The basic story of Purim is well-known: how King Ahasuerus of Persia let himself be influenced by the wicked counselor Haman to order the annihilation of all the Jews in his vast empire, and how the Jews were saved by the resourcefulness of Mordechai and his niece, Queen Esther.

Historically, it is questionable whether any such episode occurred exactly as it is reported in the Book of Esther. However, it is quite possible that the festival of Purim does go back to some actual incident in the history of the Persian Jews, since we have observed Purim as a major holiday since ancient times.

Purim, in the early spring, and Simchat Torah in the fall, about six months apart, have historically functioned as social release valves within the Jewish community. One can, with official sanction, drink so much he cannot think clearly. Nothing is black and white. All is grey. On Purim the world is turned upside down. Students can openly poke fun at their teachers, the poor...
**The Doorways**

"Between healing and home," are four words that succinctly describe the mission of The Doorways. The Doorways provides low-cost housing to patients undergoing a variety of medical experiences at nearby hospitals, their families and their caregivers.

On Thursday, November 17th, members of the Tikkun Olam Committee served a dinner of chicken cacciatore, brown rice and garden salads to residents there. Prior to the event, on Wednesday, November 15th, another group of volunteers prepared the dinner entrees in the Beth Ahabah kitchen. The main courses were then transported to The Doorways to be served later in the week.

To serve the meal on November 17th, several members of the Tikkun Olam Committee and CBA volunteers met at 5:30 pm to ready the dining area, re-heat the entree and toss the salad. Bread and desserts were provided by area food stores.

The Doorways residents, guests and staff were very appreciative of our efforts. In a time of societal discord, what the people of CBA did demonstrates what people of our faith, good intent, determined purpose and love for our fellow mankind can accomplish.

In December, we celebrated the birthday of the Prophet Mohammad, Christmas and Hanukkah. Perhaps the one refrain should be, “God bless us, each and every one.”

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**To the Members of Congregation Beth Ahabah,**

When community forms around an idea, task or mission, people discover one another in new and meaningful ways. Strangers become acquaintances and acquaintances become friends. Bridging RVA is all about connecting individuals, groups and causes to advance common good in our community.

Due to the closing of the Freedom House in 2012, the annual Christmas Day Dinner in Richmond also came to an end. After learning of this void in our community, Bridging RVA decided to bring the dinner back to our city in 2015. We all agreed that Christmas is a culturally significant time of the year. Regardless of one’s theology or religion, we believe a Christmas Day Dinner advances the common good by feeding the hungry; and promoting goodwill and peace among ALL people.

We are extremely grateful for Congregation Beth Ahabah, who made their beautiful place of worship available as the venue for the 2016 Christmas Day Dinner. We are also grateful for the 150 volunteers, 38 individual donors and 9 corporate donors who contributed to the effort. At the end of the day, the 2016 Christmas Day Dinner was a huge success! More than 500 people were fed and hundreds of toys were given out to children.

It was a beautiful example of people coming together to advance common good. Here is a link to a video that captured the moments and smiles of the day: https://youtu.be/SG_nY1uAjkY

On behalf of Bridging RVA’s Board of Directors, thank you for your openness and hospitality.

Kind Regards,

*John Sawyer*

*Bridging RVA Board Chairman*
A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Many members ask where our historic congregational cemetery is located and what is involved in purchasing a plot? Well, Hebrew Cemetery is on Hospital Street between Fourth and Fifth Streets. Hebrew Cemetery provides traditional grave sites with either flat or raised headstones in a setting that is conducive to peace, solace and meditation. There are also sites available for cremation urns.

Our congregational cemetery is another aspect of our common support and shared concern for every member. Remember, too, by making arrangements now, you will spare members of your family the anxiety and stress of making such a decision on their own during trying times.

When you are ready to discuss your needs or would like to visit Hebrew Cemetery, we invite you to make an appointment by calling me or chairman, Bill Thalhimer, III at the Temple office.

BUDGET SEASON IS UPON US

Budget season is upon us and the Finance Committee is hard at work guiding the staff, lay leaders, and program committees through the annual budget process. Budgets serve two primary purposes as they help provide a blue print for the congregation to follow based on expected income and expenses and also serve as a key control to ensure financial discipline within our organization. In addition to preparing an annual budget, the Finance Committee will also take a longer term financial view and estimate our financial picture over a three to five year period. This longer term view will help our leadership with evaluating alternatives and assessing the impact in such important areas as staffing models, alternative dues structures and new and innovative programming ideas. We look forward to presenting a sound financial plan to the congregation at the Annual Meeting in May and providing tools to assist our leadership in evaluating important decisions for the Congregation.

Jewish Music from Around the World

Don't miss this once-a-year opportunity to hear examples of Jewish music from around the globe!

As part of my ongoing Cantorial studies, I have continued to learn as much as I can about the many different cultures and traditions of Jewish music across the centuries, and across the globe. There is so much diversity in Jewish music, much of which we are not exposed to in our day-to-day lives.

Friday, March 31 will be a special opportunity to hear examples of different global Jewish musical traditions, and learn about them!

During the Torah service that evening, I will chant that week’s Torah verses in several styles: first, our “normal” one (which comes from an Eastern European/Ashkenazi style), and then in a few other styles, including Western European/Ashkenazi (featured during the Brotherhood service this past January), an Iraqi style, and a Moroccan style.

Then, following the Torah service, we will explore Global Jewish music traditions as they have developed in different areas of the world, with musical examples of course!

I am very excited to once again present this taste of Jewish music from around the world in March, and I hope you are able to join us during services that evening.

Left to Right: An oud (pronounced ood, as in food) is a stringed instrument similar to a lute used in many Middle Eastern Jewish traditions; and a darbuka, or doumbek, a type of goblet drum used in Middle Eastern and North African Jewish music.
A Warm Welcome to
Our New Members!

Congregation Beth Ahabah would like to welcome
the following new members and their families:

David Cohn
Donna Poland
Richard & Lawrence Gordon

Please excuse us if we missed listing your name,
we will include it in the next issue.

We extend a warm welcome to the
newest members of our Beth Ahabah community
and look forward to engaging you in all
of the exciting things that are happening
in our congregation.

Carol Ann Callahan
Membership Committee Chairperson

can mock the rich, the weak can deride the powerful and we
can all pretend to be someone else.

The Megillat Esther, or Scroll of Esther, from which Purim
derives, is one of the latest books in the TANACH, the
Jewish Bible, and was only placed within our canon after
much debate by the rabbis in the late first century of the
Common Era. It is universally regarded as a comic novella as
it is historically implausible, frivolous, and bawdy. It does,
however, give us the foundation and authorization for the
observance of Purim.

There are three main themes in the Book of Esther.

The first is based on Haman’s complaint to King Ahasuerus
about the Jews. He tells the king (Esther 3:8), “There is a cer-
tain people, scattered and dispersed among the other peoples
in all the provinces of your realm, whose laws are different
from those of any other people and who do not obey the
king’s laws—and it is not in your Majesty’s interest to tolerate
them.” While the charge that we do not obey the king’s laws
was a blatant lie, the Jews were different from every other
people within the realm. Haman was choosing to practice the
age old custom of tyrants everywhere, to direct the hostility
of the government and populace against a small minority of
people who are different from the majority. Haman was obvi-
ously foiled in his effort to destroy the Jews, but other tyrants
have not been so easily defeated. We learn from this that we
must always strive to protect those who are different, those
small minorities whom it is easy to oppress. Our best protec-
tion as Jews is to protect others who are targets of prejudice
and discrimination.

