

BESpeak

MARCH 2018

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

A Clear and Present Danger: Faith-Based Medical Advice

by Hugh Taft-Morales, Ethical Leader

As an Ethical Culture Leader, I do not always take time to criticize supernaturalism. I invest most of my energy inspiring humanists to honor worth, grow relationships and build justice. My highest commitment is to bring out the best in others and thus in myself. And, as an individual, I tend to embrace moderate positions and diplomatic language. This month, I will criticize one particular aspect of supernaturalism. Please excuse what might strike you as extreme, combative words.

I will use my Leaders' column to criticize one particularly deplorable and dangerous effect of supernatural beliefs during this flu season. At the time of this writing in mid-February, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, at least 14,676 people have been hospitalized with influenza since October, which is the highest ever recorded. At least 53 children have died, and flu season is far from over. Even at this late date, the CDC is urging the unvaccinated to get a flu shot.

How many innocent people will die because instead of listening to the CDC, they listen to people like televangelist Gloria Copeland, co-founder the Fort Worth, Texas-based Kenneth Copeland Ministries? In a video she posted on Facebook on January 31, she denied the reality of this epidemic: "Listen, partners, we don't have a flu season." Copeland went on to promote her hocus pocus: "I'm asking you Lord with your supernatural power to heal them now from the top of their head to the souls of their feet. Flu, I bind you off of the people in the name of the people! Jesus himself gave us the flu shot.... Inoculate yourself with the word of God."

These words enraged me. I admit that perhaps Copeland's comments triggered me because people I know are suffering due to the flu, including my daughter. But I think most of my anger was due to the fact that, while our administration and Congress slashes the CDC budget and attacks science, Copeland is, according to *ABC News*, a member of President Trump's faith advisory council. What exactly this council is, however, is unclear. I see little evidence that the "White House Of-



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SUNDAY PLATFORMS 10:30 a.m.

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MARCH 4

"Housing our Neighbors: Organizing for Housing Justice in Baltimore"

Presentation from three members
of Housing our Neighbors

MARCH 11

"Making Room for Conservatives"

Hugh Taft-Morales
Ethical Leader

MARCH 18

"The Hidden Logic of Bad Decisions"

Michael J. Frederick, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor,
University of Baltimore

MARCH 25

"Physician Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia of Non-Terminal Psychiatric Patients"

Mark S. Komrad M.D., DFAPA
Ethicist-in-Residence, Sheppard Pratt

ETHICAL HUMANIST SUNDAY SCHOOL

Every Sunday
10:30 a.m. – Noon

Individualized programs for preschool
children and school aged students.

TODDLER CARE

Separate supervision provided
for children up to age two.

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Fritz Williams *Leader Emeritus*

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Secretary, or Admin followed by
@bmorethical.org. For general
questions: ask@bmorethical.org.

On the web at bmorethical.org

Mission and Vision

by Thomas Higdon, BES President

This past Fall, the Board launched a process to develop a clear statement of our mission, vision, and values. For those who are unfamiliar, this statement will answer several fundamental questions about our Society. What do we do (Mission)? How will the world be different if we succeed in our mission (Vision)? What are the key values that guide our Society (Values)?

We began this process by hosting listening parties at members homes in October and November. These gatherings were followed by an online survey in January. Finally, a team of board members lead by our Clergy Leader, Hugh, worked over the last month to write the following first draft.

The Baltimore Ethical Society is a Humanist Congregation

Our Mission: To be an alternative to traditional religion that improves our lives, relationships, and the world through reason, compassion, and action.

Our Vision: A just world where relationships are valued and the worth of every person is affirmed.

Our Values:

Humanism - We follow a rational philosophy that is informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion.

People - We believe that every human being has inherent worth, is entitled to be treated with dignity and respect, and has the right to participate in the governance of their community.

Connection - We build community to celebrate life's joys and support one another through life's challenges. We nurture our relationships with people and the natural world.

Action - We value deed before creed. We believe that positive change will only come about through human efforts. Therefore, we must take personal responsibility and work together to address the great challenges of our age.

Lifelong Learning - We are committed to free thought in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding, from our Sunday school to our weekly platforms.

The Board will discuss this draft at its meetings on March 11 and April 8. All members are welcome to participate in these discussions. If you are out of town or otherwise unable to attend either of these meetings, please send me your comments and I will make sure they are presented to the Board. The final draft will be approved at the April 8th Board meeting and then forwarded to the membership for a vote at the Annual Meeting on April 22nd.

I want to thank the entire Board for all their help in this process, but I wish to express particular gratitude to Charlie, Hugh, and Max for their hard work in making this draft a reality.



