

Annual Meeting Minutes

April 25, 2023

Attendance: Quorum of 69 in person, 10 online

Opening Song – Cantor Kohlbrenner

D'Var/Remarks – Rabbi Briskin

- Israel marks 75 years – joyous, even with challenges, building on goals/values established in 1948
- This week's Parsha talks about Holiness Code, following mitzvot in Parsha and throughout Torah
- Every organization should have values and vision to guide them to live up to potential – Shir Ami has our mission and vision

Greetings – Rabbi Strom

- When Shir Ami moved into the first building in the Fall of 1980 – first choir sang, led by Paula Goldberg
- Shir Ami is a house of study, prayer, community – pillars still remain, as we continue to reach for something higher
- Synagogue leaders are people in congregation for decades and also new younger leaders
- Confident in the future

President's Remarks – Ellie Short

- Good year for Shir Ami
 - Covid behind us, back in person for holidays with choir
 - Anna Gever Shabbat - Nefesh Mountain
 - Code Blue
 - Chanukah Rock Shabbat with Shir Band
 - 25 teens went to Israel with Eric and Ferne - upcoming congregational trip in Dec. 2023
 - Purim festivities, baskets, hamantaschen, shpiel, band, and food.
 - Dueling Pianos WOSA Appreciation
 - ELC Kindergarten graduation
 - Women's Seder
 - Sunday brunches
 - Theater group
 - Chevra Torah
- Appreciation to Nina Or, ELC Director and preschool staff, fully enrolled, new playground
- Thanks to Rabbi Eric and staff - Religious School enrollment is strong
- Upgrading livestream system, digital display in lobby
- Mortgage just over \$1 million
- Membership now in upper 400s – lost some members during Covid
- Dates to remember
 - Honoring Ferne 4/28
 - Board Installation 5/12
 - Confirmation 5/13
 - Golf Outing and Cards 5/15

- Circle of Giving honors and honoring Cantor Kohlbrenner 6/9
- Thanks to Board and Past Presidents for support
- Thanks to Rabbi Briskin, Rabbi Goldberg, Cantor Kohlbrenner, Phil Nordlinger, Jodie, Jodi, Shanika, husband -Ed Short
- Engagement theme of presidency – get involved, encourage others to come, grow synagogue and keep it vibrant, continue as hub of Reform Judaism in Bucks County

Business Items

- Budget Approval - Phil Nordlinger & Gillian Lynde
 - Motion to approve – Robin Firestone
 - Discussion
 - Thank you to budget committee – Michael, Phil, department heads, committee, and board
 - Fits into pillars – Making Impact, Connecting, Learning Together, Growing Spiritually
 - Budget Highlights
 - 3% increase in dues (max \$84); 6% increase for ELC, Extended Care Camp tuition
 - Maintenance expenses increased significantly – almost \$30,000
 - Compensation increases planned for ELC and Religious School teachers
 - Hiring full-time program director
 - Capital reserve and security enhancements
 - No questions
 - Approval - unanimous
- Board Election - Jon Stevens
 - Approval for slate of candidates, members and officers passed unanimously
 - Discussion
 - Thanked committee
 - Thanked members leaving board, Rachel Tyler and Melissa Rubenstein

Incoming President's Remarks – Stephanie Kravatz

- Like tonight, expects no questions on the budget for next 2 years ☺
- Committed to doing the work of the synagogue
- Impact of pandemic – helped to draw the community together - thanks to clergy and staff
- Ellie guided us back to coming together – calm, organized, - expect her to continue to mentor
- Excited to work with new board – old and new members – sustain and grow vibrant community
- Know clergy and directors will work with her to make best community

Shir Ami Mission Update (see slides)

- Philanthropy – Jon Stevens
 - Thanks to all who contribute
 - Thanks to Meryl Reis and Debbie Steven for leadership on Circle of Giving
 - Thanks to Donna DeSantis and Barbara Roth for grocery and discount cards