The second theme is a dominant one in Jewish life—when
ever and where ever we have lived, we have emulated the
habits and customs of the majority culture. In this country,
we are thoroughly and completely American. Our music,
dress, and language, and our attitudes all reflect our complete
immersion within 21st century American life. Jews through-
out the ages lived with the tension of being different and
being part of the societies in which we sojourned. Jewish life
and culture has always reflected the time and place in which
we live. The secret to Jewish survival is maintaining our dif-
fferences while simultaneously living like everyone else.

The third point is unique to the Book of Esther and the holi-
day of Purim. Esther is the only book in the Bible in which
God is not mentioned. Nowhere in our text does God
appear, yet God’s hand invisibly guides all the actions of

Mordechai and Esther. This reminds us that even if God is
not imminent in our lives, God works in and through us to
bring goodness and light into the world. We see God through
our actions, in the small and large acts of goodness we
perform each and every day. This is one of Purim’s greatest
lessons, one that permeates our existence as Jewish human
beings.

Randi joins me in wishing everyone a Happy and Joyous
Purim. May we all share in God’s work by sharing joy and
laughter with all this month of Adar.

Joyfully,
Rabbi Scott Nagel
Inspiring Jewish Lives—Building Sacred Community: What Lies Ahead
By Katie Roeper, Congregational President

It’s always a little challenging to write an article that won’t be published for several weeks. It forces us to look beyond the immediate future and consider what will be most relevant two months down the road. Today is actually January 1st, the secular new year—a day that encourages us to look forward. In keeping with this tradition, I am looking forward to the coming months and what I hope to accomplish before the end of my term in May. Here are a few of the highlights:

Innovation Teams have met several times since last summer—identifying goals, objectives, and action steps. Priorities have been assigned, based on feasibility and potential level of impact, with an intention to be inclusive of all demographics in our congregational community. There are common themes and cross-cutting goals, which will now be compiled into a comprehensive Strategic Plan to guide us over the coming years.

Committee structure will be examined to determine where we have gaps, based on the new strategic plan. Small groups will be designed to provide opportunities for members to work on specific programs or ideas, offering them flexibility, focus on greatest interest, and less time commitment than committee work.

Parking in the city is no easy feat on Sunday mornings yet more and more families want to engage in Sunday morning activities. While this topic was raised during the charettes, it was not feasible to build additional parking into the plans for renovation and new construction. In looking around town, however, it seems that city churches have come up with some innovative ways to secure parking on Sunday mornings. We should be able to do the same. A small group of families have agreed to take the lead in exploring creative alternatives and working with Richmond City to seek a solution for our members.

Budgeting has been somewhat of a “chicken and egg” dilemma for Beth Ahabah. We have at times, set the budget and asked committees to design programs accordingly. We have also asked committees to set the budget and submit to the finance committee, who then is charged with figuring out how to balance income and expenses. This year, we are taking a hybrid approach by asking committees to prioritize their budget requests, based on alignment with the vision. This will give better guidance to the Finance Committee when tough decisions need to be made.

Development will take a more coordinated approach. We will be restructuring development efforts to strengthen all fundraising to include Giving Circles (annual giving), special projects, Life and Legacy planned giving; and future phases of the campaign. We will be working with small groups to coordinate communication, donor cultivation and donor recognition and create a collaborative plan to serve as a roadmap for future development.

We will strengthen communication and support Religious School families by training all teachers on Beth Ahabah Connect. This important tool will be used for all future communications between teachers and families and to connect all adult members according to areas of interest. If you have not yet signed up, please contact Lori Allen at the Temple office to learn how easy it is!

Plans to break ground for renovations and new construction are projected for late spring, providing final approvals are granted by Richmond City. We look forward to planning an event that mirrors the inclusive approach established in the fundraising phase of the campaign.

Getting Involved—if any of these areas spark interest with you, please contact Katie Roeper to learn how to make an impact in the future of our congregation.

Beth Ahabah: Inspiring Jewish Lives—Building Sacred Community.

Beth Ahabah Cares
Beth Ahabah Cares reaches out to our congregational members who are ill, hospitalized, or perhaps sitting shiva by sending cards, making calls, and delivering healing meals. We reach out in times of gladness as well by sending Mazel Tov greetings to our families with new babies. We love sending newly knit caps and/or booties to our newest tiny members. This active committee is always open to welcoming new members who are available to bake, cook meals, knit, or make telephone calls. Everyone is welcome! If you can give us a little of your time you can help our community in a big way.

Please contact Lori Skiles at 804.346.2684 or lskiles@verizon.net; or Miri Eyan at 804.269.5424 or pink4good@gmail.com to begin touching lives one family at a time.
When I was about to turn 60 and planning to retire from almost 30 years practicing law, I had a major problem. What was I going to do? My brain was going to turn to mush! I was having lunch with a friend and expressed my concerns. She suggested I join her at her bridge lesson. I had learned to play in college where the game and I had an intense relationship. After marrying David, we played a lot as a young couple, but as we began to have serious family and career responsibilities, we would play just once or twice a year. But I was curious and accepted her offer.

It turned out bridge had really changed! It was still a partnership card game divided into two parts: bidding and playing, but that was about all that was familiar. I enjoyed the lessons and the challenges they presented. I even began to review the homework - leading David to comment that if I had studied this much in college I would have come out with a PhD! After several months, I asked my teacher about a mentor and she had the perfect one in mind for me.

In addition to my weekly lesson, I played once a week with my mentor and we spent almost two hours after the game going over the hands we had just played. Soon other people began asking me to play. I was serious about learning and willing to study, so my partners were patient. I am not a natural card player but I figured if I worked hard and studied it would make up for whatever deficits I had.

I have progressed to the point where I want to return the generosity others have shown me, so I became a certified bridge teacher this summer and now have 8 beginning students. In addition to teaching the mechanics of the game, I hope to impart what a truly elegant game bridge is. It can be played socially with two couples enjoying a bottle of wine or it can be fiercely competitive. You can play it with a basic understanding of the game and never advance further than that, or spend a lifetime learning its intricacies.

My brain turn to mush? Ha! Not as long as I can play bridge!

This is a new series written by and about the members of Beth Ahabah. If you would like to submit an article about a friend or family member at Beth Ahabah, or your own adventures, avocations or interesting career, please contact Lori Allen in the Temple office at l.allen@bethahabah.org.
CBA Music Makers
by Laura Savage, CBA Music Committee Chair

Featuring…
the Sopranos

NO, not those Sopranos...the ladies of the Adult Choir. Each issue, we will feature a different section of the choir. St. Augustine said, “he who sings, prays twice.” My feelings exactly. It is why I choose to sing. We asked the choir members how long they have sung in the choir, why they sing, how singing impacts their families and what they do when not in the choir. Here are the results:

Sarah Blankenship is a veteran singer having started her career in the Junior Choir in 1986. She has been a member of the Adult Choir since 1999. Sarah describes her love of singing as a “meaningful spiritual experience” and “a way to give back.” Singing is a commitment which impacts her family. They are super fans, but it means “sitting with the choir instead of my family.” Sarah’s day job embraces her passion for creativity. She is a marketing/coordinator/graphic designer/photographer for Caldwell Baker. She is also a jewelry designer and artist in her spare time when she is not volunteering with the Boy Scouts as an Assistant Scout Master. In addition, Sarah is a beloved Religious School teacher of K-2.

