

THE VIEW

A GUIDE TO OUR PROGRAMS,
HOLIDAYS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

WINTER ISSUE | NOV 2023—FEB 2024



CONGREGATION
SHOMREI TORAH
שומרי תורה



RABBINIC TRANSITION UPDATE

As you know, in July Rabbi George announced his retirement as of June 2024, following 28 years of service to the Congregation Shomrei Torah community.

An interim search committee - CST Board President Eli Weinzveg and Secretary Judith

Richlin-Klonsky (co-chairs) and Sharon Bauman, Erica Magers, and Jillian Navarro – is moving forward with the identification of a Rabbi to serve our community for a year after Rabbi George retires in June 2024 and transitions to the role of Rabbi Emeritus.

The committee has begun to review applications through the lens of CST values and goals, with the aim of identifying a finalist by early 2024. Feel free to share your thoughts with the interim search committee by emailing the office. Save these 2024 dates for special events to say farewell to Rabbi George in his present role:

April 7 Legacy Circle Member Reception at Rabbi George's home

May 19 50th-anniversary celebration/fundraiser recognizing the contributions of our founders and outgoing Rabbi George Gittleman

May 24 Family Shabbat farewell to Rabbi George

June 14 Shabbat service featuring music composed by Nolan Gasser

...Read more on page 2.

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Facing the Challenges... Together

Sunday, November 5, 3:00 PM

In our final "Building Alliances" session, we will look to the future. Help us plan how our communities can work together to combat hate and support those in need. We will use a "Community in Conversation" format to develop ideas for learning more about each other's cultures, responding to racist and anti-Semitic attacks and helping our larger Sonoma County community. As a plus, there will be food representing our Alliance partners: Japanese, Chinese, Filipino and Jewish. We will share our cultural heritages through food - a large variety of ethnic foods will be served. Available in person and on Zoom, please register to attend: www.cstsr.org/social_action.

FROM RABBI GEORGE GITTLEMAN



As I write this, more news of the atrocities committed by Hamas is coming to light and Israel's aerial attacks on Gaza are intensifying. Laura and I are sick with grief and worry about what comes next. It's hard to think or concentrate. I'm struggling to limit my news consumption, knowing well the deleterious effects of

secondary trauma. The waiting reminds me of the fires: worrying about everyone's safety, wondering if and when the winds will turn...our house will be spared...the smoke will clear. The feeling of helplessness. The whole mess is triggering.

And yet, there are things we can do to help the Israeli branch of our Jewish family and ourselves. By the time this article has reached your hands, things will have changed, but not so much that these suggestions won't be of help. Various organizations aiding Israel need funds (see our website for more information) and there are also a number of opportunities for public advocacy. Check out the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) website for what's

happening around the Bay Area and read the Press Democrat with an eye towards writing letters to the editor in response to the Israel bashing which will surely come.

We help ourselves by coming together as a community, whether it be at the Prayer Vigil we held three days after the attacks began, regular Shabbat Services, or any other gathering advertised in this edition of the View. When we come together, we hold each other up and remind ourselves that we are not alone. Finally, I suggest intensifying your Jewish practice. Light Shabbat candles, come to Torah Study, join us for Jewish Mindfulness Meditation, or consider any number of other ways you can feed your *neshamah*, your soul. We are a strong and resilient people and part of that grit comes from the practices and traditions of our ancestors which we recharge through our personal engagement!

Sending y'all love and strength.



Rabbi George's Sermons:
www.cstsr.org/rabbi_george

Rabbi George's Blog:
www.cstsr.org/rabbi-george-blog

Continued from the front page:

FAQ's about Rabbinic Transition

What is the timeline for the change in rabbinic leadership?

Rabbi George will be with us as Rabbi until June 2024, **continuing to teach; lead services, Torah study, and meditation; meet with the Board and committees; and counsel members who need his guidance and support.**

Upon retirement, Rabbi George's title will be designated as "**Rabbi Emeritus**" as a mark of respect and recognition for his dedicated service over the years.

CST leadership has begun the process, outlined by the Rabbinical Placement Commission of the Central Conference

of American Rabbis and Union for Reform Judaism, to select an **Interim Rabbi**, who will be with us from (approximately) July 2024 through June 2025.

During the year when we have an Interim Rabbi, a search committee representing our diverse membership will be selected to lead the process of selecting our **next Rabbi**, who we anticipate will begin July 2025.

What's an Interim Rabbi? How are they selected? And why engage one for a year instead of just searching for a new Rabbi right away?

Following the loss of a longtime Rabbi, it's a challenge for a congregation to pivot to the future, assess current congregational needs and goals, and

identify the rabbinic characteristics we feel would work best for our community in coming years and decades. Doing that in a matter of months – while simultaneously saying farewell to Rabbi George – would be rushed. An interim year allows CST leadership to thoughtfully listen to input from the congregation, review candidates, and make a careful selection. We are a large, diverse community and selecting a new rabbi is a big, important task. We feel it is better to do it right than do it fast.

