Annual Report
2017–2018

NORTH SHORE
CONGREGATION
ISRAEL
Dear Friends,

As one year closes and another begins, we take this opportunity to reflect on what we have accomplished and experienced together. NSCI is the largest synagogue on the North Shore, a flagship for the Reform Movement. Our priority is to be of service to you, our congregants, and a resource to both the Jewish community and the community at large.

NSCI truly has a place for everyone. We strive to provide as many paths and opportunities for each person to feel acknowledged and known for who they are and what they value. To be sure, we all share common traits and interests that unite us inextricably, but it is the uniqueness that each of us possesses that enables us to be the incredible community we are.

As a center of spiritual and intellectual nourishment, a provider of care and support, a source for the restoration and repair of the world, and so much more, we invite you to connect, be enriched and inspired to “more” as you read this year’s Annual Report.

There has never been a better moment to dig deeper into NSCI. We hope you will join us.

L’Shalom,

Wendi Geffen
Senior Rabbi

Jody Weinberg
Immediate Past President

Marilyn Perlman
President
At NSCI, connection is at the heart of everything we do. As a synagogue, we endeavor to create an environment for our congregants, both inside and outside our walls, that nourishes and deepens a sense of connection with themselves, with each other, and with the larger community. In an acrimonious world, NSCI models a big tent wide enough to shelter us all and allows relationships to develop and thrive.

**Connect**

[kuh-nekt]  
verb  
to join, link, or fasten together; unite or bind

**New friends were made at NSCI’s first annual Pancake Breakfast**

After two decades of phone conversation, congregants skyped for the first time with members of our sister community in Ukraine, allowing them to meet “face to face.”

**NSCI Here and Beyond**

NSCI is not limited to 1185 Sheridan Road; NSCI “happens” all over. As a part of our continuing efforts to “meet people where they are,” we convened across our country, from lovely homes of our congregants in Chicago to the bustling streets of NYC:

» Snowbird Shabbat was expanded this year to two coasts: Palm Springs and Palm Beach
» Our popular Shabbat Meetup Dinners at Max and Benny’s continue to be a hit
» Parents of 8th-12th graders met along the shores of Lake Michigan to dine and discuss how Jewish wisdom might inform their role as parents
» NSCI congregants who live in the city continued a series of Shabbat dinners hosted in their homes
» We blazed through the South with 8th and 9th graders and their parents joining Rabbi Daniels for a Civil Rights Trip
» Women of NSCI and Rabbi Greene explored Jewish culture and history in NYC

**Transformative Teen Impact**

At this year’s Elaine N. Sherman Karav weekend titled “Voice and Choice,” our High School students participated in the 42nd year of this transformative retreat. Immersed in a tight-knit group of peers, B&Bers/alumni in their 20’s, teens and clergy explored topics from technology to tradition to personal values. Through it all, they learned about themselves, each other, and Judaism in a fun-filled and meaningful 3 days in Oconomowoc, WI at OSRUI.

“TYG (Temple Youth Group) was the first time in my high school career that I felt like I could be my true self, where there is no judgement from anyone and no one telling me to be someone I’m not. TYG has helped me gain a sense of independence and deep understanding of what it means to be a part of the Jewish community.”  — MAX NGUYEN

**Communities of Support**

At NSCI, we offer opportunities for connection in times of strength and in times of struggle. In addition to convening support groups for congregants navigating illness and mourning, we also host weekly Families Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous groups open to the entire community. This year we initiated a weekly Alateen group to support teens who struggle with addiction. We meet you where you are; the clergy is listening when the time is right for you.

**How will you connect @ NSCI during the coming year?**

190
Jewish young professionals gathered in the city to celebrate Shabbat as a part of Friday Night: A Low-Key Shabbat Celebration

100+
Starbucks gift cards mailed to NSCI young adults at college

85
people in Women of NSCI’s book group read 11 books

6
Jewish and Israeli-themed films watched with Cinema @NSCI
Enrich [en-rich]
verb

to add greater value or significance to

NSCI offers a home for Jewish engagement for all people, and the much needed opportunity for sacred rest, recharge and renewal. NSCI invites each person into dynamic, accessible, and impactful opportunities for personal, intellectual, and spiritual enrichment.

Moving Worship

We hear over and over again how our Friday evening Kabbalat Shabbat services continue to allow service participants to leave their week behind and join together in elevating prayer and song. Our broad array includes monthly services featuring Selah, our 25 member teen song leading group, our lay choir Shir Chadash, or our expanding group of volunteer vocalists and musicians who partner with Cantor Goldstein to share their talents with us. Our clergy continue to offer meaningful and relevant sermons rooted deeply in Jewish tradition, compelling listeners to “take the message home with them.”

