

# OUR SHIR SHALOM

**Annual  
Reports  
Included!**

Congregation Shir Shalom of Westchester and Fairfield Counties

Winter 2023 / Tevet-Shevat-Adar 5783

## SHABBAT WORSHIP & PROGRAM

# MLK

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 13 @ 7:00 PM**

## WITH SPECIAL GUEST KIMBERLY WILSON

**Join Us For This Special Service Including Dramatic Readings and Songs!**

Originally from Minneapolis, MN, Kimberly Wilson was a founding acting company member of Mixed Blood Theater in Minneapolis.

Her professional acting career includes performances in national television commercials, and stage and touring productions. Kimberly has performed in many mainstage and touring productions. In 1999, Kimberly produced and co-starred in the comedy play "A Couple of White Chicks Sittin' Around Talkin'," its first production with an all-Black cast.

A resident of Westport, CT, Kimberly has written her own one-woman shows, "The Spirit of Black Womanhood," "A Journey." She has performed these shows in Connecticut and New York for Black History programs for nearly twenty years. In 2016, Kimberly was awarded the Best Playwright Award for "A Journey" at the Atlanta Black Theatre Festival. She celebrates Black History 365 days a year!



**THERE WILL BE AN EXTENDED ONEG WITH MEET AND GREET FOLLOWING  
THE SERVICE AND PROGRAM. ALL ARE WELCOME!**

# OUR WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Join us in-person or via Zoom for all worship services throughout the year.  
Zoom links are made available through our weekly congregant eblast.

## JANUARY-FEBRUARY WORSHIP AND PROGRAM SCHEDULE

January 6	6:00 p.m.	<i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Worship	February 3	6:00 p.m.	<i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Worship
January 13	5:30 p.m.	Tot <i>Shabbat</i> Worship	February 4	9:00 a.m.	Torah 101 with Rabbi Reiner
January 13	7:00 p.m.	MLK <i>Shabbat</i> Worship with special guest: Kimberly Wilson	February 5	3:00 p.m.	Author Talk with Benedetta Jasmine Guetta
January 20	7:30 p.m.	<i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Worship	February 10	5:30 p.m.	Tot <i>Shabbat</i> 2.0
January 21	9:00 a.m.	Torah 101	February 10	7:30 p.m.	<i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Worship
January 27	5:30 p.m.	Tot <i>Shabbat</i> 2.0	February 11	9:00 a.m.	Torah 101 with Rabbi Reiner
January 31	11:30 a.m.	Cafe Israel with Ofek Moscovich, Israeli Emissary, on current events in Israel (Bring your own Lunch)	February 17	7:30 p.m.	<i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Worship
			February 24	7:30 p.m.	<i>Kabbalat Shabbat</i> Worship

*Please join us in-person or online for Shabbat, holiday and festival Services!*



## OUR NEWEST CONGREGANTS

Jonathan Kahn and Tiffany Fendley-Kahn, Asher and Evie (New Fairfield, CT)

Katherine and Steven Corletta, Toni and Harry (Ridgefield, CT)

Randi and Jacob Gurka (Danbury, CT)



# CONGREGATION SHIR SHALOM OF WESTCHESTER AND FAIRFIELD COUNTIES

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email: [office@OurShirShalom.org](mailto:office@OurShirShalom.org) [OurShirShalom.org](http://OurShirShalom.org)

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**[JWeilEmmer@gmail.com](mailto:JWeilEmmer@gmail.com)**

Leslie Gottlieb, Religious School Director Emerita

**[Leslie@OurShirShalom.org](mailto:Leslie@OurShirShalom.org)**

## OFFICE HOURS / SHABBAT AND HOLIDAY EMAILS

Our office is generally open Monday-Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and by appointment. If you are unable to visit during our office hours, there is a clear plastic bin on the porch by our main entry door. *Yahrtzeit* candles, prayer books, Jewish calendars and seasonal items are available for home use. Our clergy and staff are eager to connect by email or telephone and (consistent with our Jewish values) our practice is not to check or respond to e-mail on *Shabbat* or other Jewish holy days, festivals or secular Federal holidays, except in the case of a life-cycle emergency. We ask that you refrain from emailing or texting our clergy or staff during those times. We'll be happy to communicate you upon their conclusion. Thank you.



# ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE RABBI'S DESK

Rabbi David Reiner



*For this column I am reprinting a portion of the report submitted for the Congregation Shir Shalom 2022 Annual Meeting on*

*Sunday, December 11, 2022.*

The Rabbi's Report for our Annual Meeting is an annual opportunity to reflect on the past year, consider successes and growing edges, and share aspirations for the year to come. As I approach my tenth anniversary serving our community, I am also especially reflecting on personal and communal growth over the past ten years.

I am again struck by how our world, country, and community has changed, while many constants remain. The global pandemic continues to evolve around us, as many are able to gather in familiar ways that we could not have imagined two years ago. At the same time, we are also familiar with new practices, traditions and accouterments. As a sacred community we are continually reimagining our work, both the sacred and standard operating procedures. The continuing impact of the pandemic is set against many challenges facing our community and the world, from economic uncertainty to systemic racial injustice to a startling rise in antisemitism to a far right political shift in Israel to climate change to the

nature of our precious democracy. As I wrote two years ago, "While our practice of Judaism has evolved over millennia, we have adapted and evolved ancient rituals over a period of months and found new meaning in ancient words and rites, gathering in new ways. All this has taken a tremendous amount of time and energy and collaboration between our lay leaders, professional staff, and clergy."

We aspire to serve our sacred community by inspiring greater involvement and connection with our tradition, deepening relationships within families and among our

**"As a sacred community we are continually reimagining our work..."**

congregants. We have accomplished a great deal together in the past year and our accomplishments are even greater when set against the challenges in our world.

Here are some highlights from 2022 (and opportunities for continued growth in the year ahead):

## **The High Holy Days:**

Although one of my sermons focused on the question of defining "normal," it was wonderful to see so many people in the sanctuary at Congregation Shir Shalom during our High Holy Day worship, similar to pre-pandemic in person participation. The pandemic provided an opportunity to rethink and reframe some of our practices and traditions, as well as create new traditions. Our outdoor family

worship, *shofar* service, and tot services on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* were well attended, drawing more than our Tot High Holy Day Services before the pandemic. Our upgraded sound system and new video system enabled participation of congregants, family, and friends near and far.

## **Our Investment Campaign:**

The Atid: Campaign for Our Future is an important step in defining a vital and vibrant future for Congregation Shir Shalom – our Promised Land – and I am grateful for the energy, talent, wisdom, and generosity of our campaign chairs, Tara and Max Axler.

We had a fantastic kick off of the public phase of our campaign on May 22nd, with many of our families gathering at our synagogue for a lovely celebration co-hosted by the Axler, Broder and Knispel Families. To date donors (including 100% of our board, staff, and clergy teams) have pledged approximately \$2.5 Million to our Atid Campaign for Our Future, with pledges still coming in, as Max and Tara Axler have concluded their efforts as Campaign chairs, far more effort than I think they imagined when we began discussing the idea of a campaign in 2018. Our Board of Trustees continues to discuss application of the funds raised including funding priorities for 2023 (see below).

## **Engaging Current and New Families:**

We have seen an influx of families and individuals over the past two years as our Early Childhood

*(continued on page 5)*

## FROM THE RABBI'S DESK (CONT'D)

Center has grown and continues to attract new families with innovative opportunities and expanded hours, and our *B'Yachad* (Religious School) Program welcomes many new students and families, also with innovative approaches to Jewish learning and engagement. Our Tot Shabbat Program has grown as well, as we see that new Jewish families are eager to connect with peers.

### General Observations:

We continue to experience a fairly high rate of congregant turnover, even as our numbers of affiliation are growing. A high rate of turnover is not unique to our community – many congregations lose congregants after students become *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* or graduate high school. Specific to our region, relocations are also somewhat common: families relocate for work or to retire. There is also a constant influx of prospective members generated by relocations to the area or a realization of desire to affiliate. We continue to improve our processes for congregant resignations and as well as welcoming new families and individuals to our sacred community. Improving congregant retention is a high priority in 2023.

### A Few Goals for 2023:

1. Begin a strategic planning process.
2. Begin preparing for our cantorial transition in July of 2024 (and celebrate Cantor Debbie until then!)
3. Improve congregant retention.
4. Consistent with Jewish values, move beyond inclusion to inspire a stronger sense of affirmation and belonging within our sacred community, especially related to LGBTQ+ equality, disability, and socio-economic inclusion.