Fern Cohen is one of the “original” choir members having sung for 23 years. She says that “singing makes my spirits soar.” Fern’s musical career started at Brith Achim in Petersburg as a member of the Junior Choir. “Music has always been a part of my life. My mother played the piano and we would sing along.” Fern is a semi-retired speech pathologist. She volunteers with RVA aphasia group, Hadassah’s Check-It-Out Program and is a reader for the Virginia Voice. Fern’s hobbies include theater, opera and the arts. “I love life!”

Rebecca Eichelbaum joined the choir 4 years ago. She “loves music.” Rebecca is a self described “homemaker” whose hobbies include her children, dance art and walking. “Choir has become an important part of my life. I enjoy the choir members and Natan.”

Holly Jordan has given her beautiful voice to the soprano section since 1994. As a professional, she is a choral instructor in the Chesterfield Public schools. She is a frequent soloist and section leader at St Paul’s Episcopal church. When not singing, Holly enjoys her sons, Ian and Collin.

Rachel Schmidt has dreams of becoming a cantor. It’s never too late. She has somewhat fulfilled this longing by singing for the last 20 years with the Adult Choir. Rachel has been our “Cantorial soloist” during summer services. “Singing is the best way to connect with God.” Rachel is a senior coordinator in her day job. She loves dogs.

Laura Savage started singing every Shabbat morning in the youth choir at Temple Beth Emeth (PS it still exists). She has been a member of the adult choir for over 30 years. “Music is the spiritual way in which to connect and embrace Shabbat.” Her mother had a great impact on her love for music. There was always music in the home as her mother played piano and was the music teacher at Religious School. Laura’s husband and daughter are “faithful fans” ever present in the third row cheering her on with “smiles and pride.” Laura retired from VCU after 30 years as an advanced practice nurse only to be coaxed back a year ago. Her passions include volunteering and travel.

Kathryn “Kat” Sinclair joined the choir 4 years ago. Singing “brings her joy and is the most meaningful way to pray.” Kat says her family “has no idea
CBA COMMUNITY

IN SYMPATHY TO THE FAMILIES OF....
Ellis Abrams
Selma Levy
  grandmother of Lara (Jeff) Lavelle
Dorothy Holzbach
  mother-in-law of Beryl Holzbach
Rick Morgan
  husband of Susan Morgan
  father of Aaron & Evan Morgan
Mabel May Hull
  mother of Rita (Carter) Buxbaum
Ida Wagner
  mother of Patricia Dodson
Nancy Segal
  wife of Jeff Segal
  mother of Jessica, Jacob & Anne Segal
Murray Lowenstein
Gladys Lehman
  sister of Minnie Held &
  Gloria Weiner Adams
Frances Smith
  mother of Debbie (John) Cook

MAZAL TOV! GOOD NEWS & SIMCHAS TO:
Deborah Greenberg on the birth of her grandson, William Kevin Reed born November 22, 2016. Also to great-grandmother, Mikki Evans and parents, Brendan Reed & Dr. Emily Caplan Reed of McLean, Virginia.

Coffee & Adam Bourne on the birth of their son, Judah Elon Bourne, born December 15, 2016


Marcia & Harry Thalhimer on the birth of their granddaughter, Rose Antoinette Thalhimer born November 15, 2016. Also to parents, Michael & Alyson Thalhimer of St. Paul, Minnesota, uncle, Andrew Thalhimer and grandparents, David & Doris Hoel.

Barbara D. Boyan, who will be inducted as a 2016 National Academy of Inventors Fellow.

BETH AHABAH SENIOR BRIDGE

Transportation = independence. Many seniors who do not like to drive consider themselves a burden to others, especially when they cannot access public transportation (and only 4% of the elderly use public transportation). Most people hate to ask for help, so they will just do without going out. The availability of transportation enables older persons to live independently in their communities, helps to prevent isolation and the possible need for long-term care placement.

We can meet this need by volunteering once a year to drive a congregational senior to and from services. Please consider being a part of this mitzvah!

Reminder: Thursday March 2, 2017 6:30 p.m. @ Joel House information concerning Medicare from the Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program. Trained volunteer counselors assist with Medicare and help seniors and caregivers understand Medicare and other health insurance benefits.

Planning Ahead: Tuesday April 18, 2017 6:00 p.m. @ Joel House Care Givers Appreciation Dinner, details to follow!

Rachel Schmidt, Senior Bridge coordinator
rachelcohenschmidt@gmail.com
804.690.8439
Nathan Litow Aschheim will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah on February 25th, 2017. He is the son of Shari Litow and David Aschheim, the brother of Seth Litow Aschheim and the grandson of Joseph and Madeleine Litow and Barbara and Peter Aschheim.

Nathan is in 7th grade at St. Christopher’s School and has been a member of Beth Ahabah since the age of eight. At school, Nathan enjoys math, woodworking and science. Outside of school, Nathan enjoys playing soccer on the FC Richmond soccer team, playing tennis, hiking and biking. His family and friends would say that he is funny, friendly, happy and enjoys solving problems.

For his Mitzvah Project, Nathan plans to do work that will better the lives of US Military Veterans.

Jake Kenneth Lightfoot Weiss will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah. He is the son of David and Mackenzie Weiss and brother of Alexis Weiss. He is the grandson of Ken and the late Mary Bo Gassman of Richmond, and Harriet Weiss and the late Gary Weiss of Orlando, Florida.

Jake is a 7th grader at Pocahontas Middle School. He is first string for his weight class on the school wrestling team. In his free time he enjoys skateboarding, gaming and creating cool inventions. Jake is a neighborhood favorite as he has a special way with younger children and always finds a way to include them in “big kid” activities. He has a kind heart and is always helping those in need in various ways. His favorite subject in school is science. Following in the family footsteps, he is a huge fan of the Florida Gators and aspires to attend University of Florida for college. He is thinking of becoming an architect as an adult.

For his Mitzvah Project, he has implemented a program in his school collecting gently used jeans to donate to homeless shelters.

Mannix Green will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah on March 18, 2017. Mannix is the son of Carolyn Dean and Lonny Green, and brother to Galen, Stenzler, Thomas, Knaide and Quinn. He is the grandson of Janet O’Connor and the late Dr. Philip Dean, and the late Shirley Green and the late David Green.

Mannix is a 7th grade student in the International Baccalaureate program at Moody Middle School. He is on the Moody Middle School soccer, basketball and track teams and swims for the Dominion Club in the summer. Mannix loves music and plays tenor saxophone in the middle school band. Mannix enjoys school, sports, family time and playing his sax and his ukulele.

For his Mitzvah Project, he has implemented a program in his school collecting gently used jeans to donate to homeless shelters.

We are very proud of Mannix, and look forward to celebrating this simcha with his family, friends and the congregation.

B’nei Mitzvah...continues on Page 10
Nicole Brager will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on Saturday, March 25. She is the daughter of Sharon and Rob Brager, and the sister of Erica and Corinne. She is the granddaughter of Madelene and Stan Brager of Potomac, Maryland, and Phyllis and Bill Scott of Berwyn, Pennsylvania.