- Working on endowment for ongoing revenue
- Upcoming events
 - 5/15 Golf outing and cards – thanks to planning team
 - 6/9 – Circle of Giving honors and honoring Cantor Kohlbrenner
- Building & Grounds/Security – Ken Standig
 - Thanks to committee and Larry Schorr, who created a thorough inventory of capital projects and costs
 - Looking at optimizing facility spaces – library may become a play space
 - Investigating solar panels
 - Survey congregant re: expertise and preferences
 - Security
 - strong focus now, creating emergency action plan – being edited/integrated by Helen Berman
 - improvements in progress, (cameras, lighting, etc.), new signage
 - Training in the Fall
- Growing Spiritually – Andy Salsman & Beth McAleese
 - Return to in-person events
 - New Member Shabbat
 - Sukkah crawl/Purim shpiel
 - Intergenerational Shabbats, Rock Shabbat, Shabbat honoring students who traveled to Israel
 - Weekly onegs
 - Thanks to committee and clergy
- Inclusion – Bob Cherkin
 - Rabbi Eric and Staci Kinkus supporting DEI in Religious School
 - Also supporting ELC with Nina Orr
 - Thanks to Paula Shavell, who is providing inclusion services, came back from retirement to make sure IEPs are faithfully implemented
 - DEI Shabbat February 24th – focus on need to be warm and welcoming, support students who need special support
 - Rabbi Briskin is adapting B'Mitzvah program to work with student strengths and interests
 - 2023 – 2024 – focus on more DEI, make Shir Ami more welcoming
- Connecting with Each Other – Jason Cohen
 - Membership
 - New Member Shabbat dinner – 100 attended ((0-3 years), new member welcome baskets
 - New members joining committees
 - Engagement
 - Listening campaigns, launched Shir Groups
 - 20 newborn onesies to congregation and ELC
 - Purim baskets
 - Integrated auxillary programs
 - 100 people helped to bake hamantaschen, assemble/deliver Purim baskets

- Future – new member buddy system, review membership process, host more Shirhappenings, build member cohorts, host ShirHappenings info tables for during high impact events/programs
- Marketing/Communications – Jeff Cohen
 - Re-formed committee with marketing and communication experience
 - Analyzed membership data and involvement
 - Created personas to represent interest groups
 - Working on improvement of the flow for Shirhappenings
 - Future – meet with committees to help with marketing, communications, activities
- Learning Together – Stephanie Kravatz & Ellen Rawicz
 - Lifelong learning theme this year - Israel is real and complex and challenging, celebrating 75th anniversary
 - Israeli book club
 - Dinner and a movie
 - iEngage
 - Holiday celebrations
 - Record club
 - Master classes
 - You, me, & Us
 - Religious School
 - 200 students
 - family programs returned for K-5
 - Israel theme – cooking and tefillah, prayer labs (older kids practice prayers and work with younger kids)
 - 25 8th-11th grade students went to Israel
 - 2023-2024: Continued focus on Connection- To Israel, Living a Jewish Life, Repairing the World, and Each Other/Our Shir Ami Community
 - Shafy K-12 now
 - Tikkun Olam/social action
 - Hosted WINSTY
 - Highest attendance at SPINTY (17 kids)
 - Shabuddies
 - Purim carnival
- Making an Impact – Essie Cherkin, Barbara Roth, Mark Luber
 - Homeless
 - Code Blue – outpouring of support, housed 169 homeless people over 16 nights during December, made impact on congregants, guests appreciative
 - Food Insecurity
 - Feeding homeless every Wednesday at Pendel,
 - Cooking for Caring for Friends – 300 meals delivered (many from Ferne and kids)
 - Collections
 - 120 bags of winter coats for JFS
 - Soles for Souls – shoe collection
 - Racial Justice Discussion – 3rd Thursday each month
 - Civic engagement – RAC PA, get involved, Vote

- Food Pantry
 - 28,247 lbs. delivered (22,366 PYR)
 - HHD Food Drive – 15,509 lbs. (50% increase PYR)
 - 2022 avg: 2,354 lbs. (1,808 PYR) (current 2,800)
 - Avg. \$1,157/month in monetary donations (\$937 PYR)
 - Streamlined our buying process (ShopRite Yardley) – buy in bulk
 - Increased avg. volunteers from 30 to 40 people
 - All food in goes out immediately
 - New goals
 - 16000 lbs,
 - build steering committee
 - encourage donation of super market gift cards and recurring donations (contact Marc)

Volunteer of the Year – Rabbi Briskin

- Marc Luber – Food Bank, Golf Outing

Mitzvah Makers – Ellie Short

- Barbara and Lenny Roth, Essie and Bob Cherkin
- Code Blue – organized, shopped, cooked, trained volunteers, served, cleaned-up, pointed-out kitchen needs
- Phil responsible for finding opportunity and bringing us in as only synagogue
- Church members came to help

WOSA Presentation – Risa Kane

- Many fun events – Boozy Bingo, Seder, Appreciation dinner, Derby night
- From fundraising donating - \$3600 to Shir Ami (1/2 for Youth lounge in honor of Ferne, ½ to audio system) and \$1800 to food pantry

Closing Prayer – Eric

- If you want it, it is not a dream – principle that helped found Israel
- Celebrate last year and look forward to the next
- Don't just dream, but do, do together

Adjorn – motion by Andee Losben