"Interim Rabbi" is a specialized job category. Interim Rabbis are trained and experienced in assisting a congregation transition from their previous rabbinic leadership to a new Rabbi. An Interim Rabbi isn't assigned: CST is engaged in selecting an individual from an array of applicants,



FROM ELI WEINZVEG

PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear Members of
Congregation Shomrei Torah,

I hope this message finds you well, despite the challenging times we find ourselves in. As the President of our congregation, I wanted to take a moment to address and update you all on several important matters that are currently on our minds.

First and foremost, our hearts go out to the people of Israel as they continue to endure the devastating impact of these terrorist attacks. We stand in solidarity with our community in Israel, and our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by these senseless acts of violence. We reaffirm our commitment to supporting Israel and promoting peace in the region through dialogue and understanding.

In other news, I am pleased to report that our search for an Interim Rabbi is making significant progress. We are working diligently to find a Rabbi who will guide us through this transitional period with wisdom and compassion. We understand the importance of strong leadership during this

time of change, and we are committed to ensuring a seamless transition for our congregation.

Additionally, I would like to share that the landslide mitigation efforts are in progress and will continue to be as the rainy season approaches. We are in constant contact with the City of Santa Rosa and FEMA to ensure continued efforts to facilitate a resolution to this disaster. Thanks to the hard work of our dedicated volunteers and the support of our community, we have made significant strides in safeguarding our synagogue and its surroundings. The safety of our members remains our top priority, and we will continue to monitor and maintain these measures to ensure everyone's well-being.

As we begin the New Year, I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for each and every one of you who make up our congregation. Together, we have faced challenges and celebrated joys, and our unity and resilience have been truly inspiring. May this upcoming year bring us peace, good health, and continued growth as a congregation. Thank you for your unwavering support, and may we all be inscribed for a year of blessings in the Book of Life.

L'Shana Tova U'Metuka - Wishing you a sweet and happy New Year!

to identify someone whose Jewish values and practices, as well as personal style, are a good match with ours.

But there is a mutual understanding that an Interim Rabbi is essentially a placeholder; maintaining CST programming and community and offering guidance while we seek a longtime arrangement.

**? What's a Rabbi Emeritus?
What does the title mean for
Rabbi George's involvement
with Congregation Shomrei Torah?**

"Emeritus" is an honorary description. It allows retired professionals in certain fields (especially academics and clergy) to continue to hold their title.

It's a way of expressing respect and appreciation for Rabbi George's service to Congregation Shomrei Torah and indicating our ongoing institutional support for him in retirement, should he ever choose to be engaged in professional activities (such as teaching or writing).

Rabbis Emeriti typically step back temporarily from involvement with

their onetime congregation, to allow members of the community to look ahead and to establish a positive relationship with their new rabbinic leader. Following that kind of gap period, Rabbi George has expressed his intention to eventually return, both participating as a member of the CST community and possibly occasionally offering his professional talents as well.



Regular updates to the CST community can be found at www.cstsr.org/rabbinic-transition-updates.



JOIN US ON THE SECOND FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH AT 6:15 PM.

\$18 for CST members
\$22 for non-members
Kids 13 & under are free

Evening Schedule
 6:15 – 6:45 PM – Shabbat Blessings & Meal
 6:45 – 7:10 PM – Mi Shebeirach & Kaddish
 7:15 – 8:15 PM – Speaker Presentation

Reserve your seat: www.cstsr.org/rabbis_tisch

November 10th



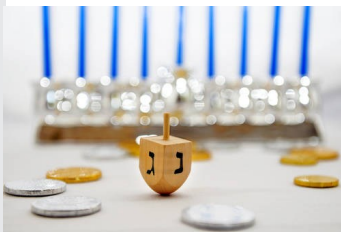
Jeff Nathanson, Executive Director and Art Curator of the Museums of Sonoma County, will discuss "Museums and the Art of Social Change". How concepts of social justice and social change can be communicated, explored, and ideas put into action.

January 12th



Nina Bonos, CST member and artist of our beautiful Torah mantles, will share her vibrant watercolor paintings and mixed-media collages reflect sunshine and abundance, growth and spirituality.

December 8th



Please join us for a tisch-style Shabbat Hanukkah party. Candle lighting? Check! Latkes? Check! Donuts? Check! Dreidels? Check! Music and fun for all ages? Definitely! We will light the candles together - bring a menorah with candles from home and wear your Hanukkah gear!

February 9th



Featuring our teen L'Taken participants. Please join us to hear what our teens had to say to our elected officials on their Washington DC L'Taken trip. During this special Shabbat service, we will be honoring these teens committed to social justice and hearing excerpts from their speeches.