Nicole is a 7th grader at Orchard House School. She likes to play sports, and is on a year round travel soccer team, her school basketball team, and plays tennis in the summer. In her free time, Nicole enjoys writing stories, hanging with friends, listening to music, and watching Netflix. She and her dad volunteer together in monthly community service projects with her friends from Orchard House. For her Mitzvah Project, Nicole is volunteering in various activities with the residents at The Virginia Home. Her favorite subject is science. She’s always been good at building things, and hopes to one day be an engineer or an architect, or maybe a writer.

As the last of nine grandchildren on both sides of the family, we are very proud of Nicole and all of her hard work on becoming a Bat Mitzvah.

mazal tov!

**PURIM SOCIAL JUSTICE GUIDE**
http://www.reformjudaism.org/purim-social-justice-guide

In spite of, or perhaps because of, its fun-filled celebrations and traditions, Purim remains a holiday about social justice. The commandments to eat, drink and be merry are accompanied by the **mitzvah** of giving **matanot l’evyonim** (gifts to the poor) and **tzedakah** (literally “justice,” but understood as “charity”). In the Book of Esther, we read, “The same days on which Jews enjoyed relief from their foes and the same month which had been transformed for them from one of grief to joy and from mourning to festival, they were to observe them as days of feasting and merry-making, and as an occasion for sending gifts (**misloach manot**) and presents to the poor (**matanot l’evyonim**)” (Esther 9:22).

In giving **matanot l’evyonim** on Purim—and in the larger sense of pursuing social justice—we recognize the need to address the inequalities we see in our society. By engaging in social action on Purim, we hope to help erase the hierarchy of the haves and the have-nots in our world. During this time of revelry and fun, of forgetting our usual inhibitions and turning our usual routines on their heads, let us also remember that we have the power to transform the lives of those who are suffering, to turn their days of mourning into days of joy.

Here are a few simple ways that you can give **matanot l’evyonim** (gifts to the poor) on Purim:
- Donate food or money to a local food pantry.
- Volunteer at a soup kitchen, cooking or serving a meal.
- Make sandwiches to distribute to the homeless.
- Bake and sell **hamantaschen** and donate the proceeds to an anti-hunger or social service agency.
- Conduct a canned-food drive for a local food bank.

You can also incorporate social action themes into your Purim celebration in the following ways.

***Use macaroni graggers***
This Purim, when the wicked Haman’s name is called out during the megillah reading, use a box of macaroni and cheese or any other uncooked pasta—as a gragger (noisemaker). After the service, donate the boxes of pasta to food banks.

***Help Poor Jews Celebrate Purim***
Create gifts of Purim goodies such as **hamantaschen** and bring them to people who would have difficulty buying the items themselves. Children of any age can decorate the boxes or make greeting cards to include. Gift might be brought as part of a visit to a senior center or left anonymously for families in need. Your local Jewish Family Service or rabbi can provide you with a person or place that would love to receive your gift.

***Donate Grocery Store Gift Certificates***
Gift certificates to local grocery stores can help food pantries assist clients with meeting the dietary needs that canned food drives cannot address, allowing clients in need to purchase fresh foods that food pantries cannot stock.

***Have a Party to Feed the Hungry***
Are you hosting or attending a Purim party or se’udah (festive meal)? Make a donation to a food pantry or to another organization that fights hunger...
Judaism = A lifetime of Learning

Learning is what Jews do. It never stops. We are the people of the book. Perhaps you remember your Bubbe or Zayde calling their synagogue a shul, the Yiddish word for school. And it is; a place to worship and a place to learn. Jews are commanded when starting a new community to first build a school, and that one does not keep children from school even to build the Temple. Religious education here begins at birth with Tot Shabbat and continues until when? B’nei Mitzvah? Confirmation? Trick question!! The correct answer is forever.

One may notice in whatever synagogue they attend that the congregation always participates loudly and earnestly in the V’ahavta. It is perhaps the prayer most commonly “known by heart” in Hebrew. In it, we are told to love God with all our heart, soul, and might, and then we are told how to do that, by taking the instructions we are learning and… teaching them to our children diligently, by reciting and living them at home, in public and when we are on our way.

Parents are the first and most important teachers that children have. This is true even for religious education. As the noted Jewish sage, Albert Einstein said, “Example isn’t another way to teach, it is the only way to teach.” Our children model the behaviors we show them, what we find important enough to do, they will do. The Gesher Program at the religious school is one way our parents model continuing Jewish learning for their children. Parents are taught a lesson by Rabbi Nagel, the students are taught a parallel lesson by their teachers, and then the children join their parents for a joint activity that reinforces the lesson.

So far this year the Kindergarten, First and Second grade parents and student enjoyed “Tanakh 101”. Both groups received a lesson on the different parts of the Tanakh: The Torah, Nevi’im (the Prophets), and Ketuvim (the Writings). They then came together for an exciting Scavenger Hunt in which they had to answer clues using the knowledge they had just learned about the Tanakh to find 11 puzzle pieces hidden all around the CBA campus. When the puzzle was assembled they all received crowns as a reward. In addition to learning about the Tanakh, many reported finding parts of the campus they hadn’t known about before.

The third grade Gesher used this Tanakh genealogy and personal family tree.

The third grade used this Tanakh genealogy and personal family tree.

The third grade and their parents participated in a gesher lesson on the Heroes of the Tanakh. Each heard a 10 minute lesson on all the Heroes of the Bible from Adam and Eve to Nehemiah and King Ezra, they watched a short video on the same subject and while the parents had a discussion with Rabbi Nagel, the students made a 15 foot long timeline scroll matching the heroes to important events on the timeline, which they very proudly presented to their parents. (It will soon be displayed in the upstairs religious school corridor for everyone to learn from.) The students and parents then together studied a genealogy of the Tanakh and had the opportunity to fill out a genealogy of their own family with Hebrew and English names. Some who did not have Hebrew names worked with Rabbi Nagel to choose one. The fun wasn’t over yet, they then made Hebrew name keychains or jewelry using alef bet beads.

Upcoming Gesher lessons include a lesson on Tallit for the Sixth graders and their parents, and Israel for the Fifth grade and Jewish Wedding customs for the Fourth grade.
TOT SHABBAT!
Saturdays, February 25 & March 25
from 9:30 to 11:00 am in the Gumenick Chapel then Joel House

For our young congregants who are newborn to 5 years, we have special services designed to give them a fun and warm introduction to the synagogue, to Shabbat, to the holidays, and to Judaism. A family friendly Service with music and movement begins at 9:30 am on Saturday mornings. The service is followed with an activity hour fun, snacks and social time

Upcoming Geshers

5th Grade Gesher
Sunday, February 26th
Topic: Israel

4th Grade Gesher
Sunday, March 5th
Topic: Jewish Wedding Customs

CBA Youth Groups

Beth Ahabah Senior Youth Group
Grade 8 through 12

Beth Ahabah Teens are going to start off February with a ski trip from Friday, February 10th to Saturday, February 11th. We will be joining other youth groups from across Virginia for a ski trip hosted by Temple Beth El in Harrisonburg to Massanutten Mountain and Massanutten Water Park. This event is open to everyone in 8th to 12th grade, so contact Lori Allen to sign up!

On Sunday, February 26th, there will be a Madrichim Social before Religious School! We’ll meet in the youth lounge for some breakfast.

On Saturday, March 18th, JeRafty (our teen youth group) will be having a night on the town! We will be going to dinner and doing something fun afterwards! This event will be open to everyone in 8th to 12th grade and Brian will be emailing more details soon!