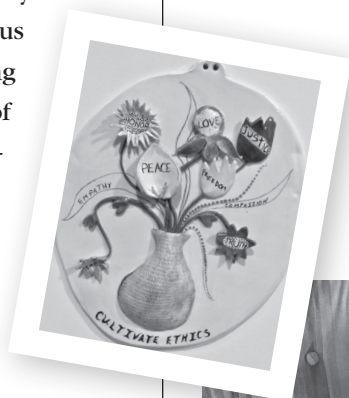
The Smiles and Warmth of Toddler Care Aide Romy Smith

We continue to enjoy and appreciate the enthusiasm and passion of our new Toddler Care Aide, Romy Smith - who has been with us since December, engaging children in the age group of one year to 2.9 years: reading stories, playing with them and using appropriate toys to enhance their motor skills.

Romy comes to us with a kit-full of skills of her own: ten years experience in working with children and knowledge of the creative world as a graduate of MICA (Class of 2016). Romy communicates a real passion for working and engaging with children. She says: "I feel that I am truly in my element while I am assisting children and educating them through play and exploration"

When asked why she was interested in working for and with BES, she said: "After reading the "Is It Right for You" page on the BES Website, I found the philosophy resonating with my own Quaker inspired upbringing."

The Ethical Education Committee of BES is pleased to include Romy Smith as a member of the family of children caregivers, in joining the teachers of pre-K (Jill Gordon) and pre-Teen (Monica Cooper and Beth Millstead) living and learning ethical values.



NAVIGATORS USA CHAPTER 43

The Baltimore Ethical Society is proud to sponsor Navigators USA Chapter 43, an all-inclusive, co-ed, secular scouting group. If you are interested in joining Navigators please email baltimore Navigators@gmail.com. Regular meetings in March will be on the 11th and 25th.



OTHER ACTIVITIES

Poetry Group

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

PR Committee Meeting

Sunday, March 4, 12:30 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation

Sunday, March 11, 9:30 a.m.

Second Sunday Family Meet-Up

Sunday, March 11, 12:30 p.m.

Board Meeting

Sunday, March 11, 12:30 p.m.

Ethical Action Meeting

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

Program Committee Meeting

Sunday, March 25, 12:30 p.m.

Newcomers Meeting

Sunday, March 25, 12:30 p.m.

CHECK OUT OUR MEETUP GROUP

It is the easiest way to RSVP to an event, get directions, or arrange car pools. Together we can create meaningful events, make friends and learn, teach, and share ethical culture.

www.meetup.com/bmoreethical

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	March 4
G to L	March 11
M to R	March 18
S to Z	March 25



SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

MARCH 4

“Housing our Neighbors: Organizing for Housing Justice in Baltimore”

Presentation from three members
of Housing our Neighbors
www.bonbaltimore.org

This presentation will share a brief introduction to Housing our Neighbors history and biography and talk about some of the work they have done and what they are currently doing.

Housing Our Neighbors is a community group led by people experiencing homelessness and their allies, fighting for the human right to housing. They are working to end homelessness in Baltimore City through access to permanent affordable housing for all. They advance the right to housing through education, leadership development, direct actions, political advocacy, and grassroots community organizing. They practice consensus decision making and believe that every voice will be heard and respected.

MARCH 11

“Making Room for Conservatives”

Hugh Taft-Morales
Ethical Leader

For over 140 years Ethical Humanism has promoted progressive solutions to social problems – solutions that try to ease human suffering through collective action and civic engagement. At times this leads Ethical Societies to appear exclusively dedicated to liberal perspectives. What do these political labels mean? Is there room for conservatism in Ethical Humanism? How do we encourage freethought and civil debate while remaining true to our heritage? Hugh Taft-Morales explores the challenge of balancing diverse perspectives and group cohesion within Ethical Culture.

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.

MARCH 18

“The Hidden Logic of Bad Decisions: How Evolution and Development Shape Personality and Life Choices”

Michael J. Frederick, Ph.D.
*Assistant Professor, Division of Applied Behavioral Sciences,
Behavioral Neuroscience and Evolutionary Psychology,
University of Baltimore*

Humans often engage in behaviors that seem misguided or short-sighted. Many people act in ways that are impulsive, aggressive, or promiscuous despite negative consequences, and some are more prone to these behaviors than others. New research on developmental biology combined with evolutionary theory suggests that such traits may represent adaptations to conditions in the early environment.

Michael J. Frederick is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Applied Behavioral Sciences at the University of Baltimore. He received his Ph.D. in Biopsychology with an emphasis in evolutionary psychology from the University of Albany. His research examines behaviors that seem maladaptive or counterintuitive, but that might serve an adaptive function in certain evolutionary contexts.

