Having slides come up earlier or later than the words they were meant to represent was at the very least distracting. Luckily I managed to keep the rhythm through my presentation and even enjoyed myself in the process. You can see the talk by searching for my name on the Ignite Baltimore Youtube channel, or by pasting this into your URL: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IniYwK3bbGE&list=PLvCBTR8hPQIPyL6\\_UJlZr\\_2BTZiyW11PF&index=6](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IniYwK3bbGE&list=PLvCBTR8hPQIPyL6_UJlZr_2BTZiyW11PF&index=6).

The reason why I chose this topic is that I wanted to reclaim the term “spirituality” so that pragmatic, godless freethinkers could – if they choose – use the term with their heads held high! As I explained in the presentation, not everyone likes the term “spirituality.” But our founder, Felix Adler, used the term “spiritual” not to imply the existence of supernatural entities like god, angels, or ghosts, but because it provided him existential energy – it enhanced his commitment and capacity to live a more fully engaged, meaningful, and responsible life. While he often said that he used the term “spiritual” just as he would use the term “ethical,” it is clear that for him spirituality implied a deeper, more emotional experience. It does the same for me.

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### SUMMER SUNDAYS

10:30 a.m.

Informal discussions on topics related to social, spiritual, and philosophical issues – or just a little bit of fun.

(details on pages 4–5)

JUNE 5

#### “The Experiences of One Baltimore Police Officer”

Uta Allers and SSG Derek Tucker

JUNE 12

#### “Kurt Vonnegut: The Secular Sermonist”

Wayne Laufert and Jane Wehrle

JUNE 19

#### “Learning to Breathe”

Karen Elliott

JUNE 26

#### “Building Community Through Time Banking”

Nine Trillion, Emil Volcheck,  
and the LetsBMore Team

JULY 3

#### “Ethical Culture in Old England”

Gordon Stills

JULY 10

#### “Exercise the Right Side of Your Brain!”

Karen Elliott and Therese Spadaro

JULY 17

#### “Introducing the B'more Clubhouse Tour”

B'more Clubhouse Members

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# BESpeak

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## Issue 460

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

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@bmorethical.org. For general  
questions: ask@bmorethical.org.

**On the web at bmorethical.org**

# Personal Thoughts From Your President

by *Paul Furth, BES President*

**T**he past year has been a major learning experience for me. It's been a year of many struggles, highs and lows, anguishes and successes... a year of extremes of good and bad. While I've gained from these experiences, there's more to learn.

Let's welcome our newly elected Board Members. Thomas Higdon will serve as Vice President; our new At-Large Board Members are Charles Shafer and Gordon Stills. Please join me in warmly welcoming them. Reelected Board Members are Janey Solwold as Secretary, Karen Elliott as Treasurer, Fred Compton and Emil Volcheck as At-Large Board Members. And continuing as At-Large Board Members are Stephen Meskin and Alan Shapiro with Hugh Taft-Morales serving ex-officio. I thank our outgoing Board Members, Argentine Craig, Wayne Laufert, Maria P. Delgado, Mav Vaughan and Amy Trauth-Nare for their help and dedication to our community. I'm honored to serve another year as your President.

My mom died last November. Six years ago, I came back to Baltimore to care for her. For several months before and after her death, I was under much distress. Yet, it was during this time of great sadness that I also came to realize the beauty of our BES Community. Being one who had shied away from congregations, never really being part of a community, I found the support and love demonstrated by you during my darkest days to be profound, healing and deep. I will always appreciate this show of support you gave me.

Even now, I continue to grieve. Although lessening, the pain from the loss of my mom will be with me. It's through such pain that I grow. I think it's a mistake for people to consider death and life as opposites. For me, the opposite of death is birth - both are transitional processes. We have no understanding what and if there's something after death beyond the physical attributes. There are many beliefs regarding "the afterlife." Many believe in a heaven or hell, some believe in reincarnation, some believe that death is the end for which there is nothing beyond, some believe that an 'energy force' of some kind remains. And we welcome to BES those with these and other beliefs. For me, it really doesn't matter. What's important is right here and now. Yet, whenever someone close to us dies, there will be changes for all those who are left. When my mom died, part of me died with her. Although it still hurts, much like birth must be painful, healing does happen naturally. And like any transition, as one state ends, a new one opens. I'm not quite there yet, but I do know something new will come.