### Priorities:

1. Using a small portion of funds received and pledged through the Atid: Campaign for Our Future, it is prudent to invest in the creation of a strategic plan for our sacred community, that will help us with deploying funds raised through the campaign in the future. While a portion of funds raised will support capital needs (including replacement and upgrades of systems in our synagogue), we want to invest in our future by finding ways to better engage congregants and deepen the relationships within our community. While I anticipate that we will broadly follow the “Relational

Judaism” model described by Ron Wolfson and many other Jewish communal leaders, a strategic planning process led by an outside professional, will be significantly helpful.

2. Our upcoming cantorial transition is a meaningful and important opportunity to reflect and anticipate our needs going forward. Music is central to our identity as a sacred community. Some of the conversations from our strategic planning process will be helpful for our search process.

3. Congregation Shir Shalom joined a new cohort of synagogues and Jewish organizations serving Westchester County in Keshet's Leadership Project. Keshet is a national organization working for the full equality of all LGBTQ Jews and families in Jewish life and strengthening Jewish communities. Throughout the year our task force will assess, reflect and grow initiatives, guided by Keshet staff.

Congregation Shir Shalom has experienced significant changes in the past year, from the structure

*(continued on page 6)*



## TORAH 101 WITH RABBI REINER

Join Rabbi Reiner on select Saturday mornings at 9:00 a.m. for Torah 101.

You'll find this opportunity to engage in the study of our faith, observances and text to be extremely uplifting and interesting as we learn together. Check our weekly eblast and calendar for dates and in-person and Zoom information.

## FROM THE RABBI'S DESK (CONT'D)

of our professional staff to our lay leaders, to welcoming many new families.

I shared many words of gratitude and praise in my bulletin column following the High Holy Days and it would be appropriate to again express my appreciation for the lay and professional leaders and partners who help us operate and engage in our sacred work. Rather than a lengthy list, I want to acknowledge briefly the three senior most lay leaders in addition to our staff team.

It is a blessing and a privilege to work with wonderful and deeply committed professionals and lay leaders. We have adapted and grown on the fly, working closely together, sometimes in the same room and sometimes online. I have enjoyed working with our co-Presidents, Larry Brooks and Dr. Jeff Gorelick, and the fresh perspective, patience, and commitment that both bring to their role. It has been a pleasure and an honor to work with Dr. Terry Henry, our Executive Vice President, for many years in many roles, and I am grateful for Terry's time, energy, patience, candor, and support as she cycles off the Executive Committee and onto the Board as an at large trustee. Their deep commitment to the success of our sacred work and sacred community is clear and inspiring. I want to also acknowledge and thank Karen Taylor who stepped down as our volunteer CFO and VP-Finance during 2022, after a thoughtful and gradual transition of responsibilities to Lesly Burns (thank you Lesly as well!). Karen oversaw our financial operations for many years as CFO and we are grateful for and indebted to her for her wisdom,

patience, and expertise. There are many other lay leaders who continue to volunteer their time and energy in positions of leadership within our congregation, from Trustees to committee members to leaders of our auxiliary groups, from the Ritual Committee to Sisterhood to the Education Committee to ECC parent volunteers to the Mutual Review Committee to our Financial Planning Board and on. I am grateful for all the tremendous contributions of time and energy to help move our sacred community forward.

And it is a blessing and privilege to be surrounded by a professional staff team that is committed to our sacred mission. Cantor Debbie is a fantastic clergy partner and her music and spirit uplift me and so many in our sacred community; it is always wonderful to share the bimah with Cantor Debbie, especially during the High Holy Days and I am excited for her as she begins to contemplate the next stages of her Jewish journey and know that I will miss having her as a clergy partner after June 2024 (and look forward to celebrating her work in the next eighteen months! I continue to learn a lot from our professional educators, Sarah Denyer (ECC) and Cathy Deutchman (*B'Yachad*) and am grateful for their partnership and support, as well as our "back office" team led by our Executive Director, Mark Block. Mark has been a patient partner as we have navigated a new structure and role – the first time our sacred community has had an Executive Director during my tenure and the first time I have worked with an Executive Director. Kim Franz has ably managed our office on a day-to-

day basis, and Susie Hamilton, our in-house bookkeeper continues to support our daily operations. I am grateful for the presence and energy of Patrick Barry who has transitioned from our security contractor to being our manager of security and facilities, helping to ensure that our sacred and secular spaces are clean, comfortable, and cared for, along with our porters, Maria and Julie Silva. Last but not least, my assistant, Allyson Bellio, does so much for our sacred community. Allyson's email address (RabbiAssist) and placement in our annual budget (under the Ritual heading) inadequately reflect her role as a critical member of our administrative team and the administrative support she provides across the board to ensure the smooth operation of our sacred community. Allyson continues to take on new tasks beyond assisting me, though she also helps to improve my efficiency and better manage my time, focusing less on administrative tasks and more on tasks that relate to my rabbinical training and experience, as well as my personal responsibilities as a husband and father. Allyson contributions have had a tremendous impact on my work and her energy, efforts, and ideas impact and significantly benefit the entire congregation, and lighten the workload of the other members of our administrative staff team, as well as volunteers.

I am filled with hope and inspiration about how much more we can accomplish together.

*Respectfully Submitted,*

*Rabbi David L. Reiner*



# MY ANNUAL REPORT

## Cantor Deborah Katchko-Gray



I would like to begin with the words of *Shehech-eyanu*.

Blessed are you, Holy One of Blessing for giving us life, sustaining

us, and enabling us to reach this moment in time.

It is with intense gratitude that I write this 23rd Annual Report. Twenty-three is a magical number in my family. My mother's birthday was February 23rd. She gave birth to me on her birthday. She gave birth to my brother Bob on her birthday, and I gave birth to Ezra on that birthday. Four February 23 birthdays, three generations. And now, an annual report on this 23rd year of my life with Congregation Shir Shalom.

Even with Covid, or because of Covid, we had many special moments and opportunities to connect. We learned so much from these unusual times of lock down, social distancing and extra precautions. Even with all of that, we managed to connect, to grow and to create moments of education, beauty, music, and holiness. It is with much thanks to our Rabbi David Reiner for all his dedication to the technology necessary to connect and his unwavering passion for communicating personally with our congregation, counseling and connecting. His care and compassion are extraordinary and I must thank him publicly. Our wonderful new Education Director Cathy Deutchman

has brought incredible energy, vision, and her yoga language of intention which I love. There is a renewed spirit in our religious school and the numbers are growing thanks to her, Rabbi Reiner and the dedicated staff of teachers and support staff. Sarah Denyer does a wonderful job with her delightful toddlers who bring so much joy to our synagogue! Many thanks to our Executive Director Mark Block for all his support and creativity helping with my Cultural Arts programs. It is wonderful to have colleagues who truly help each other. Thanks to Mr. Pat for always keeping us all smiling and safe.

I like to see my role as a varied one –

**"I love seeing the ways to bring the community together and bring the beauty of Jewish music to our synagogue.."**

while leading services, training *B'nei Mitzvah*, teaching music, and life cycle events are the first priorities, I love seeing the ways to bring the community together and bring the beauty of Jewish music to our synagogue. Cultural Arts including concerts, author talks, crafts, and guest artists, composer, all expose us to the wider world of Jewish arts and life.

Professionally I've had some wonderful highlights this year that have helped me grow and expand my horizons. I have several cantorial students across Europe through the European Academy for Jewish Liturgy. Finland, Germany, and the

U.K. It is incredible to meet them on Zoom and see their progress. They are bringing traditional music back to Europe, and it is a joy to help them.

I recently came back from a trip to Budapest, where the Milkin Music Foundation sponsored me to teach my grandfather's music to mostly orthodox cantors from across Europe, Israel, and U.K. It was incredible and you will read about it in the next bulletin.

Anat Hoffman, director of Women of the Wall had a dream of a choir during their monthly *Rosh Chodesh* services at the *Kotel*. She asked me to help get it going. It has been a joy to bring this dream to life. I chose the music from their regular services, had Beth Styles arrange lovely choral versions, we found a music director who has rehearsed and already sung at a service with beauty and *kavanah*. NPR has agreed to do a story on this choir and its journey. It is all very exciting! I hope to go one day and sing with them for a service!