From Friday, March 24th to Sunday, March 26th will be NFTY-MAR’s TheVent! Get to know Jewish teens from Maryland, Virginia, D.C. and North Carolina while competing in a color war-style event! This event is open to all 8th through 12th graders. Look for an email with more details soon!

Beth Ahabah Middle Schoolers
Grade 6 through 8

Later this winter we will be having a board game day! Join your friends after religious school in playing some games and hanging out!

Beth Ahabah Kids
Grade 2 through 5

Stay tuned for details on an After School Activity on March 19th!

HAVING A MOVING EXPERIENCE?

If you’re hanging your mezuzah on a new doorpost, please be sure to let us know right away. That will keep the bulletin coming to you promptly—and save us postal fees.

We want to keep you posted!

Thinking of Buying or Selling? Call me 1st!

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Insist on Stevie!
Beth Ahabah Men of Reform Judaism
by David Feibish
President Beth Ahabah Brotherhood/MRJ

Looking back, looking ahead….

December 2016 was an exciting and fun month for Beth Ahabah’s Brotherhood.

In addition to volunteer ushering and presenting B'nei Mitzvah gifts, and on December 11th preparing and cooking hundreds of latkes for the Religious School Hanukkah Party, we had our 2nd BREWS & BROTHERHOOD social at Strangeways Brewing.

Besides the big attendance of children and parents at the Hanukkah Party, we had new volunteer faces helping Brotherhood. It was an outstanding event, thanks to the leadership of Dan Rosenthal.

We also had familiar and many new faces at our men's social event, which was very rewarding and exciting as well. The Strangeways venue exuded the growing "hipster" reputation of RVA (and Brotherhood?). The craft beer selections unique to Strangeways Brewing were well received and enjoyed by those in attendance. Rabbi Nagel, a craft brew aficionado, joined us. The private room for our event was eclectic and fun, with its location safely near the actual micro-brew area surrounded with stacked barrels of product. The dinner provided was heartily consumed and there was a lot of interaction between all those in attendance.

I want to thank the Brotherhood Board for giving me the freedom and budget to put together last year’s men’s-only events at Hardywood, and this year at Strangeways.

Some years ago when I first started participating with Brotherhood, I did it in spite of my thinking it was made up of older men with whom I probably did not have much in common. I could not have been more wrong.

There is a natural churn with the active Brotherhood membership, but it consists of men who run the full range of ages. We have active members with children in Religious School, to members like me with a child who celebrated her Confirmation 17 years ago and others who date well beyond me. The thing we have in common is that we want in some way to volunteer as a contribution to Beth Ahabah.

I am hopeful our social event opened the eyes of younger men in our congregation that Brotherhood offers more than just volunteer work and meetings to budget and plan events. Brotherhood is really a key component of many activities that happen at Beth Ahabah.

Doing for others is very rewarding for all of us in Brotherhood, but I have to admit that I do it for myself as well. The sense of self-satisfaction observing others who enjoy our cookouts; eating our delicious latkes; fulfilling a request of providing lunch for 75 volunteers for a Tikkun Olam Committee event; sponsoring an affordable family night in January at a University of Richmond basketball game, a [board & other] Game Night in February for all ages, setting up and participating in the March Purim Carnival at the JCC and more, make it all worthwhile!

This is an open invitation for men of all ages to attend a meeting to simply check out Brotherhood and perhaps offer to volunteer in some small way. You don't have to make an all-consuming commitment; offer what you are comfortable doing and check out what Brotherhood has to offer.

The volunteer efforts we provide to the Congregation as a whole are invaluable, but as men and fathers we also provide leadership and show the way for our sons and daughters how to shape their commitment to Jewish life.

Brotherhood has the following opportunities to participate in February and March 2017:

**Game Night**
Saturday, February 11 at 7:00 p.m.

**JCC Purim Festival**
Sunday, March 12 at 10:00 a.m.
Weinstein JCC

Men of Beth Ahabah, look for our meeting notices and other upcoming events posted in the weekly Beth Ahabah enews! As always, you are welcome to call or email me anytime to discuss Brotherhood or about participating/volunteering in any way with one of our events or programs.

Contact David Feibish at 804.399.4514 or oldbenz@aol.com
Volunteer for the CBA Communications Committee!

Do you have an interest in marketing, social media, photography or journalism?

We’d love your help!

Contact Ron Kasoff at rkassoff@aol.com or Russ Finer at rfiner@bethahabah.org for more details.

When does Tu BiShevat occur?

Tu BiShevat or the “New Year of the Trees” is Jewish Arbor Day. The holiday is observed on the fifteenth (tu) of Shevat which this year coincides with February 11. Scholars believe that Tu BiShevat was originally an agricultural festival, marking the emergence of spring. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.C.E. this holiday was a way for Jews to symbolically bind themselves to their former homeland by eating foods that could be found in Israel. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century Kabbalists created a ritual for Tu BiShevat similar to the Passover seder. Today, Tu BiShevat has also become a tree planting festival in Israel, in which both Israelis and Jews around the world plant trees in honor or in memory of a loved one or friend.

Tu BiShevat, also known as Chamishah Asar BiShevat (the fifteenth day of the month of Shevat) has a long and varied background in Judaism. Today, the most commonly associated theme ascribed to Tu BiShevat is the environment. It is considered a festival of nature, full of wonder, joy, acknowledgment and thankfulness for God’s creation as we anticipate the renewal of the natural world. Linking these ideas and tikkun olam, during this festival we consider our obligation to care for God’s world, of which we are the custodians, and our responsibility for sharing the fruits of God’s earth with all.

For more information on Tu BiShevat, visit URJ.org.
HELP BUILD OUR FUTURE – JOIN THE LEGACY CIRCLE

Beth Ahabah is pleased to announce the launch of our Legacy Circle for those members who have helped secure our future by making a legacy gift to the temple as part of their estate plan. The Legacy Circle is part of the Life and Legacy program which Beth Ahabah has joined in partnership with the Richmond Jewish Foundation following Richmond’s selection to be part of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation’s national legacy gift initiative. We have nine new participants who joined the Legacy Circle in the fall. Beth Ahabah will qualify for a substantial incentive grant from the Grinspoon Foundation if we receive at least nine more new legacy gifts by the end of April. Please contact one of the following members of the Beth Ahabah Legacy Circle team to find out how easy it is to make your legacy gift. We also would like to hear from you if you have already included Beth Ahabah in your estate plan so we can include you in the Legacy Circle. Look for upcoming events in the spring to thank those who have joined our Legacy Circle.

Jim Weinberg (Jlweinberg@hf-law.com)
Rosann Bocciarelli (rbocciarelli@gmail.com)
Rob Davidson (rob.davidson@aftonchemical.com)
Katie Roeper (katie.roeper@gmail.com)
Jim Schuyler (jschuyler1@verizon.net)

NEW TECHNOLOGY IS COMING TO BETH Ahabah

We are currently testing a new membership management system and during February/March, will be running parallel systems. The new system will be cloud-based, providing greatest security for our member data, more flexibility for accessing data, and significantly improved efficiencies. While we move from one system to another, there may be the possibility of a mistake in billing. If that happens, please accept our sincere apologies and please contact the office immediately so that we can correct the error. In addition, we will be replacing the antiquated computers in the office, in part, thanks to a generous donation by Brian and Ellen Glass. We are grateful for their support, which will help provide our staff with the critical upgrade needed to work more effectively.