One of the reasons I left the Catholic Church while in my teens (and still in Catholic high school) was due to my disagreement with much of their dogma. I rejected the concept of Satan/the devil and Hell, as none of it made any sense to me even within the parameters of Christianity. That led to many other dogma rejections, especially on social issues to which the Catholic Church claims all Catho-



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**FULFILL YOUR  
PLEDGE BY  
JUNE 30!**

Remember June 30 is the end of the current pledge cycle (FY 2015-2016). Please make a contribution to fulfill your pledge if you have not already done so. Help BES finish strong and get a great start on the next year!

**SUMMER SUNDAYS**

*(continued from page 1)*

**JULY 24**

**"AEU Assembly Report"**

Karen Elliott, Stephen Meskin,  
Emil Volcheck, Kathleen Wilsbach

**JULY 31**

**"The Real News Network  
Field Trip"**

Jackie Hryncewich and Paul Jay

**AUGUST 7**

**"Esperanto"**

Nine Trillion and Emil Volcheck

**AUGUST 14**

**"A Humanist View on the  
Non-existence of God"**

Fred Compton

**AUGUST 21**

**"Scared and Sacred Score  
the Same in Scrabble"**

Charles Shafer

**AUGUST 28**

**"What is Nuclear Medicine?"**

Gabriel Soudry, M.D.

**SEPTEMBER 4**

**"Celebrate National  
Recovery Month"**

Thomas Higdon

# Summer Children's Activities

The Sunday Ethical Education sessions for Tots-to-Teens will resume on September 11, 2016. However, during the summer months of June, July and August, we are recommending activities and events that address the core ethical humanist values of:

- cherishing and being part of the earth and all life upon it;
- learning from the world by using senses, mind, feelings and creativity;
- being a member of the world community which depends on the co-operation of all people for peace and justice; and
- treating every person fairly and kindly.

## Activities and Events

**The Reginald F. Lewis Museum** (830 Pratt Street, Baltimore) on Saturday, June 11 at 12:00 p.m. I Am Franklin: Comic Book Art Workshop. Free. Create comic book art with artist using the African American character



Franklin Armstrong from the comic strip Peanuts. Recommended for ages 8-14.

**The Baltimore Museum of Art** (10 Art Museum Drive) every Sunday throughout the summer from 2:00-5:00 p.m. Free. Explore your creative side with hands-on art-making workshops.

**Navigators USA – Chapter 43 Baltimore** ([www.facebook.com/Navigators-USA-Chapter-43-Baltimore-MD-117313418453537](http://www.facebook.com/Navigators-USA-Chapter-43-Baltimore-MD-117313418453537)) Accessible sailing trip; orienteering day; tubing in Gunpowder Falls; camping and other outdoor summer events.

**Enoch Pratt Free Library Waverly Branch** (400 East 33rd St.) on Saturday June 11, at 1:00 p.m. Just for Teens. Get in the spirit for PrattCon: state-of-the-art video games delivered in a mobile unit. Find out more at [gаметruckparty.com/howard-county](http://gаметruckparty.com/howard-county).

**Enoch Pratt Free Library Central Branch** (400 Cathedral Street) Preschool Leaps – Stories, songs, and fun. Saturdays at 11:00 a.m.

## INDIGO MAGIC

**Saturday, July 16, 12:00 p.m.  
at the Frederick Douglass-  
Issac Myers Maritime Park**

Indigo Magic is an exhibition that uses indigo as a lens to view, witness, and contemplate the ways that indigenous African traditions show up in contemporary African American art forms. If there is interest, we can have lunch afterwards. RSVP to [mav.vaughan@gmail.com](mailto:mav.vaughan@gmail.com).

## FELL'S POINT GHOST WALK

**Saturday, Aug. 20, 8:00 p.m.**

We can't claim to be truly rational until we fully investigate the supernatural. Join us with an open mind, and perhaps you'll be surprised! This is a family friendly event (not the Haunted Pub Crawl). Tickets cost \$13. RSVP to [mav.vaughan@gmail.com](mailto:mav.vaughan@gmail.com) and purchase your ticket ahead of time online.

## SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

**JUNE 5**

### “The Experiences of One Baltimore Police Officer”

Uta Allers and SSG Derek Tucker

Baltimore City Police officer SSG Derek Tucker will share his experiences in a program facilitated by Uta Allers.