During the year I had the opportunity to share my program of Songs and Stories of Elie Wiesel on Zoom with several organizations, Zamir Chorale of Boston, Moment Magazine, Cantors Assembly, and The Colorado Hebrew Chorale.

I also serve on the board of the Jewish Federation of Greater Fairfield County.

I was asked to teach a few master classes on Katchko music for *Shabbat* and Three Festivals for the Jewish

*(continued on page 8)*

## MY ANNUAL REPORT (CONT'D)

Theological Seminary Cantors Institute and Hebrew Union College Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music. It was particularly gratifying to teach a class to last year's cantorial students at JTS about using creative music during services. Finding great composers whose music elevates the meaning of the prayers while bringing a gorgeous melody to it is a real passion of mine.

Here are a few highlights from 2022:

January 9 – Author Talk David Page, “Food Americana: The Remarkable People and Incredible Stories behind America’s Favorite Dishes”.

January 17 – MLK program participation at Ridgefield Playhouse

February 20 – Triple Baby Naming of Ella, Rae, and Liliana

March 8 – Moment Magazine Zoominar about WOW Choir

March 13, 27 – Swedish Weaving *Challah* Cover workshops

March 13 – Ballard Park Ridgefield Ukraine Support Rally Song

March 17 – Hebrew Union College Shabbat *Nusach* Workshop

April 8 – Julian Schwarz and Marika Bournaki joining our *Shabbat* service and filmed by Noah Aronson

April 24 – Songs and Stories of Elie Wiesel

April 28 – A Holocaust Remembrance Service, including Judy Altmann Czech Survivor

April 28 – Musical inclusion at Fairfield University

April 28 – Somers Holocaust Memorial Commission program

April 30 – Thirty Jewish Theological Seminary Cantors Institute – Songs That Open our Hearts

May 13 – Creative music for *Shabbat* with Beth Styles

June – Women Cantors’ Network 40th Conference Celebration, Oklahoma City

September – High Holy Days with new accompanist Bob Scrofani and our HH Choir back on the bima! Thank you to Laurie Dubin, Terry Henry, Tammy Strom, Robert Strom, F. Scott Gray, Marisa Shafer, Alice Gottlieb, and Claire Katz. Our reed miracle Mark Fineberg and Andrew Woodruff YM cellist. It was so wonderful to make music

together again in person.

October 2 – Sponsor of the SAFE WALK with Jesse Lee Church to support The Center (formerly the Women’s Center of Greater Danbury)

October 27- Travel to Budapest to teach cantors my grandfather’s music. Sponsored by Milken Music and European Cantors Association.

November 6 – Beryl Diamond Cohen Trio-Ladino, Classical and Jazz

December 4 – Author Talk “Fighting Back” with Jeffrey Weiss

December 11 – Jewish Caroling! with Debbie Zecher

Looking back and ahead. It’s been a wonderful year and I look forward to next year, my “last” year as your cantor. It continues to be the greatest professional and spiritual journey of my life.

Please save the date June 23, 2024, for a concert of friends and a reception to remember.

*Love and Shalom,*

*Cantor Debbie*



## COVID-19 POLICY UPDATE

With the winter months upon us, we are spending more time indoors and are seeing Covid-19 infection rates rise again this year, though the intensity of the illness has likely been mitigated for many by vaccine and booster shots. In response to continued and expected infection rates in our area during these months, along with the prevalence of seasonal influenza and ongoing RSV on the advice of our medical advisors, we continue to recommend and encourage masking at Congregation Shir Shalom. This recommendation extends to all visitors, guests, students and staff. Masks are available at our entrance for any visits, including before services and other programs and events.



# CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jeff Gorelick



*Presidents' State of the Synagogue Address, as presented at the 2022 Annual Meeting.*

As most of you know, I

am Jeff Gorelick, co-president of our congregation along with Larry Brooks, my "other" better half! It is my honor to address our beloved congregation and thank you for your membership, commitment, and support over this past year and the year ahead.

As Mark Block, our Executive Director, reviewed in some detail in his annual report, a copy of which all congregants received by email (and is reprinted in this bulletin), 2022 was an eventful year at CSS.

1. Our sudden boiler failure was dealt with effectively, debating repair versus replacement, ultimately leading to a solution, with the installation of a brand new, more modern and fuel efficient two boiler system. This many month's effort was made possible by the combined efforts of Mark Block as well as congregants Hal Wolkin, Bob Henry, and Richard Lipton whose technical and practical boiler expertise were invaluable. Though a large unanticipated expense, this new system leaves us better off than we were before, and should serve us well for, hopefully, many years.

2. Mark mentioned the Employee Retention Credit or ERC federal grant which we applied for and received

in November. Mark's initiative in recognizing this opportunity along with hard work by him, Susie, and other staff has been a positive addition to our fiscal health.

3. Say goodbye to video cameras on tripods and duck taped cables traversing the Pavilion floors. A state-of-the-art audiovisual system is now in place and will serve us well beyond Covid and allow congregants,

**"Atid has succeeded in establishing a source of financial support for our sacred community..."**

family, and friends to share in our spiritual and educational endeavors for years to come. Rabbi Reiner and Richard Lipton were instrumental in its adoption.

4. Mark's report also reviewed the work and improvements made on the parking lot and driveway. More facility improvements are planned in 2023.

5. Speaking of facility improvements, and funding them, the Atid campaign continued its vital work throughout 2022 under the supervision and guidance of chairs, Max and Tara Axler. Their hundreds of hours of selfless volunteerism, despite the demands of their professional and family commitments, and their personal generosity, were vital to the eventual success of this important effort. Atid has succeeded in establishing a source of financial support for our sacred community and those among us in need as

well as providing the resources to seed new, exciting areas of growth and future programming. We are all indebted to them, Rabbi Reiner, Lynn Broder, Larry Hoffman, Karen Taylor, and many other volunteer congregants who were part of the successful Atid effort. We are equally grateful to all those members of our sacred community who donated financially to the Atid campaign, especially our major donors and benefactors.

As we get ready to close the books in 2022 we look forward to the coming year with excitement and anticipation for what it will bring to our sacred community. Larry and I thank you for your continued commitment and look forward to our continued service to Shir Shalom.

*B'Shalom,*

*Jeff Gorelick*



**LOOKING TO ADD  
MUSIC TO YOUR  
SIMCHA?**

Bob Scrafani can be privately hired to add piano to *Bnei Mitzvah* services. For more information, contact Cantor Debbie at [CantorDebbie@OurShirShalom.org](mailto:CantorDebbie@OurShirShalom.org).

# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

## Mark Block, Executive Director, FSA



As we turn the page on another secular calendar year, I look back on the past twelve months and see so much

that makes our sacred community special. I'd like to share some of what the past year has brought about for our congregation.

We knew our fiscal/calendar year 2022 was going to be different than 2021, but like everyone we had no idea the extent or how the Covid-19 Omicron variant would affect our daily schedules and plans for fully reopening the synagogue. With the guidance of our medical team led by Dr. David Pazer, we were able to begin having more in-person services and programs with greater numbers seated closer together, all while encouraging full vaccination. The town of Ridgefield provided us with cases of home testing kits which we made available all year. We have distributed hundreds of free kits to congregants and their families since last winter. While we experienced cases of Covid-19 in our Early Childhood Center, *B'Yachad* Religious School and throughout our office staff, we were able to maintain uninterrupted services to meet the needs of the congregation. As 2022 ends we remain vigilant and know that we are not free from illness even as we are more protected.

Our Shabbat service in-person attendance increased throughout the year, with Rabbi Reiner and

Cantor Debbie continuing to also lead Shabbat services via Zoom and creating engaging opportunities for anyone viewing to be a part. We also appreciate Julie de'Lange for her technical expertise in running our Zoom services behind the scenes. We also welcomed back congregants to hold parties for *Bar/Bat Mitzvahs*. We were in person and filled the sanctuary and pavilions for the High Holy Days and were together as a community to hear the words of Rabbi Reiner and melodious voice of Cantor Debbie. We even had our High Holy Day choir back and in fine tone

**"As we look toward a new year  
I see many bright spots and a  
general lifting of spirit..."**

enhancing our holy days along with musical accompanists.