The Sopranos...continued from Page 7

where she and her brother get their musical skills.” Her musical skills extend to an improv group “Jester's Link” and a “nerd” rock band “Dimensional Riffs.” By day, Kat is working on her PhD in Microbiology at VCU studying periodontal bacteria. She volunteers with the Virginia Biotech Association, her home synagogue Beth Chaverim and the Southeastern FoodBank. Her parent’s live in VA Beach. Her musical brother is studying Music Technology at VA Tech. Her fiancé, Jake, lives in Richmond and works as a CAD technician.

BETH Ahabah Book Club

May 4, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.
at the home of Katy Yoffy
The Midwife of Venice by Roberta Rich
For more information, contact Katy at kyooffy@gmail.com
Congregation Beth Ahabah proudly presents
Purim Shpiel 2017
“It’s Been a Hamantaschen Days Night”
Saturday, March 11th • 7:00pm • Goldburg Auditorium

Yes folks, it’s almost Purim, and you know what that means, Purim Shpiel time!
Beth Ahabah will proudly draw back the Goldburg Auditorium stage curtain for another amazingly zany and somewhat historical (hysterical may be a better way of putting it) rendition of the Book of Esther. We have put together a cast of characters living in Chopped Liverpool (a.k.a. Shushan).

Come join the fun and relive the story of Purim through the likes of John, Paul, George, Ringo, and a host of other characters you will come to love. And if that isn’t enough to get you interested, weave in some familiar songs (with some unfamiliar lyrics) from The Beatles, add some wine, snacks and hamantaschen, and you have the perfect storm.

Mark your calendar now to see our “almost world renowned” cast and crew.

For further information, please contact Ken Rooper at 804.658.1556 or roepers@comcast.net.
CBA LIFE:

On Sunday, December 11, Religious School students celebrated Hanukkah with activities and the Brotherhood’s latkes.
Once a month, our littlest members and their parents join the rabbi for a special Tot Shabbat service.

Upcoming Tot Shabbats:

Saturday, February 27
Saturday, March 25
at 9:30 am
in the Gumenick Chapel
Once a week, **Midrasha** students gather to learn about Jewish customs and practices, and how to cook traditional dishes like halva.
for a percentage of the cost of the food. Ask guests to bring donations of money or canned goods to help fulfill their obligation to give gifts to the poor—and to add meaning to your celebration.

Distribute Information about Help for Victims of Domestic Violence
In the Book of Esther, two women find themselves in vulnerable positions because of their gender. Vashti pays a high price for her dignity when she is banished from the palace for refusing to dance at the king's drinking party. Esther, who is chosen as Vashti's successor in a beauty pageant, fears for her very life in approaching the king without his express request to see her. As we celebrate our victory over oppression, may we also remember those, including millions of women, who are not yet free. Place informational material about a local shelter for victims of spousal abuse at your synagogue, workplace, hair salon, and clothing stores—anywhere you can think of.

Give Your Old Cell Phone to Victims of Domestic Violence
As you remember the stories of Vashti and Esther, commit to helping women in similar situations. By The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence collects deactivated cell phones, which still allow for 911 calls, to distribute to victims of domestic violence so that they can call for emergency help. Visit their website for more information.

Donate to Women's Empowerment Campaigns
Like Vashti and Esther, women in developing countries and, sometimes even in our own, have limited control over their bodies or their livelihoods. In honor of Purim, choose a campaign or organization that is meaningful to you, and invest your time or money to further the cause. Consider issues such as reproductive choice, global poverty, human trafficking, and international violence against women.

DID YOU KNOW?
Facts, Figures and Folklore of Purim

Did you know that the word Purim is Hebrew for "lots"? The name of the holiday refers to the plot of the king's advisor, Haman, to draw lots for which Jews to kill first. He planned to massacre all the Jews. Esther, one of the king's wives and a Jewess herself, saved the Jewish people from Haman's "lots" plot by revealing it to the king.

Did you know that the only holy Jewish book in which the word for "lots" appears is the Book of Esther, traditionally read on Purim?

Did you know that the Book of Esther retells the story of Purim, when the Jewish people were spared from a death decree by the King of Persia's evil advisor, Haman? The Book of Esther is traditionally written upon a scroll, known as the "Megillat Esther." The megillah is read twice during the holiday—once at night, and once the next morning. Purim, like all Jewish holidays, runs for approximately 25 hours, beginning at sunset.

Did you know that the expression "the whole megillah" comes from the holiday of Purim? On Purim, the story of Esther is read from a scroll known as a megillah. The whole megillah must be read twice on Purim, once at night and once the following morning.

Did you know that Purim is one of the most joyous holidays in the Jewish religion? So joyous, in fact, that the rabbis have actually commanded adults to get drunk on the holiday of Purim.

Did you know that there is even a Purim custom that calls for getting inebriated? Indeed, Jewish law commands that Purim revelers get so intoxicated that they can't tell the difference between the names of the hero of the Purim story, Mordechai, and its villain, Haman.

Did you know that in addition to being one of the most festive holidays, Purim is also one of the noisiest? That's because every time Haman's name is mentioned during the reading of the megillah, worshippers are instructed to make as much noise as possible to drown out his name. A special instrument was even created for this noisemaking, called a gragger (grogger).

Did you know that the Jewish people have a custom of giving alms to the poor on Purim? The specific proscription is to give three half-dollar coins, symbolizing that the giver is part of the larger whole. Everyone, rich and poor alike, is required to give the same amount on Purim, since everyone has an equal role in the destiny of the Jewish people.

Did you know that Jewish people also have a custom to give friends and family members food baskets specially prepared with at least two different types of ready-to-eat foods? The rationale behind this custom is likely linked to another tradition—having a feast in the late afternoon. The baskets ensure that everyone has enough food to eat at the Purim feast.
Did you know that hamantashen are a three cornered pastry filled with poppy seeds or fruit that are served on Purim? The cookies are named for the three-cornered hat that Haman wore. In Hebrew, hamantashen are called oznei haman or Haman’s ears.

Did you know that on Purim, children dress up in costume for Purim parades and carnivals? Traditionally children dress up as Queen Esther or Mordechai. Of course modern day revelers also dress up as Disney princesses and super heroes.

Did you know that Purim is celebrated during a Jewish leap month? The holiday falls on the 14th of the month of Adar. When there is a leap year, there are two Adars (Adar I and Adar II). Purim is celebrated in Adar II during a leap year.

Did you know that in walled cities, like the Persian city in which the story of Purim first took place, Purim is celebrated a day later, on the 15th of Adar? Today, the only recognized walled cities celebrating the later Purim date are Jerusalem, Hebron and the old city of Tzfat in northern Israel.

Did you know that the holiday of Purim begins on the 13th of Adar (regardless of whether you live in a walled city) with the Fast of Esther? In Hebrew, this fast is known as Ta’anit Esther. The day-long fast commemorates Esther’s three-day fast before she revealed her true identity to the king and pleaded for her people’s safety.

Did you know that the Book of Esther is the only holy Jewish book that does not ever mention God’s name?

Did you know that Purim is one of the only Jewish holidays not commanded in the Torah? The holiday can trace its roots to the Talmudic period. The earliest known celebration of Purim was in the 2nd century CE.

http://www.holidays.net/purim/didyouknow.htm

Make a Donation in Memory of a Loved One

Send in a check, call the office (804.358.6757) or make your contribution online at bethahabah.org.

One can give upon a death or upon the anniversary of the death. Yahrzeit is a Yiddish word that means “anniversary,” and is used specifically to refer to the day on which a person passed away.