**JUNE 12**

### “Kurt Vonnegut: The Secular Sermonist”

Wayne Laufert and Jane Wehrle

Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007) advocated his own brand of humanism in novels like *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *Cat's Cradle*, and *Breakfast of Champions* as well as in many essays and speeches. Sources of the freethinking Hoosier's sense of morality ranged from Jesus Christ to Carl Sagan. BES member Wayne Laufert will be joined by Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library board member and Vonnegut Baltimore book club founder Jane Wehrle to explore the best-selling author's views about how human beings should treat one another.

**JUNE 19**

### “Learning to Breathe”

Karen Elliott

Qi Gong is an ancient Chinese practice that is still common today, not just in China but all over the world. Exercises that coordinate breath with movements are done in a meditative way. Karen Elliott will talk about qi gong and then lead some simple qi gong exercises.

**JUNE 26**

### “Building Community Through Time Banking”

Nine Trillion, Emil Volcheck, and the LetsBMore team  
Time banking is a way for people to give and receive services in which their contributions are measured in time, not dollars. One hour helping another earns one time bank hour, which can be spent receiving a hour of service from yet another. Time banking builds supportive networks and strong communities. It differs from volunteering because it encourages reciprocity and recognizes that everyone has skills and their own distinctive worth. In this workshop, you will learn about

LetsBMore – the Baltimore Time Bank, how you can join it, and how you can use it to help others and yourself. Learn more at [letsbmore.org](http://letsbmore.org).

**JULY 3**

### “Ethical Culture in Old England”

Gordon Stills

Gordon will relate a story (full of excitement) about the joy and dismay of teaching middle school students about the ethical culture of Charles Dickens and Ebenezer Scrooge.

**JULY 10**

### “Exercise the Right Side of Your Brain!”

Karen Elliott and Therese Spadaro

Artist Therese Spadaro and poet Karen Elliott will demonstrate for you what can happen when you activate the right side of your brain, and then provide you with some tools you can use to make some artistic creations yourself using visual art and/or words. No experience necessary – all levels of right brain use are welcome.

**JULY 17**

### “Introducing the B'more Clubhouse Tour”

B'more Clubhouse Members

Today we welcome our friends from the B'More Clubhouse – a nonprofit membership organization which assists adults with mental illness in leading meaningful and productive lives of their choice in the community. Much more than simply a program or a social service, the clubhouse is most importantly a community of people who are working together toward a common goal. They are intentionally organized to support individuals living with the effects of mental illness.

**JULY 24**

### “AEU Assembly Report”

Karen Elliott, Stephen Meskin,  
Emil Volcheck, Kathleen Wilsbach

BES members Karen Elliott, Stephen Meskin, Emil Volcheck, and Kathleen Wilsbach will report on the 101st Assembly of the American Ethical Union that took place July 14-17 in St. Louis. The theme of the conference was “Bending the Arc of History Toward Justice.” Hear the latest news and inspiring stories of action from across the Ethical Culture Movement!



## SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

**JULY 31**

### “The Real News Network Field Trip”

Jackie Hryncewich, Development Manager,  
and Paul Jay, CEO

The Real News Network (TRNN) is a non-profit, viewer-supported daily video-news and documentary service. Since 2007, TRNN has produced more than 7,000 stories that have been viewed more than 100 million times. While TRNN has international scope, it reports news with ordinary people's interests in mind. TRNN has an office in Toronto and headquarters in Baltimore, with their main studio and offices near City Hall. TRNN does not accept advertising, nor any government or corporate funding; TRNN is sustained by viewer donations and earned revenue. Learn more at [trnn.com](http://trnn.com). TRNN producer/executive assistant Dharna Noor and news anchor Jaisal Noor are children of BES member Angad Singh.

BES will visit for a tour and presentation by Paul Jay, CEO, and Jackie Hryncewich, Development Manager. The tour starts at 11:00 am at TRNN headquarters, 231 N. Holliday St. If you would like a ride, please notify Nine Trillion at 443-766-4772 and arrive at BES by 10:30 a.m. Carpools will leave at 10:40 a.m. You may also meet the tour group at TRNN. *(Note for parking that the JFX Farmer's Market will be in season.)*

**AUGUST 7**

### “Esperanto”

Nine Trillion and Emil Volcheck

Esperanto is a language introduced in 1887 by Dr. L.L. Zamenhof after years of development. He proposed this as a second language that would allow people who speak different native languages to communicate, yet at the same time retain their own languages and cultural identities. Esperanto can be learned in much less time than any other language (some say that it is four times faster) and by learning Esperanto you can also learn to understand other languages better and easier! This is the fairest and least painful way for people from different countries to find a common language of world peace and friendship. Learn more at: [www.esperanto-usa.org/en](http://www.esperanto-usa.org/en).