Impactful Lifelong Learning

NSCI creates integrity-rich, lifelong learning for all. We ignite a lifelong love of Judaism in a preschooler through telling a story that he begs to hear over and over again at our Takiff Center Shabbat Enrichment Class. We engage our elementary students in our pace-setting, nationally acclaimed Camp@NSCI program, teens in compelling and intimate conversations around the challenging issues of our time, and adults in study and debate of the most important Jewish ideas and their sources.

“Being a machonik (teacher's assistant) has truly opened my heart and mind…I am grateful for the wonderful young students I have had the honor of working with. I hope that they learned some things from me, but I have also learned so much from them. Being a machonik was my way of giving back to the NSCI community.” — DEVIN DAVIDSON

— Devin Davidson

How will you be enriched @ NSCI during the coming year?

Worshippers from as far away as Cochin, India; Bhutan; and Cape Town, South Africa joined our regular Shabbat worship community via live-stream

Hundreds of congregants stayed after services to be enriched with community-building and inspiring music at our Late Night Shabbat concerts, featuring the Meadow Ridge Ramblers and Ravinia’s Steans Music Institute

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In our Adult Learning programs...

In the Goodman Center for Jewish Education...

466 total students

400+ families engaged with us in our Early Childhood programing

86 new students

61 registered machoniks of all ages

500+ adult learners attended weekday Jewish learning classes last year

100+ individuals have learned to say Kaddish in Rabbi Gelfen’s Kaddish 101 class

18 adults, ages 28–90, were called to the Torah on Shavuot morning as Adult B’nei Mitzvah under the guidance of Rabbi Greene

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In our Adult Learning programs...

How will you be enriched @ NSCI during the coming year?
inspire
[in-spahyuh r]
verb
1. to fill with an animating, quickening, or exalting influence
2. to influence or impel
3. to animate, as an influence, feeling, thought, or the like, does

Explain the concept of inspire:

One of the greatest features of our community is that our NSCI experiences not only enrich our own lives, but they also inspire us to something more—to shift the way we understand and engage in our communities and our world, transforming them from the way they are to the way they can yet be.

Be Inspired To…
@ NSCI

Exploring Big Ideas
NSCI continues to serve as the go-to source on the North Shore for distinguished and inspiring speakers and community-wide gatherings. These visits, often made possible by lectureships established by generous congregants or strategic partnerships with community organizations, allow our community to experience learning from some of the most renowned thought leaders of today. Over the past year, we hosted the following internationally renowned scholars, writers, and thinkers: Cardinal Blase Cupich, Rwandan Genocide Survivor Clemantine Wamariya, Former US Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro, Middle Eastern Commentator Bret Stephens, Former US Ambassador for Religious Freedom Rabbi David Saperstein, Jewish Scholars Marcia Falk and Dalia Marx, Playwright James Sherman—just to name a few.

More than 2,000 congregants and community members learned with our visiting scholars through lectures, services, and meals.

Changing the World
From our upholding the value of “Kol Yisrael aravim zeh ba’zeh/All of Israel is responsible for each other” through our Adult Mitzvah Corps projects benefiting the Jewish community, to our wider obligation to the larger world, this year again more than 1000 congregants volunteered as a part of NSCI’s efforts.

Digging Deeper with Mindful Living
With the busyness of life in the modern era, too often we find ourselves walking through life without intentionality, without real presence. Jewish tradition offers us a powerful antidote to mindless living through its own wisdom traditions and mindfulness practices that remind us of the potential for holiness at any and all phases of our lives. Over the past year, NSCI offered numerous opportunities for learning and self-growth through expanded Mindful or Mindless Life sessions, Wise Aging, as well as a number of Wise Parenting conversations, including topics on Raising Socially Aware and Socially Conscious Children, Girl Drama, Emotionally Healthy Boys, and Raising Children in a World of Technology.

How will you be inspired @ NSCI during the coming year?

600 pounds of fresh produce harvested from our Community Garden for The ARK and Moraine Township Food Pantries

150+ volunteers joined together for Operation Backpack to pack school supplies for children at Chicago’s Jordan Community School and Nicholson STEM School

19 student-led Sunday morning Tzedakah Table pop-up projects raised thousands of dollars for local and international charities

NSCI donated thousands of pounds of non-perishable kosher food to The ARK
thankful
[thangk-fuhl]
adj
feeling or expressing gratitude; appreciative

We, as the NSCI family, are thankful for our clergy who enlighten and lift us up everyday, our staff who thoughtfully create and enhance everything we do, our building which enables us to reach spiritual heights, and the amazing leaders we attract and inspire. There would be no “us” without all of you and your unwavering dedication to helping us connect, be enriched and be inspired to participate and impact our congregation—and the world.