Congregants made the personal decision to be in person or online throughout the year and it has become a permanent reality of our house of worship. The number of congregants online demonstrates that they and others around the country need us, and we are here for them. Because of this, and with the generous help of Richard Lipton we completely upgraded our audio visual in the sanctuary from the temporary cables, wires extension cords, and mats covering them to a fixed permanent system of three cameras and state of the art technology that enabled us to remove what was temporary and provide a more personal experience for those who join us online.

Staff and lay leadership continued

reaching out to our most vulnerable congregants throughout the year, to check in and ask if there was anything they needed. We also regularly reach out to congregants to stay in touch and the response is always positive and has become a hallmark of our sacred community. Our clergy and staff worked long hours to ensure that we connected with you through weekly and special eblasts, our completely 2022 redesigned bi-monthly bulletin, email and postal mail about important issues facing the synagogue and programs and events planned for you and the wider community. Keep an eye open for a newly designed weekly eblast that we will be debuting in early 2023.

Our Executive Committee and Board of Trustees has continued meeting monthly in service to the entire congregation. Along with the fiduciary responsibility of spending your money wisely, policy issues and operational integrity of our facility is ongoing. The dedication of our elected volunteer leaders is always amazing with the seriousness they bring to ensuring the synagogue is open and welcoming, all while being fiscally prudent – a hallmark of their service as officers and trustees.

There was no more critical facility issue in 2022 than the catastrophic failure of our sanctuary/pavilion's boiler. In March as we were coming out of winter and preparing for spring, we found ourselves facing significant expenses and a decision on repairing or replacing the boiler. While we quickly brought in portable

*(continued on page 11)*

heaters and managed our way to warmer weather, we also began the bidding process on repair or replacement of the system which had been significantly taxed during the pandemic. The vast number of meetings with our House Committee chair Hal Wolkin and member Bob Henry, along with input from Richard Lipton ultimately led us to make the decision to replace the single original boiler with a dual boiler system, one that will both be higher in efficiency and extend the life of the system. For three full weeks the vendor was on-site removing the old boiler and replacing piping and ducts and doing all that was needed to have a fully operational system in time for *Rosh Hashanah*. It cannot be understated that without the efforts of those I mentioned, we might have been in for a colder, poorly ventilated winter than any of us would have liked.

Ongoing maintenance work of the synagogue grounds took place throughout the year, in part to allow for outdoor safety due to Covid. This included tree limb trimming, gutter cleaning, power washing of algae from the entryway and the planting of a pink Dogwood tree in the center parking lot island in honor of our volunteers as a part of Shabbat Across America. We anticipate a marker to be completed and dedicated in spring 2023.

Another major capital project in 2022 was the first stage in rehabbing our parking lot. In 2022 we addressed the deep and growing potholes and substantial cracks by having them cut and hot asphalt filled for both automobile safety and to ensure

proper water drainage of the lot. This was completed during the latter summer months when our ECC Summer Fun program ended. I expect the second half of the rehab to be done in summer 2023 when the driveway and entire parking lot will be hot sealed and properly striped for parking safety and fire lane indentify.

Our House Committee and I are reviewing capital project priorities identified for 2023, and vendor quotes are being gathered to ensure the completion of several projects prior to the 2023 High Holy Days. Through our Atid capital campaign,

**"The dedication of our elected volunteer leaders is always amazing..."**

regular endowment distribution for capital projects and the generosity of congregants on individual ones, we will address critical areas of need and other projects, so we continue to be both proud and comfortable in our sacred home.

We saw positive membership engagement in both 2021 and 2022. Our congregant Community Commitment increased in 2022 and we added 36 new congregant units along with 43 in 2021. This is the largest two-year increase in membership in recent memory. This increase can be partially attributed to the pandemic with people moving to the area and wanting to affiliate and be part of a sacred community. There were increases in religious school families and a continued strong showing of families enrolling in our early childhood program. While we

had several resignations, the rate remains lower than many synagogues and primarily because of congregants moving out of the area.

We have streamlined the process of membership renewal for 2023 and are working to update our database by reviewing congregants personal profiles for completeness.

Prospective congregant tours and engagement were ongoing throughout the year, and Allyson Bellio and I followed-up with all prospective congregants. Rabbi Reiner continues to be an important point of contact for prospective

members. We continue to send welcome gifts to new congregants and fine-tune our processes with our Congregants Committee, chaired by Bobbie Cohan, and help from members Terry Henry, Christina Gogish, Linda Hirschfeld, and Jamie Kaplan. We remain committed to being an open and welcoming house of worship, regardless of one's ability to financially support the synagogue with our Special Arrangements (SA) program chaired by the dedicated David Moss.

Completing my first year as executive director, I now have the occasion to spend more time reviewing our policies and practices. It is crucial that we have systems in place and ensure our written procedures reflect them and are up to date. In 2023 current employee paper documents will be scanned to the cloud, legal advice is consistent throughout the organization and all documentation for employees is identical and

*(continued on page 12)*



## 2022 ANNUAL REPORT (CONT'D)

accurately archived.

The synagogue received two federal Covid-19 Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans the past couple years, both of which were forgiven in full in 2022. We have our former CFO Karen Taylor to thank for her extreme diligence and hard work. In mid-2022 we applied and received nearly a quarter million dollars in one-time available funds through the federal Employee Retention Credit (ERC) program. These funds are not subject to the loan process of PPP funds. The assistance of an outside firm versed in the application process paved the way for our applications approval by the IRS. Our staff accountant, Susie Hamilton, worked diligently in gathering much of the payroll information required to properly provide a completed application. Susie was also a new hire in 2022 and has become an integral part of our office team. With her on board working with our dedicated CFO Lesly Burns we will be ending our association with Kesef, our outside accounting firm by the end of the 2023 first quarter. All accounting will be brought in-house with the expectation that we will be streamlining our accounting processes to better serve you.

We have an outstanding team of professionals who work diligently to ensure the proper and smooth running of the synagogue day-to-day. Our office administrative assistant Kim Franz, who began with us one day after me in July 2021 has become a regular voice and face for congregants to see and hear when calling or stopping in the office.

Allyson Bellio, the Rabbi's assistant

has a title that knows no boundaries. Allyson has taken on tasks and projects that go beyond her job description but are critical to Shir Shalom. It is with her energy, enthusiasm and dedication to a job well done that we achieve accuracy in our database as only one example. Like all our staff there are too many to mention in this one report.

As we continued properly staffing and establishing roles, a critically important change was made around facilities management. We discontinued our contract with Integrated Security through which Patrick Barry, our security officer, was an employee and transitioned the role to one of Facilities Manager. Pat has worked to maintain his physical security presence as well as adding facility responsibilities, including room setup and breakdowns, custodial staff, programs and events and general projects on the synagogue property.

As we look toward a new fiscal/calendar year at Shir Shalom I see many bright spots and a general lifting of spirit from the dark days of Covid-19. In 2022 we came together for major programs during *Purim*, our second *Passover* seder, a tremendously successful congregation-wide get-together in May to recognize the work of our Atid capital campaign, with appreciation to Tara and Max Axler and the Knispel family, and the general full reopening of our facility. We experienced meaningful in-person High Holy Days and the following festivals and had seamless launches of our *B'Yachad* religious school and continuation of our outstanding Early Childhood Center program.

I look forward to 2023 with continued enthusiasm for the progress and growth we will make as a congregation. We will begin to evaluate our future through a strategic study and development work of creating a legacy campaign, reaching out to you in the hopes that you will include Shir Shalom in your estate planning. We will address some necessary capital projects including repairs to the ceiling leading to the sanctuary which was damaged by water in 2021 and the needed repair of our back of building fire escape to ensure safety for those on our second floor. Of course, extensive, and long-term projects will likely continue to be affected by the general state of the economy which will impact when additional projects are addressed. As we prepare for a transition from our beloved Cantor Debbie in June 2024, upon her retirement, to the important work of a strategic study plan, we will work to maintain the stability, viability, and growth of our sacred community.