Share Your Favorite Recipes With Us!

Do you have your Bubbie’s or Mother’s special holiday or Shabbat recipes? (Charoset, Matzoh Ball Soup, Brisket, Kugel, etc.)

We’d love to share them on the Temple blog and in B’Yachad. Please submit them to Lori Allen at lallen@bethahabah.org

ARTICLES FOR THE MAY/JUNE ISSUE OF B’YACHAD ARE DUE BY FRIDAY, MARCH 24!

Contact Susan Morgan at susan@susannmorganpr.com
DONATIONS

TEMPLE FUND
IN HONOR OF:
Susan Meyers receiving the 2017 Woman of Valor Award
Katy & Jimmy Yoffy
Rabbi Nagel
Frona & Alan Colker
Rabbis Scott & Randi Nagel
Katy & Jimmy Yoffy
Judith Koziol’s special birthday
Katy & Jimmy Yoffy
Nettie Opper’s special birthday
Katy & Jimmy Yoffy
IN CELEBRATION OF:
The birth of William Kevin Reed, grandson of Deborah Greenberg
Katie & Ken Roeper
CONGRATULATIONS TO:
Jeanne & Mike Decker in celebration of their daughter,
Katie Decker’s marriage
Katie & Ken Roeper
IN MEMORY OF:
Fannie Rosenthal
Nancy Bellean
Edward Meyer
Nancy Meyer
Mae S. Goldman
Stanley A. Goldman, MD
Pamela S. Finer
Russell M. Finer
Mark Katz
Lee Katz
Jane Miller, our mother
Katie & Ken Roeper
Elbert Richard Sampsell, father of Pam & David Feibish
Katie & Ken Roeper
Ruby Cansino, my dear mother
Minnie C. Held

Marc Arenstein
Carole Weintraub
Celia W. Zell
Morton & Myrna Norman
Michael & Pam Zell
Minnie Hirsch & Anne Zeichner
Terry & Jerry Hirsch
Saul Danburg
Elizabeth & Elliot Danburg
Allen Norman
Pam & Sandy Norman
Harry Yaffe
Russell Finer
Tessie Katz
Gloria Starkman
Kate Levine
Linda Pinsky
Marshall Lowenstein
Marilyn Lowenstein & Family
Jack J. Frank
Anthony J. Frank
Shirley Arenstein, my mother
Dianne A. Master
Jayne G. Gross
Pam & Sandy Norman
Leon Goldstein
Esther Goldstein Kelly
Norman Schein
Mark Schein
Gladys Rozovsky
Ray Rozovsky
Eric Blumenthal
Lynn B. Stevenson
Rose Sukonick
Ellyn & Steve Sukonick
Frances Komins, mother-in-law
Allen Finer
Herman “Hy” Finer, brother
Allen Finer
Dorothy Holzbach, mother-in-law of Beryl Holzbach
Katie & Ken Roeper
Rick Morgan, husband of Susan Morgan
Katie & Ken Roeper
Clara Litvin
Stuart Litvin
Ralph G. Phipps
Pamela & Michael Zell
Dr. Robert P. Goodman
Denise Goodman Keil
Herman Morgan
Norman Morgan
Jack J. Frank
Anthony J. Frank
Shirley Arenstein, my mother
Dianne A. Master
Irving Greenberg
Ellen & Brian Glass
Jacob Grossman
Judith & Isaac Koziol
Morris Zeichner
Terry & Jerry Hirsch
Louis Weiner, father-in-law
Russell Finer
Shirley Find Ableman
Jessica Carty
Miriam Paster
Lonnie & Diane Paster
Paul Corbett
Ira & Maureen Goldstein
Samuel Goldstein
Ira & Maureen Goldstein

THE RABBIS
PHILANTHROPIC FUND
Morton Thalhimer, Jr.
IN HONOR OF:
Rabbi Nagel being installed as the Senior Rabbi of Beth Ahabah
Cantor Renata Braun & David Braun
Adrienne & Tom Shutt
Rebecca & Rabbi Aaron Starr
Katie & Ken Roeper
Rose & Sheldon Herold
Jane Heffron’s Bat Mitzvah
Allison & Peter Heyman
Sam Feder’s Bar Mitzvah
Stefanie & Ofer Feder
John Marshak’s speedy recovery
Ken & Katie Roeper
Elise Scherr’s speedy recovery
Ken & Katie Roeper

An armed security guard is on duty at Hebrew Cemetery on the first and third Sundays of the month from Noon to 3:00 p.m.
Nettie Opper’s special birthday
Rachel & Jim Schmidt

IN APPRECIATION OF:
Earl Ferguson & Richard Birnbaum, for your generosity & kindness shown
Rabbi Scott Nagel

IN CELEBRATION OF:
The birth of Judah Elon Bourne, son of Coffee & Adam Bourne
Ken & Katie Roeper

The birth of Rose Antoinette Thalhimer, granddaughter of Marcia & Harry Thalhimer
Ken & Katie Roeper

The birth of William Kevin Reed, grandson of Deborah Greenberg
Ken & Katie Roeper

The birth of Hunter Colin Benjamin, grandson of Ron & Bonnie Kasoff
Ken & Katie Roeper

IN MEMORY OF:
Ruth B. Lee & Michael E. Boustany
Helene & Richard Lee
Ida Wagner, mother of Patricia Dodson
Janice & Robert Freed
Ken & Katie Roeper

Mabel May Hull, mother of Rita Buxbaum
Ken & Katie Roeper

CANTOR GOLDMAN
MUSIC FUND
IN MEMORY OF:
Valerii Kondrashin
Natan & Valeria Berenshtein

Hannah Berenshtein
Natan & Valeria Berenshtein

HEBREW CEMETERY FUND
IN MEMORY OF:
Leonard Ecker
Steven Ecker

Harry Grandis
Betty Sue & Todd LePage

Mary Elizabeth LePage
Betty Sue & Todd LePage

Henry Gunst, Jr.
Katy & Jimmy Yoffy

GENERATONS FUND
IN HONOR OF:
Rachel Ann Bassell
Sharon & Don Bassell

BETH AHAHAB CARES FUND
IN MEMORY OF:
Shirley Lopater, my mother
Lori Skiles

RELIGIOUS SCHOOL TUITION ASSISTANCE FUND
IN HONOR OF:
The Bat Mitzvah of Rena & Bert Berlin's granddaughter, Rose Field
Barbara J. Goldberg

ELAINE L. SCHEIN
RELIGIOUS SCHOOL EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP FUND
IN HONOR OF:
Monica Rosenthal receiving the Girl Scout Gold Award
Katie & Ken Roeper

TIKKUN OLAM FUND
IN HONOR OF:
Susan Meyers, 2017 Woman of Valor
Karen & Dan Hough
Beth Rosenthal
Melissa & Andy Brownstein

LEWIS I. HELD SCHOLARSHIP FUND
IN MEMORY OF:
Lucille Meyer, Rose Binder, Milton Meyer, Jr., Milton Meyer, Sr. & Mildred Meyer
Bruce Meyer

MUSEUM & ARCHIVES
IN HONOR OF:
Our son, Mark Opper, Becoming a Partner at Deloitte
Robert & Peter Opper