**AUGUST 14**

### “A Humanist View on the Non-existence of God”

Fred Compton

Fred Compton will share his views, insights about Humanism; What it's about and what it means to him. As a long-time BES

member, Fred enjoys the fellowship, support, and spirit of sharing that's found throughout the Humanist movement. He will also share his observations on the issue of 'God' from a Humanist perspective.

**AUGUST 21**

### “Scared and Sacred Score the Same in Scrabble”

Charles Shafer

In *Sacred and Scared*, Charles Shafer assumes a variety of quirky characters who have religious encounters of various sorts, including, a lovely but lonely young lady, a loudmouth know-it-all, and a rabbi/teacher/CEO along with Jesus and God himself. They appear in a variety of madcap scenes including a bizarre college class, a film noir adventure and a frantic attempt to avoid calamity.

Shafer, a law professor, is interested in the use of comedy to explore social issues. This is his first solo show. He says, “I want to present a very funny show that has embedded within some questions about god and religion. But I have to be honest, being entertaining and having a good time myself is number one goal.”

**AUGUST 28**

### “What is Nuclear Medicine?”

Gabriel Soudry, M.D., Director,  
Section of Nuclear Medicine, Medstar Health

“When I meet new people and say that I am a Nuclear Medicine specialist, most have no idea of what I do. Yet 17 millions of Nuclear Medicine procedures are performed every year in the United States. I will explain in simple terms the basic principles of Nuclear Imaging. Then I will show a few examples of commonly performed studies and what unique information they bring to the diagnosis of the patients. I will keep the presentation short to allow ample time for questions.” - Dr. Soudry

**SEPTEMBER 4**

### “Celebrate National Recovery Month”

Thomas Higdon

Join a panel of Society members and friends as they share their experiences with mental health, addiction, and different pathways to recovery.

## CHARM CITY

# film

## SERIES

Wednesday, June 8, July 13,  
August 10, 6:30 p.m.

In June we will be screening ***Orwell Rolls In His Grave***. The film is described as the consummate critical examination of the Fourth Estate, once the bastion of American democracy. Has America entered an Orwellian world of doublespeak where outright lies can pass for the truth?

In July we will screen ***Selma***. This unforgettable true story chronicles the tumultuous three-month period in 1965, when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led a dangerous campaign to secure equal voting rights in the face of violent opposition.

The films are free and open to the public. Donations are suggested.

## Reflections on “Godless Spirituality”

(continued from page 1)

A column by my mentor, Joe Chuman, helped me come to a better appreciation for the term as I use it occasionally in my life. (You can find it on the Bergen County website at [ethicalfocus.org/self-or-other-spirituality-or-social-justice](http://ethicalfocus.org/self-or-other-spirituality-or-social-justice).) As long-time Leader of the Ethical Culture Society of Bergen County, Joe combines as well as anyone I know intellectual precision, a passion for justice, and concrete pragmatism.

In my talk I said that if you want to nurture your own form of “godless spirituality,” then please do it with “the steady legs of science, the wings of imagination, and outstretched helping hands.” I want observation and reason to ground my spirituality. I want the imagination to help it soar. And I want reason and imagination to help me live a more ethical life.

This type of spirituality fits into what Chuman calls a “metaphorical spirituality.” It has nothing to do with supernaturalism. It is about, what Chuman calls, “some type of heightened emotional experience, such as the uplift one feels

when listening to beautiful music, or the sense of warm togetherness one feels in the midst of a powerful communal experience.” This type of experience can induce feelings of wonder and connection to things greater than ourselves. It can draw us out of ourselves and towards others and help us work together for a world that treats others with dignity and respect.

This is why I joined Ethical Culture to begin with. It’s what I will explore more in my summer months as I prepare for our fall season. Until then, I will leave you with some closing words of my mentor. Joe Chuman asks a fundamental question and offers a simple response: “Is it possible to develop a spirituality that is tightly intertwined with a broader ethic? I believe it is.... [I]n my view, humanist that I am, religion and spirituality count for little unless, in the final analysis, they conduce toward the ethical. In other words, the purpose and end of the spiritual experience – the spiritual quest – in my humble opinion, should make of us better people.”