Our Clergy
NSCI is blessed with our dynamic, complementary clergy team comprised of Rabbis Ryan Daniels, Wendi Geffen, and Lisa Greene, Cantor David Goldstein, and our two emeritus rabbis, Rabbi Steven Mason and Rabbi Herbert Bronstein. Our experience and endless possibilities at NSCI come through their vision, support, profound knowledge, scholarship, and passion.

A Chai Anniversary
Hundreds of congregants and community members joined together to celebrate Rabbi Lisa Greene’s 18th year of dedicated service to our synagogue with an inspiring service and tribute dinner. We enjoyed acknowledging Rabbi Greene for her care and compassion for our congregation, her devotion and dedication to the Jewish people and commitment to those in need both locally and around the world. We are grateful for this and more that she brings to us as one of our cherished clergy.

Our Staff
At NSCI, our staff is a family. This past year we welcomed a few new members into that family: Our accomplished Executive Director Todd Braman, our dynamic Development Associate Dena Blaustein, our warm and welcoming receptionist Debbie Heywood, and new skilled maintenance team member Salvador Garcia.

Our Home
Over the past year, we continued to make necessary, critical repairs to our building in order to assure its integrity as our physical spiritual home for our congregation and the community at large. We completed a thorough update and replacement of our 50 year old HVAC system, as well as repairing the concrete facade of the building and our roof. A significant leak in Perlman Sanctuary required replacing sections of ceiling, walls, and floors, giving us the opportunity to install a hearing loop as well. We finalized upgrades to our internal accounting system, our membership management software and launched a modern, user-friendly website that represents NSCI’s vision and mission.

Currently, we are installing an entirely upgraded sound-system for the Large Sanctuary.

Our Leaders and Award Winners
We give a heartfelt “thank you” to Jody Weinberg for her three years of dedicated Presidential service, and welcome in our new president Dr. Marilyn Perlman. Marilyn, the Board of Trustees and lay leaders have many new and innovative ways to invite and inspire you in the coming year. Congratulations to our spectacular congregants whom we recognize for their talents, dedication and enthusiasm.

Kehilah Volunteers of the Year
Lilli & James Greenebaum
Daniel Kaufman
Ilene Herst Teen Leadership Award
Lindsey Kourafas
June B. Pinsof Memorial Music Scholarship Award
Isaac Freedman

“I am grateful for NSCI’s exquisite spiritual leadership. You just get pulled in; it’s the ruach/spirit of it all.” — JILL MOSS

How will you show your appreciation for NSCI during the coming year?
We are grateful for the extraordinary generosity of our congregation. Our annual dues cover approximately 60% of our annual budget, and donations make up a critical 10% more. 2154 individual gifts were made to our congregation this year in honor or memory of someone, to support one of our fundraising campaigns, to purchase a brick in front of our building, to help the Goodman Center for Jewish Education, or to address a particular need of our congregation.

**Elijah’s Table**
Elijah’s Table contributions ensure that NSCI remains an inclusive community where all are welcome, regardless of their ability to pay full dues. We received 162 new and increased gifts for a total of 232 contributions to Elijah’s Table and raised more than $161,000. Our thanks to the following families for their collective $15,000 matching grant:

- Laurie & Grant Bagan
- Julie & Jeff Echt and family
- Melissa & Xuong Nguyen and family
- Eileen Sharkey Rosenfeld & Rob Rosenfeld and family
- Peggy & Jon Rubenstein
- Gretchen Rupp & David Fleisch and family
- Judy Wexler & Bruce Menkes

**Spring Event: A New Orleans Night at NSCI**
Howl2Go Dueling Pianos entertained 180 guests with the crowd’s favorite tunes. The talented committee of 45 volunteers, chaired by Diane Moore and April Victor, organized a dazzling event preceded by a Patron reception for 60 donors and their guests. Each Spring Event guest was given a hurricane cup party favor, and tourist map with ads purchased by our congregants and local businesses, and one lucky guest won our raffle prize: an ultimate weekend getaway to New Orleans. The event raised more than $73,000 for NSCI’s operating budget.