Every day I am blessed to be working with amazing staff and lay leadership. Their commitment to our synagogue is inspiring. Thank you to our clergy team, Rabbi Reiner and Cantor Debbie, beacons of light in our community leading us in prayer and programs and making me feel so welcome as I settled into work in this amazing community. To our wonderful Executive Committee, including co-Presidents Jeff Gorelick and Larry Brooks, Executive Vice President Terry Henry, Vice President's Suzanne Sunday and Marc Sheridan, CFO Lesly Burns, Secretary

*(continued on page 13)*

## 2022 ANNUAL REPORT (CONT'D)

Jody Cross, and our Immediate Past President Larry Hoffman. They all serve with a true sense of commitment and devotion. The Board of Trustees for their work as volunteers ensuring our synagogue is financially secure and serving the needs of our community deserve our thanks all year long. Shir Shalom could not ask for a better team. I also appreciate all our committees who enrich our community, including Ritual, Adult Programming, Social Action, and Sisterhood, especially

thanking our Chairs: Michael Salpeter, Laurie Dubin, Serafima Dashevskaya, Debbie Lavin, Debbie Landzberg, Margie Gorelick, Laurie Wolkin, and Christina Gogish. I could also not ask for more dedicated staff to have the privilege of working side by side, including Kim Franz, Allyson Bellio, Susie Hamilton, Patrick Barry, Maria and Julie Silva, and our *B'Yachad* Director Cathy Deutchman and Early Childhood Center Director Sarah Denyer. Thank you also to Laurence Furic for her dedication

to maintaining and updating our website, and Julie DeLange our Zoom service aide.

On behalf of our staff, we value and thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve you. Most of all, I thank all of you, our congregants, it is a privilege to be your Executive Director. Here's to a glance at the past and a clear eye toward the future.

*B'Shalom,*

*Mark Block*

## ADULT PROGRAMMING NEWS

On December 4th we hosted a Zoom presentation by Jeffrey Weiss, who with his brother, Craig, authored the book "Fighting Back" about Stan Andrews, one of the first fighter pilots in the Israeli Air Force. In 1948, Andrews, an assimilated American Jew and World War II veteran, traveled to the newly-declared State of Israel to defend it against Arab invasion. Jeff is a terrific speaker, telling us about the meticulous research he and Craig conducted during their work on the book. Cantor Debbie moderated the questions.

On Sunday, February 5th at 3:00 p.m., we will discuss the new culinary book, "Cooking alla Giudia: A Celebration of the Jewish Food of Italy," by Benedetta Jasmine Guetta, an Italian food

writer and photographer. (see back cover of this bulletin) Born in Milan, she now lives in Santa Monica, California. In 2009, she cofounded a website called Labna, the only Jewish/Kosher cooking blog in Italy, specializing in both



Italian and Jewish cuisine. Guetta has previously coauthored two cookbooks in Italian; this is her first English-language cookbook.

Ofek Moscovich, the Israeli Emissary for our Federation in Fairfield County, will run a couple of

programs at Shir Shalom. Everyone is welcome to come on Tuesday, January 31 at 11:30 a.m. for an informal lunch and learn "Café Israel." Ofek will discuss current events in Israel and answer any questions.

On Sunday, March 19th, Ofek will present a program called "Hummus" – we will taste hummus prepared by Ofek and watch a movie about hummus.

On Sunday, April 16th, we are planning a field trip to New York City. Brad Shaw, an

experienced and licensed tour guide, will lead a tour of synagogues of the Lower East Side.

If you wish to join Adult Programming committee please email to [adultprogramming@ourshirshalom.org](mailto:adultprogramming@ourshirshalom.org).



# CONGREGATION CHANUKAH CELEBRATION





## RITUAL COMMITTEE

It is the final night of *Chanukah* as I am writing this column. Aside from the usual lighting of candles nightly and, for those of us in this country, the giving of gifts to our children, the festival is essentially about rededication. For the Jews of the Maccabean era this meant rededication of the temple after the desecration which was wreaked upon it by the invading forces.

Similarly, we can use this time of year to reflect on ways we can rededicate ourselves to Congregation Shir Shalom. Some of the mechanisms we can utilize are to get involved volunteering with the various committees which help

keep congregants connected to our community (including the ritual committee). Attending *Shabbat* and



festival services either in-person or online is the most common form of participation. For those with young children attendance at the

monthly Tot *Shabbat* services can be particularly rewarding. Over the next several months look for announcements of congregation-wide celebrations for *Tu B'shvat*, *Purim* and *Passover*. Also there are a number of special *Shabbat* services scheduled – look for information in the weekly email blasts.

We hope you have a happy and healthy secular year and look forward to working with our congregants in rededicating ourselves to our sacred community.

*Michael Salpeter and  
Laurie Dubin*



Congregants and visitors to Shir Shalom were treated again this year to our inflatable Chanukah menorah anchored on the synagogue's front lawn. Over eight days the menorah enjoyed bright sunny days and also withstood wind and rain, remaining upright throughout the festival.



## SOCIAL ACTION

We had a successful Breakfast Run on Sunday, December 4th, with our prep day on Saturday, December 3rd. Thank you to all the volunteers who donated food, toiletries and new men's underwear and socks. Approximately twenty people helped with the prep day, including: Matt and Nathan Gershner, Larry and Abigail Brooks, Elie Schecter, Amy Margulies, Ellen Darvick, Jessica and Eric Reisch, Sarah and Micah Rottman, Daniel and Henry Darst, Susi and Skylar Mannheimer. On Sunday, thanks to the intrepid kitchen crew who fried up egg and cheese sandwiches starting at 6:00 a.m. in the morning, from left to right in photo, including, June Rubin, Ron Tiktin, Scott Trachtenberg, Matt Gershner, Jenna Dubin, Alisa Trachtenberg, photographed by Laurie Dubin, who led the enterprise! Thanks go to the crew that came with us to Manhattan to serve approximately forty homeless clients at our assigned spot on the upper East

side, from left to right in photo, including, Leah Minsek, Allison Sidel, Emily Wein, Calvin Wein, Lisa Ipp-Voelmicki, Debbie Lavin, Eli Schecter, Larry Brooks and Madison Brooks. This was a gratifying experience for all and the clients very much appreciated it.

Once a quarter, we have a group led by Deb Gershner who purchases and prepares a meal for the Dorothy Day Hospitality Center in Danbury, which happened the first week in December. If you are interested in helping out next quarter, please contact [Debrah.gershner@gmail.com](mailto:Debrah.gershner@gmail.com). Another congregant heads up an effort to make a monthly meal for the DDHC. If interested in helping, please contact Jeff at [Jhubsher@comcast.net](mailto:Jhubsher@comcast.net).

Over the winter, we will begin preparations for our congregation-wide Mitzvah Day which will take place on May 7th. It is a community-building event where more than 100 volunteers gather to work on

projects which will benefit over a dozen social service agencies in our area. The whole family can participate in projects including baking cookies for the DDHC, tying fleece blankets for the Kids in Crisis organization, braiding fleece dog toys for the SPCA, filling and decorating flower pots for the nursing homes, collecting children's books, and many more. We start with a lunch of pizza and salad and end the afternoon with make-your-own-sundaes and a slide show of our activities. This is the first Mitzvah Day since the pandemic, so we hope to have a big turnout of volunteers! If you are interested in helping to organize or taking a lead role for any of the activities, please email Debbie Lavin at [SocialAction@OurShirShalom.org](mailto:SocialAction@OurShirShalom.org).

*Debbie Lavin*





*The Sisterhood and B'Yachad Religious School teamed up to adopt two families in need for Family Services of Westchester. These were two families who were unable to provide holiday items/gifts for their children. Sisterhood and B'Yachad families went above and beyond in purchasing items for these families and then everyone wrapped items together at the synagogue Chanukah Celebration on December 18th. Our effort was coordinated by Tiffany Zezula, Deborah Lavin, and Lynn Broder from Sisterhood, and Alex Hirschbein delivered all of the gifts to FSW.*

*Sisterhood enjoyed a Chanukah party and candle lighting this year after two years of Covid separation.*

*In addition to festival foods and gift exchanging, the camaraderie of being together again created an evening of warmth and enjoyment for those in attendance.*





## SISTERHOOD NEWS

Sisterhood has been busy! Starting off with a very well attended "Kick-Off," was both fun and meaningful. Canasta and Mah Jongg continue weekly gaming. Book Club has been reading and meeting with stimulating discussions every six weeks and a fabulous trip to New York City for a visit to the Morgan Library (focus of the book "The Personal Librarian") and lunch together in the City. Those who participated found it very valuable and enjoyable. Sisterhood joined with other committees for gift wrapping for the "Adopt-a-Family" where two families in need received age/need appropriate holiday gifts for each family member. Many B'Yachad religious school families

took the opportunity to do some wrapping along with their kids with Sisterhood members to make the meaning of giving more concrete and relevant. Sisterhood celebrated Chanukah together with candle-lighting, nibbles and simple gift exchange which was an important opportunity for connection and holiday delight. We are looking forward to more meaningful opportunities for connection in 2023!