Elise Scherr's Speedy Recovery
Cynthia Becker

Denise Keil’s Speedy Recovery
Cynthia Becker

IN MEMORY OF:
Rick Morgan
Shelly Berger & Matt Richmond

Marc Arenstein
Ted & Marianne P. Metzger

Janet Silverstein
Bonnie & Mike Eisenman

Henry Gunst, Jr.
Mrs. Blanche B. Nusbaum

Shirley Perel Plotkin, Our Beloved Mother
Ted & Marianne P. Metzger

Ronald M. Plotkin, My Beloved Brother
Ted & Marianne P. Metzger

IN APPRECIATION:
Temple Beth El of Williamsburg, VA

For more information please call Russell Finer or Bill Thalhimer, III at 358.6757.
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<td>Dinner (Reservations Required)</td>
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<td>Activities for kids in the Joel House</td>
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<td>Sunday, February 5</td>
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<td>Jewish Music <em>Shabbat</em> Service</td>
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<td>Monday, February 13</td>
<td><em>Midrasha</em> Monday</td>
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<td><em>Shabbat</em> Service w/Choir</td>
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<td><em>Bar Mitzvah</em> of Nathan Aschheim</td>
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*CALENDAR INFORMATION IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE, please check the calendar online at bethahabah.org*
A Brief History of Reform Jewish Music (and why Beth Ahabah is so fortunate)
by David Farris, Director

At our Museum & Archives, our main focus is Beth Ahabah and its rich history. We are especially blessed in the area of music, and this month I would like to talk about how we came to be where we are.

The only remnant of ancient Jewish music that can be heard today is the shofar. The next oldest element of Jewish music is the of singing the Torah and Haftarah—so-called cantillation. While the method of cantillation is several millennia old, the oldest surviving examples of how cantillation actually sounded dates from the 16th century when some non-Jewish Germans wrote it down. Until that time and for most Jewish music until the 19th or even 20th century, Jewish music was handed down from generation to generation by oral tradition. Obviously, after three thousand years and dispersion all over the globe, the music of the Jews is no longer a unified, common tradition.

In the 19th century a great deal of traditional Ashkenazi music was written down, and one of the leaders in this effort was a man named Solomon Sulzer in Vienna, who published cantors' music and also choral and organ arrangements. This music, it is believed, served as the basis for American Reform music.

Most frontier Jewish communities (like Beth Sholome, our ancestor congregation) started synagogues without any cantor or trained Jewish musician, so there were many non-Jews who directed the music of our leading Reform congregations. Such a man was Christian Frederick Kitziger, organist and choir director of Touro Synagogue in New Orleans during the last two decades of the 19th century. He composed more synagogue music in America during the 19th century than anyone else, and his music was sung in congregations in many states and foreign countries.

In the second half of the 20th century, Hasidic nigunim were introduced. These wordless tunes probably owe a great deal to non-Jewish Russian folk music, but they became so popular that today they are considered by many to be an essential element of Jewish music. In my time at Beth Ahabah, they have always been heard.

In the 1930’s, inspired by Ernst Bloch’s “Sacred Service”, serious composers began writing music for Reform services - people like Arnold Schoenberg, Kurt Weill, and Darius Milhaud. In this period many Reform rabbis wrote music for their synagogues, combining traditional Jewish elements with contemporary harmonies.

In the 1960’s, under the growing influence of Israeli folk music and American protest songs (such as the songs of Bob Dylan), a new style of music was introduced into Reform synagogues to attract young people looking for relevance in their religion. This new music has retained its popularity and, presented in combination with the older music, thrives today.

At Beth Ahabah, in the present day, we are blessed with creative musicians who perform and lead our music. They are products of old and new influences, both American and Eastern European, and continually delight our ears and souls with their artistry.

I once heard a prominent composer say in an interview that he never composes at the piano, as his fingers tend to wander into familiar keys and chord progressions, which would give his music a “sameness” that he wanted to avoid. I suspect that Natan, our Music Director, does much the same as his wonderful arrangements continually surprise us with their rich, modern harmonies, and creative rhythms.

Sarah, our wonderful Cantorial Soloist (soon to be an ordained Cantor), has been trained in the liturgy from childhood by her rabbi father. Her Hebrew pronunciation, according to an Israeli friend, is flawless. Her intonation is perfect, and her voice is strong and inspiring. Great things await her, and personally I hope that Beth Ahabah will be her home for years to come.

Our wonderful choir, a mix of professional and amateur singers, continues to amaze us with their artistry. Natan plays the choir like the beautiful instrument it is, and Sarah joins in to provide her inimitable touch.

The old pipe organ no longer plays a part in our worship, having been replaced by the piano. If we were to spend the $700,000-plus it would cost to restore it, we would still have a 1904 organ and, as with most things, organ

David Farris, Director
builders have learned a lot in the past 113 years. Restoring it, then, is not a sensible option. We will, however, continue to appreciate the imposing appearance of those gold pipes over the Ark. One of these days, ask us to show you what is behind them.

So, we move into the new year with a new spirit and beautiful music. Those are the ingredients that make for success and contentment. From that strong foundation, we move forward and grow.

Visit us at the Beth Ahabah Museum & Archives any day (except Friday and Saturday) between 10 and 3. Bonnie, Amy and I look forward to greeting you.

TREASURES FROM THE MUSEUM & ARCHIVES COLLECTION

Many items within our holdings are treasures simply because they are not common items in today’s current households. They have been given to us to preserve and protect for future generations. Some are very fragile and not frequently handled or displayed while others will maintain a fairly consistent state as long as we keep them safely stored. The pictured snuff box is one of the latter type.

Snuff boxes were designed to hold a day’s supply of snuff (pulverized tobacco) and keep it from drying out. They were often ornate in design and made to be carried in one’s pocket throughout the day. This snuff box belonged to Beth Ahabah’s first Rabbi, Maximilian J. Michelbacher. Reverend Michelbacher served the congregation from 1846 to 1879. The snuff box was engraved and given to him by his student, Gustavus Millhiser, in 1863. The box is made of coin silver and probably dates to around 1835.

The snuff box is about 3 ¼ by 2 ¼ inches in size. It was given to the Archives by Rosalie M. Cohen in 1974 in memory of Sam Cohen.

A Gem from the Archives

This portrait of Rev. Michelbacher by Ferdinand Spangenberg was painted in 1859. It was donated to the Archives by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Klein and is currently on display in the Museum. Visitors often ask what Rev. Michelbacher is holding in his closed hand. While the portrait predates his receipt of the snuff box from Gustavus Millhiser, it still could be that the Rabbi was painted holding another treasured snuff box in his hand.
Gifts That Make A Difference...
Charitable Giving in honor of or in memory of a loved one is an important tradition for the Beth Ahabah congregation. For more information about giving opportunities, please visit the Temple website or call the Temple office at 804.358.6757.
Thank you for your consideration.

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February 3rd!

Be a Shabbat Service with Kol Simchah at 6:15pm
Congregational Dinner at 7:00pm
BYOB. By Reservation. $10/Adult (children 18 and under are FREE)
Email a.shiflett@bethahabah.org or l.allen@bethahabah.org to make your reservation. You may call the temple office with credit card information or pay online at www.bethahabah.org.

Supervised Activities for Children at 7:30pm
Inflatable gaga, games and movies will be supervised so that parents may enjoy some adult conversation over dinner.

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Religious School students in kindergarten, first and second grades and their families went on a scavenger hunt to find the pieces of a puzzle that assemble to create this image that reinforced their Gesher lesson on Tanakh. Read the entire article on page 11.