**Goodman Center Partners**
Goodman Center Partners contribute $500 or more annually to support our school, as tuition alone does not cover the cost of operating the Goodman Center for Jewish Education. Donors Barbara & Ron Borden and Barbara & Victor Weiskopf hosted a very special reception with speaker Rabbi Scott Aaron, Ph.D., Executive Director, CFJE (Community Foundation for Jewish Education) for our supporters, raising $30,000 for programs and equipment and another $8000 for Shisler Fund scholarships. With support for this program, the Goodman Center for Jewish Education continues to engage our youth and families with Jewish living and learning.

**Sustaining Members**
NSCI is grateful to many congregants who send a donation with their annual dues to help meet our annual budget needs. Last year, we received nearly $60,000 in donations to help provide the highest quality religious, social justice, educational and communal programming. The Sustaining Members Program creates a more stable financial base for our annual funding needs.

**Create a Jewish Legacy**
NSCI is privileged to participate in this innovative program, funded by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and an anonymous donor, that offers training and support to lay leaders and professionals in the area of legacy giving. We now have 70 Declarations of Intent for planned gifts to the NSCI endowment through the Create a Jewish Legacy program. As a participant in this community-wide program, NSCI has received $30,000 for meeting goals during the four years of the program.

**Sustaining Our Sacred Community**
“We signed up to be members of the Legacy Circle because of what a wonderful community NSCI is. We believe that the synagogue is central to cultivating and retaining one’s Jewish identity, and we want to see that continue forever. We are hoping that everyone will join the Legacy Circle, whether your reasons are the same or different, and we want to thank you for making that commitment.” — BETH AND NATE TROSS

**What will you do to help sustain NSCI this coming year?**

Laurie & Grant Bagan
Julie & Jeff Echt and family
Melissa & Xuong Nguyen and family
Eileen Sharkey Rosenfeld & Rob Rosenfeld and family
Peggy & Jon Rubenstein
Gretchen Rupp & David Fleisch and family
Judy Wexler & Bruce Menkes
A Big Thank You

to our Board of Trustees for their oversight, time, donations, and forward-thinking leadership. It is a special honor to serve on the board. Each year, we carefully consider congregants who have generously shared their talents as volunteers, demonstrating a strong commitment to NSCI. We consider board nominations in the spring, inviting curious congregants to meet with us to discuss their interests, expertise, and passions.
We believe in the transformative power of Jewish Living.
We recognize the Divine spark in every person.
We affirm that everyone is a stakeholder and community matters.
We understand that Judaism has something to offer everyone.
We value diversity.
We are young and young at heart.
We are seekers and cynics and everyone in between.
We are born Jews and choosing Jews. We are interfaith. We are LGBTQ.
We are Am Yisrael. We are our brothers’ keepers.
We believe Jewish living calls us to do nothing less than repair our world.
We experience Judaism as a lived practice.
We travel. We eat. We celebrate. We mourn. We pray. We learn. We give.
We ask big questions and explore big ideas.
We yearn. We hope. We invite. We inspire.
We foster understanding. We change lives. We make a difference.
We nourish our deep roots. We grow. We believe in the possible.
We are NSCI.

Staff

Senior Rabbi Wendi Geffen
Cantor David M. Goldstein
Senior Associate Rabbi Lisa S. Greene
Associate Rabbi Ryan E. Daniels
Rabbi Emeritus Steven S. Mason, D. Min
Senior Scholar Rabbi Herbert Bronstein

Professional Staff

Dena Blaustein
Development Associate

Todd Braman
Executive Director

Andrea Dalinka
Youth Group Advisor (Grades 1–8)

Susan Ellenby
Youth and Family Community Engagement Coordinator

Dr. Roberta Louis Goodman
Director of Education

Alfredo Lopez
Building Engineer

Neil Rigler
Senior Youth Group Advisor

Roy Ruiz
Finance Director

Sheryl Cohen Solomon
Director of Development

Jacki Sundheim
Facilities and B’nei Mitzvah Coordinator

Administrative & Maintenance Staff

Sarah Duffin
Executive Assistant to Rabbi Geffen and Cantor Goldstein

Lisa Goosman
Executive Assistant to Rabbis Daniels and Greene

Debbie Heywood
Receptionist

Jennifer McKeag
Youth and Family Community Administrator

Lauren Nowak
Communications Manager

Holly Zimmerman
Bookkeeper

Rafael Bautista
Rodolfo Galvan
Salvador Garcia
Carmela Jimenez
Efrain Patino
Maintenance staff

NORTH SHORE CONGREGATION ISRAEL

847-835-0724
1185 Sheridan Road
Glencoe, IL 60022
Info@NSCI.org
NSCI.org
NSCIGlencoe