*Margie Garellick,  
Christina Gogish and  
Laurie Welkin*



## SANDWICHES = TIKKUN OLAM

Our partnership with Afula-Gilboa, in the northern part of Israel, includes educational and cultural exchange programs, our Israeli emissary program, and a lot more... including one of my favorites,



The Sandwich Club at the Afula Community Center.

This teen club meets once a week to make sandwiches for kids who don't have enough money to buy breakfast in school. We all know that hungry kids cannot focus on their studies, so these sandwiches are not only feeding them, but helping them to get better grades, which means a better future.

The youth group at Congregation Shir Shalom, late this fall, gathered to learn about the partnership region, The Sandwich Club and the Jewish values it reflects. Afterwards, we made sandwiches for the Dorothy Day Hospitality House in Danbury. The



teens learned the importance of the Jewish values (*Tikkun Olam*, *Tzedakah* and *Chesed*) and how teens from Israel and the U.S. can live by these values.

*Ofek Moscovich*

Federation Israel Emissary

# ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE B'YACHAD RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Cathy Deutchman, Director



As we wrapped up Chanukah, and prepare to celebrate a new secular year, we have an opportunity in the

calendar to reflect on the past year. John Dewey, one of my favorite educators, wrote: "We do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience".

After we reflect, we have an opportunity to plan with renewed clarity. *B'Yachad*, like most schools, is going through a transition we're "coming out" of Covid and reassessing how we want to gather, not just in school but outside of school as well. Before we can plan for the 2022-2023 school year, we'd like to hear from parents with children in the school about what type of structure they'd like in the school year ahead (weekday versus Sundays, online Hebrew Zoom versus in person Hebrew instruction). We plan to have focus groups to hear from you. Please look for more

details about these groups in the weeks ahead so you can engage in the conversation.

My vision is to continue to grow *B'Yachad* and strive for excellence. Here are some priorities for the year ahead:

1. Family Engagement: The first strategy is to develop and expand family engagement for the community. The *Sukkot* family

"My vision is to continue to grow B'Ychad and strive for excellence."

program, for example, brought families together in a fun and informal way to learn and celebrate *Sukkot*. Planning more holiday celebrations where families can engage is a priority.

2. *Madrichim* Program Expansion: Another strategy to grow *B'Yachad* is to continue engaging teens in the *Madrichim* program, formerly known as the Mentor Program. Growing the *Madrichim* program is a way to keep teens engaged in the Jewish

community, learning new things about Judaism and serving as role models for the younger students while playing a crucial role in running the school.

3. Social Emotional Learning/ Inclusion: Another long-term goal is to provide professional development opportunities for teachers and *Madrichim* in social-emotional learning skills and addressing the needs of the neuro-divergent.

The goal is to provide a safe environment conducive for all children to learn and develop a spiritual life. To accomplish this goal, we hope to create a series of workshops for teachers and *Madrichim* to explore both the theory and practice.

I'm grateful for those parents interested in helping to improve the school and welcome your partnership. Please reach out with ideas or suggestions as we continue to adapt to the new normal.

Wishing everyone a safe, productive, and happy 2023!

*Cathy Deutchman*





# ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

Sarah Denyer, Director



Spring of the 2021/2022 school year at the ECC brought the end of mask mandates. Most of our families

chose to send their child to school without a mask, and others opted to have their child wear a mask indoors only. We began having our families join us more regularly for ECC Shabbat and to be "Mystery Readers" in our classrooms. It surely felt like we were inching our way back to normal. We had a lovely End of School Year *Shabbat* in the sanctuary with a nosh outdoors afterward. The Annual ECC Art Show was again in-person. And 10 of our Pre-K students "graduated" on to Kindergarten.

Our 2022 Summer Fun program was joyful and successful. The SF Director was Alison Llewellyn. Sarah Denyer was the SF Administrator and Assistant On-site Director. We had one Lead Teacher and five Summer Interns working with us

and we all made a great team. The structure of the program remained as it had historically been, six weeks, broken into three two-week sessions with each having its own theme, Science and Nature, Goop Lab and Arts and Crafts. We had over thirty participants who were thrilled to be outdoors and having fun with other kids. We spent the majority of our time outdoors, but went inside a bit to get the students acclimated to

"It surely felt like we were inching our way back to normal."

what would be their new classrooms in the Fall.

The ECC added a Before Care Program this school year that enables working parents to drop their children off 35 minutes early (8:40 a.m.) so they can get to their job by 9:00 a.m. Currently there are five students enrolled in this program. Several additional families have used the two spots that we reserved for drop-in students whose families might need extra care here

and there. Our families seem grateful for this additional program.

Our 2022/2023 school year is going very well. We have ten new ECC Families and twenty-six Families in total. We have thirty-one ECC students in addition to five Practically Preschoolers (our program for one-year olds who attend with a parent or caregiver). Our Friday Young Community *Shabbats* took place outdoors until the weather turned cold and we are now enjoying being back in the sanctuary with our families being invited to join us each week. We are back to having one ECC class cook something each week for us to nosh on with our *challah* together after the *Shabbat* service. The ECC Thanksgiving *Shabbat* service and reception were lovely, and we also brought back our ECC *Chanukah* Carnival and Celebration this year!

We have managed to keep Covid out of the school, and although other illness are creeping back in, it certainly feels like we are nearly back to normal, or really a new normal.

*Sarah Denyer*





# Congregation Shir Shalom

## CULTURAL ARTS CALENDAR

# 2022-2023/5783

**Sponsored by The Cantor's Music Fund**

### **NOVEMBER 6**

Beryl Diamond-Chacon (violin),  
Roni Ben-Hur (guitar), and  
Eduardo Belo (upright bass)  
Jewish, Sephardic, Brazilian, and  
American Jazz Concert  
@ 3:00 p.m.

### **NOVEMBER 18**

Spirited and Soulful Kabbalat Shabbat  
Beth Styles @ 7:30 p.m.

### **DECEMBER 11**

Debbie Zecher in Concert  
Jewish Caroling: The Music of  
Carole King, Carole Bayer Sager  
and Carolyn Leigh  
Annual meeting @ 2:00 p.m.,  
followed by concert @ 3:00 p.m.,  
hors d'oeuvres/wine & cheese following

### **DECEMBER 17**

Shabbat Music and Meditation  
Nosh and daven 9:00 a.m.  
Service @ 9:30 a.m.

### **JANUARY 13**

MLK Shabbat  
Kimberly Wilson  
Service @ 7:00 p.m.

### **MARCH 12**

Julian Schwarz and Marika Bournaki  
Music that Celebrates Life!  
Cello and piano duets @ 3:00 p.m.

### **MARCH 18**

Shabbat Music and Meditation  
Nosh and daven 9:00 a.m.,  
Service @ 9:30 a.m.

### **MARCH 24**

Spirited and Soulful Kabbalat Shabbat  
Beth Styles @ 7:30 p.m.

### **MAY 6**

Shabbat Music and Meditation  
Nosh and daven 9:00 a.m.,  
Service @ 9:30 a.m.

### **MAY 19**

Spirited and Soulful Kabbalat Shabbat  
Beth Styles @ 7:30 p.m.