MARCH 25

“Physician Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia of Non-Terminal Psychiatric Patients: An Emerging Ethical Crisis”

Mark S. Komrad M.D., DFAPA
*Ethicist-in-Residence, Sheppard Pratt; Faculty of Psychiatry,
Johns Hopkins, University of Maryland, and Sheppard Pratt*

In several European countries physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia by lethal injection are being made available to psychiatric patients with non-terminal mental illnesses, commonly administered by their own treating psychiatrists giving the injection. Canada now offers euthanasia by injection for patients who are not strictly terminally ill and is on the verge of making it available to those with psychiatric disorders only. This raises profound ethical questions, for psychiatrists in particular, who have a core ethos and skill set to prevent suicide, help patients cope with suffering, find alternative paths to a better future, even make meaning of suffering. Allowing psychiatrists to help their patients suicide inverts the fundamental

SUNDAY PLATFORM PROGRAMS

ethical framework and very definition of what it means to be a psychiatrist. This lecture examines the history of developments in Europe, Canada, and the U.S. regarding physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia of non-terminal psychiatric patients. Data from Belgium and Netherlands are reviewed. The positions of medical and psychiatric organizations around the world are shown, especially the new ethical position against such practices by the American Psychiatric Association. Fundamental ethical arguments in favor of psychiatric euthanasia are contrasted with those against. Clinical, social, and professional consequences are reviewed, including some specific cases, relevant data, and evidence for a “slippery slope” of these policies and practices. Finally, the way these activities challenge the fundamental identity of physicians in general and the psychiatrists in particular will be discussed, and how this is an unanticipated consequence of pursuing parity for the mentally ill.

Mark Komrad MD is the Ethicist-in-Residence for the Sheppard Pratt Health Systems, where he chaired the Ethics Committee for over 20 years. He is on the teaching faculty of Johns Hopkins and the University of Maryland. He is a member of the APA Assembly and previously served 6 years on the APA Ethics Committee. In these two capacities, he helped craft the new APA Position Statement, just approved this past December:

“...a psychiatrist should not prescribe or administer any intervention to a NON-terminally ill person for the purpose of causing death.”

He is now lecturing widely through the U.S., Canada, and Europe to address the ethical concerns that several hundred suicidal psychiatric patients in Belgium and the Netherlands are being voluntarily euthanized each year with lethal injections, typically by their own treating psychiatrists. He has consulted several times to policy makers in Canada, trying to dissuade them from extending the current Canadian law – permitting physician-assisted suicide for non-terminal patients– to now include psychiatric patients in this new Canadian right, a goal being promoted by certain advocacy groups there.

Dr. Komrad maintains a private practice and has a special interest in helping families convince a troubled loved one to

get a psychiatric consultation, using ideas from his book *You Need Help: A Step-by-Step Plan to Convince a Loved One to Get Counseling* (YouNeedHelpBook.com). He lectures and gives workshops on these ideas to mental health advocacy and support organizations throughout the country. For this work he was given NAMI’s “Exemplary Psychiatrist Award” and its “Mental Health Professional of the Year Award.” He was also host of the national radio call-in talk show, “Komrad On Call,” which broadcast to 43 million listeners throughout the U.S., and he continues to appear regularly on TV, radio, and podcasts to discuss topics in psychiatry.

CAN’T MAKE IT TO THE SOCIETY ON SUNDAY MORNINGS?

INTERESTED IN A PAST PLATFORM THAT YOU MISSED?

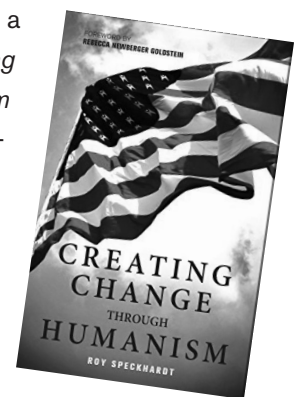
Watch them on our Vimeo page! Simply go to vimeo.com/user4409178 to see video recordings of many of our platforms from the last several years.

BOOK DISCUSSION: CREATING CHANGE THROUGH HUMANISM BY ROY SPECKHARDT

Sunday, March 11, 2:00-3:30 p.m.

Join Hugh Taft-Morales for a book discussion of *Creating Change through Humanism* by Roy Speckhardt, Executive Director of the American Humanist Association. What does Speckhardt offer that might be of use to our efforts to support ethical behavior in civic life? Come find out what one of

our most important humanist allies thinks about how best to change society for the better.



MAKE YOUR FY19 PLEDGE TODAY!

If you haven't made your 2018-2019 pledge yet, there's still time! The pledge drive doesn't end until March 25th; in the meantime, you can either mail in your pledge or, if you prefer, give it directly to our Treasurer (Richard Heffern), Finance Chair (Tevis Tsai), or President (Thomas Higdon). Payments aren't due until April 30th 2019, but pledging now helps us budget for the coming year and lets us know you support our mission of a more ethical world. Thank you to all of our members who have pledged so far!