## GETTING OUT THE VOTE

This is just a brief shout out to all the BES volunteers and to Rob English and staff of BUILD, and to all our coalition partners for their great work organizing our “Get out the Vote” efforts on April 26th. Personally, I spent the first half of my day helping set up “headquarters” at City Temple Church of Baltimore at Dolphin and Eutaw Streets and then driving voters to and from the polls. In addition to being able to demonstrate my craft skills (I made balloon bouquets to decorate headquarters), I also enjoyed conversation with the voters, all of whom were engaged in the election and grateful for the ride. It is one little way BUILD helped me connect with a Baltimore that needs to be united.

– Hugh Taft-Morales



## **AEU ASSEMBLY: BENDING THE ARC OF HISTORY**

**Thursday, July 14 through Sunday, July 17, St. Louis, Missouri**

Attend our annual Ethical Culture national assembly in St. Louis from Thursday, July 14 – Sunday, July 17! Our theme is our commitment through collective action to bend the arc of history toward justice. These four days will be full of inspiring workshops, entertaining performances, and engaging activities with Ethical Humanists from around the country. An Ethical Action Project at the St. Louis Area Foodbank will occur first on Thursday, followed by activities and workshops on Friday emphasizing growing our societies. Saturday focuses on issues of justice for marginalized people in America, and that evening we will honor Millennial Activists United with the Elliott-Black award for their dedication to end racial injustice and police brutality. Visit the AEU website at [www.aeu.org](http://www.aeu.org) to signup and for further information. Be a part of Ethical Culture at the national level! Register today!

## **Personal Thoughts From Your President**

*(continued from page 2)*

lics must adhere, be it their claim that using contraceptives is abhorrent or that abortion is a sin even when the woman would die without it. Many of the ideas and personal beliefs I formed led to the estrangement of many a 'Catholic friend'; I suppose they felt threatened or afraid of my ideas, and an unwillingness to engage in any discussion. For them, it seems, any thoughts or ideas that the Vatican doesn't tell them to follow are to be feared. Inevitably, I became the outsider, the other, not one of them. And as much as the pressure to 'fit in' was there, I could only be true to what made sense to me. BES is that inclusive community that does allow each one of us the freedom to express our ideas in a civil manner. I have found my community at BES.

And words cannot express my thanks and appreciation for the community I have at BES. Never having a close family (beyond my mom), never

feeling welcomed in many groups and almost always feeling like the outsider, BES offers all of us a chance to be family.

At BES, we all are encouraged to bring out the best in us and in others. For me, that includes doing what we know will help to improve the lives of others, help the environment be cleaner and more livable, and to hold ourselves and our elected leaders accountable for the actions we take and those we don't. Keep that passion to change the world, but focus on the small steps to change even just a part of it. In the words of Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." May we as individuals continue to help others achieve greater potential while reaching for that greater potential in ourselves, and as a community strive to make our world a better place.

## **REASON RALLY**

**Saturday, June 4, at the  
Lincoln Memorial**

Come promote fact-driven public policy and separation of church and state all while celebrating freethought with many diverse groups and unique individuals attending the **2016 Reason Rally on Saturday, June 4th at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC!** The American Ethical Union is one of many sponsoring organizations declaring that reason, science, and freedom of belief are vital to our country. There will be an advocacy day on Thursday, June 2nd, parties and other events. For further details visit [www.reasonrally.org](http://www.reasonrally.org) and the AEU website at [www.aeu.org](http://www.aeu.org).

## **ART QUILTS AT THE BMA**

**Saturday, June 18, 11:00 a.m.**

Please join the Social Events Committee on a trip to the BMA! We'll enjoy a short lived exhibit of art quilts. (So short lived that June 19th is the final day.) We'll meet in the lobby next to the gift shop at 11:00 a.m. Afterwards, we could have lunch together, at the museum cafe or One World Cafe. I hope you can make it! RSVP to [mav.vaughan@gmail.com](mailto:mav.vaughan@gmail.com). More information about the exhibit can be found at [baltimore.org/events/new-arrivals-art-quilts](http://baltimore.org/events/new-arrivals-art-quilts).



**BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY**

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

**NEWSLETTER**

Please do not delay!

**TIME VALUE**

**ETHICAL ACTION MEETING**

**Sunday, June 21, July 19, August 16, 12:45 p.m.**

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

**NEWCOMERS MEETING**

**Sunday, June 28, July 26, August 30, 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, June 14, July 12, August 9, 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](http://bmorethical.org) and look for us on Facebook, Twitter, and MeetUp.com @bmorethical

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