**CONGREGATION  
SHIR SHALOM**  
of Westchester and Fairfield Counties

# JANUARY YAHRZEITS

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 6

Peter Aries  
father of Richard Aries  
Joan Fields Berg  
mother of Jeff Berg  
Margie Bernstein  
grandmother of Maggie Staub  
Penny Binn Binstock  
relative of Moreton Binn  
Rhoda Brand  
mother of Michael Brand  
Ernest Elkin  
father of Stephanie Herbstman  
Eli Gorelick  
father of Jeff Gorelick  
Jean Kaplan  
grandmother of Susannah Altman  
Sanford Kessler  
father of Ronni Hammer  
Renee Miller  
mother of Linda Hirschfeld  
Bernard Shuler  
father of Robi Margolis

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 13

Ruth Sunday Davis  
mother of Suzanne Sunday  
Theodore Garfiel  
grandfather of Karen Blum  
Yetta Goldberg  
mother of Jacob Goldberg  
Roslyn Harris  
mother of Ian Harris  
Joan Landzberg  
mother of Steve Landzberg  
Arnold Manus  
father of Rhonda Manus  
Arthur L. Penzel  
father of Lesly Burns  
Shirley Schwartz  
grandmother of Lisa Kurtz  
Bernard Raider

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 20

Allan Blumstein  
father of Eve Zibel  
Sharon Eisberg  
mother of Tiffany Zezula  
Muriel Fried  
aunt of Lonnie Shapiro  
Morris Geller  
grandfather of Jamie Garrett  
Ruth Glaser  
mother of Laura Agisim  
Aaron Jay Gordon  
brother of Elaine Gordon  
Julius Hubsher  
father of Jeffrey Hubsher  
Oliver Hughes  
son of Tyler and Hillary Hughes, grandson of Rick and Bobbie Cohlan  
Eugene Kahn  
father of Leslie Gottlieb  
Gloria Lederman  
mother of Linda Lederman  
Martin Levenson  
grandfather of Karen Brenner  
Abraham Mirkin  
grandfather of Judith Strom  
Cal Mishkoff  
uncle of Joan Isman  
Zelda Morley  
mother of Larry Morley  
Susan Pleener  
sister-in-law of Liz Winson  
Marshall R. Lavin  
father of Mark Lavin  
Bernard Schwartz  
grandfather of Lisa Kurtz  
Steven Zeitlin  
brother of Ianne Poushter  
Herbert Zieselman  
father of Judi Stooogenke  
Lawrence Stewart Raynor  
Solomon Fremed

## FRIDAY, JANUARY 27

Stella Baker  
grandmother of Carlyn Bergman  
Douglas Birdsall  
father of Emily Wein  
Nancy Ellis  
wife of Joseph Ellis  
Joy Ginsberg  
mother of Jamie Garrett  
Kenneth Greenberg  
husband of Barbara Safran  
Fred Greenberg  
father of Adrienne Orlan  
Harold Hoffman  
father of Larry Hoffman  
Saul Jacobs  
father of Alan Jacobs  
Debby Jonisch  
wife of George Jonisch  
Sarah Katz  
mother of Claire Katz  
Jesse Kaye  
uncle of Diana Friedlander  
Edward Kleinbaum  
grandfather of Stacey Rubinfeld  
Philip Levens  
father of David Levens  
Irma Lowy  
grandmother of Terry Henry  
Joseph Mirkin  
father of Judith Strom  
Benjamin Rothberg  
cousin of Judith Strom  
Fanny Siegel  
mother of Lewis Siegel  
Cary Wellington  
father of Brad, Abby and Ben Wellington  
Norma Zucker  
mother of Bobbie Cohlan

# FEBRUARY YAHRZEITS

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3

William Drucker  
father of Janine Gordon  
Judith Eydenberg  
mother of Susan Westlake  
Hannah Hirt  
mother of Judy Hirt-  
Manheimer  
Diana Hirt  
sister of Judy Hirt-Manheimer  
Ruth Kahn  
mother of Leslie Gottlieb  
Nathan Kaplan  
grandfather of Susannah  
Altman  
Jacob Kaplan  
grandfather of Steve Kaye  
Norman Levitt  
father of Bonnie Dietzek  
Elaine Lynn  
mother of Elise Jonisch  
Theodore Mallon  
father of Linda Krulwich  
Rhoda Moss  
mother of David Moss  
Joel Renert  
brother of Helene Karlin  
David Siegel  
father of Lewis Siegel  
Albert Strom  
father of Robert Strom  
Sylvia Weinstein  
mother of Terry Weinstein  
Anna Weintraub  
grandmother of Karen Gerard  
Marcy Cohen Lissau Daniels

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 10

Max Banner  
father of Barbara Brodsky  
Gregory Davis  
son of Elyse and Jay Davis  
Hannah Drucker  
grandmother of Janine Gordon  
Sam Farber  
father of Janine Gordon  
Reveka Gogish  
grandmother of Vladimir  
and Ilya Gogish, mother-in-law  
of Serafima Dashevskaya  
Charlene Lavin  
mother of Mark Lavin

Stephen Margolis  
husband of Robi Margolis,  
father of Loren and Julie  
Betty Mirkin  
aunt of Judith Strom  
Philip Renert  
father of Helene Karlin  
Michael Robinson  
relative of Moreton Binn  
Joseph Rosenhouse  
father of Harry Rosenhouse  
Hubert Ryan  
father of Eve Siegel  
Norman Sage  
father of Robyn Cohen  
William Shoff  
grandfather of Jeffrey Hubsher  
Millicent Stark  
mother of Andrew Stark  
Jeannette Walker  
mother of Jay Walker  
Eugene L. Wishod  
husband of Lora Wishod  
Rita Zelin  
aunt of Karen Taylor and Lori  
Stalowicz

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Carole Alexander  
mother of Neil Alexander  
Thelma Apel  
grandmother of Valerie Rich  
Marvin Burg  
brother of Judith Besserman  
Mollie Darvick  
mother of Murray Darvick  
Robert Felper  
grandfather of Margie Gorelick  
William Frankel  
grandfather of Scott Brenner  
John Grzymala  
father of John Grzymala  
Elanor Hoffman  
grandmother of Brandie Krulik  
Eric Spencer Morley  
father of Larry Morley  
Sam Munsart  
uncle of Joan Isman  
Morris Rymberg  
uncle of Judith Strom  
Rose Vayda  
relative of Moreton Binn

Brett Winson  
husband of Liz Winson, father  
of Danielle, Caitlin and Lucas  
Benjamin Wishod  
father-in-law of Lora Wishod  
Cantor Kerry Ben-David

## FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Blanche Agisim  
mother of Elliot Agisim  
Bernard Baker  
father of Carlyn Bergman  
Arthur Brown  
father of Michael Brown  
Vivienne Bruckman  
stepmother of Rena Bruckman  
Sandra Elkin  
mother of Stephanie  
Herbstman  
Gloria Katz  
mother of JoAnn Gorman  
Gerald Levine  
father of Joan Isman  
Norman M. Lash  
father of Joseph Lash  
Steven Mechanic  
son of Elinor Darvick  
Irving Reichenthal  
father of Sandra Rosenhouse  
Rose Robinson  
relative of Moreton Binn  
Rose Schneider  
grandmother of Margie  
Gorelick  
Edward Shade  
uncle of Diana Friedlander  
Anna Shapiro  
grandmother of Laurie Dubin  
Rose Shoff  
grandmother of Jeffrey  
Hubsher  
Rae Weissman  
aunt of Diana Friedlander  
Burt Yolen  
father of David Yolen  
Alex Gelbart  
Morton Tucker



# CONTRIBUTIONS

## **RABBI'S DISCRETIONARY FUND**

Richard Lipton  
Terry and Bob Henry  
Barbara Ripps

### **In Honor Of:**

Daniel Krampf becoming Bar Mitzvah  
Gabrielle Guttman and Gary Krampf  
Henry and Annabel Darst becoming  
B'nei Mitzvah  
Daniel and Rebecca Darst

## **CANTOR'S DISCRETIONARY FUND**

### **In Honor of:**

Daniel Krampf becoming Bar Mitzvah  
Gabrielle Guttman and Gary Krampf

### **Music Fund**

Rachelle Axel  
Richard Lipton

### **In Memory of:**

Freda Shuler  
Roberta Margolis

## **ECC FUND**

### **In Memory of:**

Robert Weil z"l  
Bobbie and Rick Cohlan  
Becky and Scott Freedman  
George and Elise Jonisch  
Eric Larson

## **GENERAL FUND**

Richard Lipton

### **In Memory of:**

Sidney Klein, z"l  
Karen Taylor  
and David Kaminer  
Ann Brodsky  
Karl and Barbara Brodsky  
Jack Bergson  
Phyllis and David Amerling

## **High Holy Day/YK Appeal**

### **Donations** (since last Bulletin):

Elyse and Joshua Arnow  
Michael and Carlyn Bergman  
Ellen Lipton  
Evette Carp  
Lester and Loretta Steinman  
Dr. Kurt Voellmicke and  
Dr. Lisa Ipp-Voellmicke



## In Memoriam

The Memory of the Righteous is a Blessing

### **We extend condolences to:**

Barbara Ripps on the death of her husband, Ronald Ripps, z"l  
Jane Emmer on the death of her father, Robert Weil, z"l  
Audra Emmerich on the death of her aunt, Adrienne Fish, z"l  
*May their memory be for a blessing.*



*Cantor Debbie began providing Chanukah menorahs for Ridgefield Main Street shops nearly ten years ago. She believed that seeing a small menorah in window shops would make us Jews feel part of the community holiday festivities. Ridgefield is beautiful during the holiday season, and including a menorah has helped bring the community together even more as it's grown over the years. Shop owners have been very willing to participate and add a little Chanukah to their holiday festivities.*

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# CONGREGANT SPOTLIGHT

Bobbie and Rick Cohlan



## **Tell us about how you came to the area in South Salem.**

**Rick:** We were living in Yonkers at the time (1977) and I was practicing law there early in my career. It's hard to believe but I didn't want to be commuting from Northern Westchester to Yonkers. We had an aspiration of moving north though. We used to hike up in the Pound Ridge area and liked the outdoors. When I was able to become affiliated with a firm in White Plains that pushed us that little bit to move.