LUNCH AT HANDLEBAR CAFE

**Tuesday, March 6, noon,
511 S. Caroline St.**

Come join us for witty conversation! (Wittiness not guaranteed.) Carnivore, Vegetarian and Vegan friendly. Email Mav at mav.vaughan@gmail.com with any questions.

BLACK PANTHER

Saturday, March 24

Arundel Mills Muvico – time TBD (afternoon/early evening). Perhaps dinner afterwards. If you have a different theater to suggest, please email Mav at mav.vaughan@gmail.com.

The AEU Assembly: A Great Excuse to See New Mexico!

Come to the AEU Assembly in Albuquerque, June 7-10 and take a few extra days to tour one of the most scenic areas in our country. *Seeds for the Future: Environmental Justice and Ethical Culture* will offer great keynote speeches, workshops on both environmental justice and congregational development, and social events to meet Ethical Culturists from all over. Ethical

Culture Leader Curt Collier and Director of National Youth Programs for Groundwork USA will give the Sunday platform talk. You can register for this event at aeu.org/event/aeu-103rd-assembly/. On that same webpage you can donate to the "Voices at the Table Fund" to help assure diverse representation. Whether you are attending the Assembly or not, consider donating to this worthy cause!



SECOND SUNDAY FAMILY MEET-UPS!

Sunday, March 11, 12:30 p.m.

Join other families with young children immediately following platform on the second Sunday of each month to have fun, build community, and let off steam. The activities will be selected with 2-6 year olds in mind, but all are welcome! If you have questions, email Maya at may-agk@gmail.com or Beth at emlinbill@gmail.com.



PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING

Sunday, March 25, 12:30 p.m.

Join the Program Committee and help choose speakers for our Sunday morning meetings! Visitors are also welcome to provide thoughts and speaker suggestions, or to just listen.

In March we will begin scheduling summer Sunday talks which are primarily given by BES members. See the notice at right if you are interested in giving a talk. The Program Committee meets monthly on fourth Sundays.

A Clear and Present Danger

(continued from page 1)

fice of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnership,” which was active under Obama, still exists.

Perhaps Copeland is a part of nothing more than the so-called “advisory council” of 1000 religious leaders that Trump cynically put together to help him get elected. Nate Walker, Executive Director of *1791 Delegates* and the person I trust most on issues of religion in public life, told me that the advisory counsel in previous administrations were full of experts in law and religion dedicated to upholding the appropriate distance between church and state, Trumps advisors seem to be “merely a lobbying group.”

According to *Christianity Today*, Copeland joined people on the council like James Dobson, founder of *Focus on the Family*, who attacked transgender rights, abortion rights, and access to contraception. Dobson disingenuously embraced Trump in exchange for Trump’s cynical promise to support such intolerant policies, calling our current misogynist bigoted president “a baby Christian”, someone who has “really made a commitment.”

Copeland joined people on the advisory council like Jerry Falwell Jr.,

president of *Liberty University* and one of the first evangelical leaders to endorse Trump. He had that gall to say that Trump “lives a life of loving and helping others as Jesus taught in the Great Commandment.” He even said that Trump “reminds me so much of my father.” What?! Did his father spew the kind of words Trump sanitized as mere “locker room talk”? Did Jerry Falwell Sr. brag about sexual assault and grabbing women?

How far from reality must these particular “religious leaders” stray? Plenty of dedicated, compassionate religious leaders see reality clearly – they condemn both misogyny and anti-science nonsense. When less-thoughtful religious leaders like Copeland ignore the moral failings of our current president to advance intolerant social agendas, however, that’s bad. But it’s even worse when their supernatural beliefs lead them to encourage ignorant and life-threatening behavior, like slashing budgets and attacking inoculations.. As humanists we must speak up. We must defend rational and evidence-based policies that make real our commitment to the worth of every person.

Get your flu shot!

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 Program Committee Chair Paul Furth with your ideas and suggestions. Proposals must be submitted by April 30 to guarantee consideration.

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, at weddings@bmoreethical.org.





BALTIMORE ETHICAL SOCIETY

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

NEWSLETTER

Please do not delay!

TIME VALUE

ETHICAL ACTION MEETING

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

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

NEWCOMERS MEETING

Sunday, March 25, 12:30 p.m.

New to the Society and interested in learning more? Come to the Newcomers Meeting, held following the last Sunday Platform of every month, and find out more about Ethical Culture and our Society – its history, its philosophy, and its organization. Meetings last about one hour and are recommended for anyone who's curious about membership. Please attend at least one Platform before going to a Newcomers Meeting. Contact Wayne Laufert or Janey Solwold for more information.

MINDFULNESS

meditation

Sunday, March 11, 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.

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

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