**Bobbie:** It was a lot more rural at the time. There were no traffic lights from 684 to Ridgefield. You didn't have to dial 763. You just dialed the last four digits.

**Rick:** My parents, particularly my father, were not happy because they said there's no Jews.

**Bobbie:** He drove around to look at mailbox names and told us there's no Jews there. At the time we were more interested in the woods and outdoors than in the Jewish piece. We wanted our house to be private and to be able to hike and stuff like that. There was even skiing in the town park with a rope tow.

When we first moved to this house

from the other house, our address was now Waccabuc and Waccabuc Country Club was down the street. It had a reputation of no Jews allowed along with a lot of country clubs in that era. I was unpacking boxes and I picked up the phone and the person said, "Jew get out of Waccabuc." I hung up the phone. I'll always remember that. I called the rabbi. We always need to think about antisemitism. It's the sense of community and responsibility for each other. We want everyone to feel that we have a sense of responsibility to have a temple. We need to have representation and we need to know there is a Jewish community here.

## **How did you come to find JFC?**

**Bobbie:** I was pregnant with our oldest daughter Tracy when we moved here. When she was in first grade Tracy came off the school bus and said all the kids were going to be in the Christmas pageant and she wanted to go too. This was when I said we need to join a temple. Rick had grown up going to Rye Community Synagogue, but he went to the Port Chester schools. He didn't like the idea that there wasn't a synagogue in our town because he didn't like that feeling when he went to Hebrew school that the kids knew each other from school, and he didn't know as many kids. Then I saw a thing that Robi Margolis had about selling *Chanukah* candles or something at the church. I went to it and that was JFC in its beginnings. They were meeting in people's houses. Someone told me later that



we were the only people to join in February.

## **What memories stand out from your time as congregants?**

**Bobbie:** Our two oldest children, Tracy and Rebecca (Becca), had their *Bat Mitzvah* at the church and Hilary had her *Bat Mitzvah* at the building on 123. After the service and party for every one of my girls' *B'nai Mitzvot* I felt that they had grown and matured. They had skills that weren't just Hebrew or knowing the order of a service. Standing on a bimah, making a speech. It was meaningful, and she goes "Mom I just don't understand it. People were talking about their *Bar Mitzvah* themes. People said the theme was soccer or the Yankees or skiing. But mine was about my *Torah* portion." I was like we have done something right.

We got actively involved. Rick served on the board and was the lead

*(continued on page 27)*



## CONGREGANT SPOTLIGHT (CONT'D)

attorney on acquiring the building for JFC. I was on the Education Committee and at the same time I was teaching at Maimonides. The temple had done a big fundraiser that included a consultant who surveyed people and what they wanted. One of the things people wanted was a preschool. I started the preschool. We started with a three-year-old class and then we grew the school. Just like the school at Shir Shalom (Early Childhood Center) it became a very big and important community. That's how people met their friends and became more active in the temple. You start out for your children, and I have to say when you get to a certain age and your children are older hopefully you think broader than that. Just personally for your own needs, the sense of community if you should take ill, just having friends, or when you need to bury your parents, your spouses, or God forbid your children. It's so much more than that.

We have three daughters and eight grandchildren, one of whom was

born still. My daughter Hilary and her husband Tyler live in Ridgefield and are congregants of Shir Shalom. Three of their children have gone to the ECC. When my grandson Oliver died because I knew so much from my mother of traditions, I knew that a lot of Jewish tradition is to not consider him born or part of the family because he was not a live

**"We need to have representation and we need to know there is a Jewish community here."**

birth, and he didn't have a *bris* or baby naming. The kids wanted to do a burial and Rick took care of all that. I called our Cantor Kerry Ben-David. He studied it and wrote a whole beautiful service. I found out later on that he had never done that before. He bought blue ribbon and he cut them and made a little safety pin for kria. Our in-laws kept that on for a week or more. He gave Cantor Sheera

Ben-David his file when he retired if she ever has to do a funeral for a still born baby. The big point is rabbis, cantors and clergy of any religion can either be welcoming in a way that embraces the person where they're at or they can be such a turn off. We were lucky with that situation.

**What piece of advice would you have for someone new to Shir Shalom?**

Bobbie: If you can, you should join a committee because you'll make some friends and meet some people. If you have children in either the ECC or *B'Yachad* and you can, be active in the school program. You'll meet some people and it's nice to have some friends in the temple as well as participate beyond the religious service piece. We can use everybody's help. Each person has a unique background that they can offer to help and be a part of the temple. It's a nice feeling. It just feels good.

## OUR MISSION

### WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

We are a vibrant and inclusive community inspired by Jewish values and traditions.

We honor the diversity of our backgrounds, experiences, and aspirations.

We celebrate our shared values: the study of Torah, participatory worship driven by music, the promotion of lifelong learning, the ongoing project of *Tikkun Olam* (Healing the World), and the work of social justice. We embrace the responsibility/task of being "a light unto the nations," building a brighter future for our community and the world.

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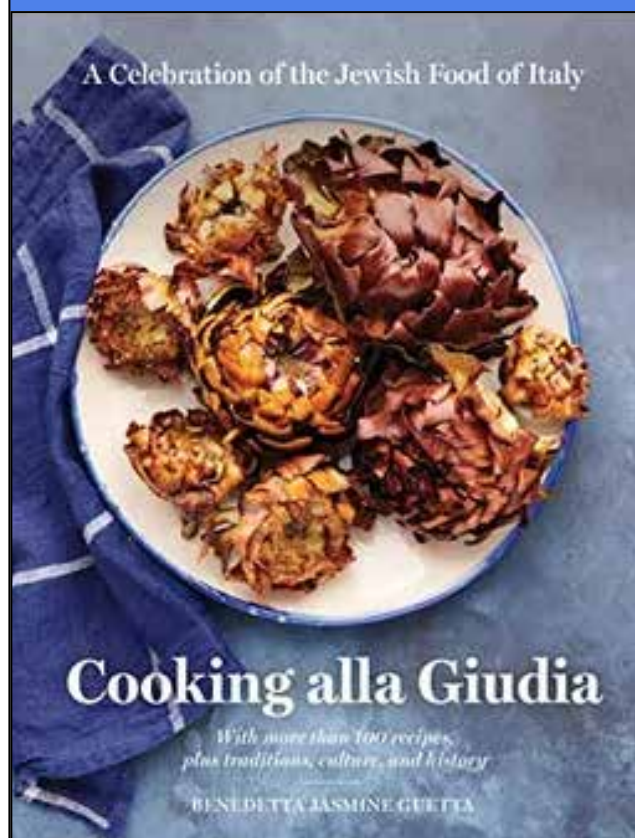
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## "COOKING ALLA GIUDIA: A CELEBRATION OF THE JEWISH FOOD OF ITALY"

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5TH @ 3:00 PM

ZOOM TALK WITH AUTHOR **BENEDETTA JASMINE GUETTA**



In her book "Cooking alla Giudia," Guetta guides readers on an expansive and inspiring tour of one of the oldest Jewish communities, highlighting how Italian techniques and flavors have long been a part of the Jewish diet and vice versa.

Throughout the book, Guetta homes in on particular connections between the two cuisines. Orecchiette pasta (which means "small ears" in Italian), for example, was likely brought over by Jews from Provence — not native to Southern Italy, as most believe.

Guetta's recipes are compelling and unexpected. Modern in taste, and welcoming in presentation, and they offer up the best of both Jewish and Italian cuisine.

-- Excerpted from a Review by Hannah Kressel

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