Join your Shomrei Torah family at the Rabbi's Tisch (table) in lieu of regular Friday night Shabbat service. Start with Kiddush, enjoy a catered communal dinner, then gather around a tisch for Shabbat blessings, Kaddish) and the special evening program. Please reserve your seat in advance to attend in person.



Who can sponsor an Oneg?
 YOU! We invite individuals, committees, chavurah, adult B'Mitzvah cohorts, etc!

Why sponsor an Oneg?
 In honor of a milestone, the birth of a child, anniversary, or just because. It is a great way to contribute back to the community and to support the work of our amazing Oneg committee.

What does sponsoring an Oneg entail?

You can shop for and bring your own refreshments on the Friday of your Oneg OR you can make a one-time donation of \$108, and we will shop for you!

How do I sponsor an Oneg?

Complete the Oneg Sponsorship Form, and a member of our staff will connect with you to begin planning.

www.cstsr.org/form/oneg



A view of our mission

This year was the first time I was able to attend Simchat Torah. I watched the Torah be unfurled, and eager hands reached out to take hold. People stepped closer to each other to ensure enough support. As the Torah stretched across the sanctuary, children danced in the center.

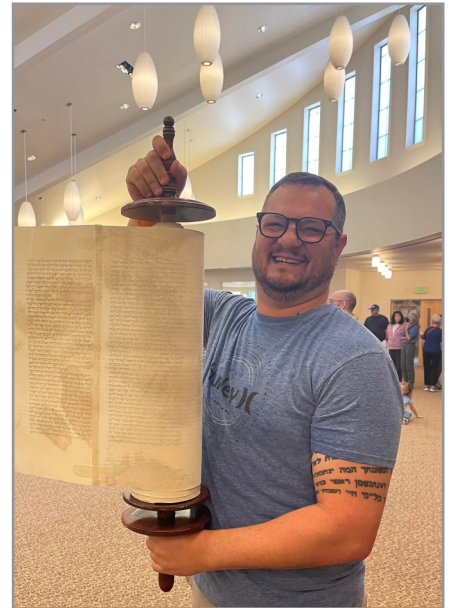
We listened to Deuteronomy, then Genesis, from end to beginning, followed by Rabbi George pointing out various highlights spanning the length of the Torah. And then we rolled the Torah back up to begin this year anew.

Aspects of our mission statement really came into view that day. Like what I witnessed at Simchat Torah, people throughout the years have eagerly reached out to take hold of the “responsibility” for creating, building, and sustaining this community. Throughout the years, people from various backgrounds stepped closer to one another, resulting in a “sensitive, caring and supportive congregational life.” Spanning across multiple generations, we have and continue to “cultivate and nurture a love and understanding of Jewish heritage” that sometimes can even result in dancing. And then we roll up our sleeves and begin anew committed to creating space for people to continue to “worship God: and

support the principles of equality, freedom and shalom among all peoples.”

As we enter the 50th year of Congregation Shomrei Torah, we are not strangers to having experienced many beginnings and endings together. There will be times of celebrations and times of disappointment and loss. Celebrating the legacy of Rabbi George will also include sadness as he transitions toward retirement. At the end of his rabbinate, there will also be a new beginning filled with opportunities for our community to demonstrate all I witnessed at Simchat Torah.

And if the past two years serving as your Executive Director have taught me anything about the resiliency, generosity, compassion, and dedication of the Shomrei Torah membership, staff, and clergy, is that those times of challenge will also include times of joy, community, singing, laughter, love and even dancing.



Continue the Tradition!

The Tradition of Giving, now in progress, is an opportunity for us to amplify our impact. This tradition, which commenced on the break-fast of Yom Kippur and extends through January 31, 2024,



is the cornerstone of our congregation's values, embodying the spirit of tzedakah and community support. The generosity of our congregation has supported the growth of CST programming and the cultivation of a vibrant Jewish community. As we step into our 50th year, we invite you to participate in the Tradition of Giving, ensuring that our traditions and values continue to flourish. Let us celebrate our journey together, embracing the legacy of our past and the promise of our future.

Your support continues to make a meaningful impact! Please give as generously as possible. Thank you for being part of our remarkable journey. Together, we honor the past and shape the future.

GivingTuesday

Tuesday, November 28

Your donation on GivingTuesday supports Congregation Shomrei Torah's Tradition of Giving campaign. Stay tuned in your weekly CST Connect email for this call to donate.

GivingTuesday is a global generosity movement unleashing the power of radical generosity. GivingTuesday was created in 2012 as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good. Since then, it has grown into a year-round global movement that inspires hundreds of millions of people to give, collaborate, and celebrate generosity.





The Jewish Meditation Center Congregation Shomrei Torah

Jewish mindfulness connects meditation to the wisdom of our tradition and the seasons of the Jewish calendar. No previous experience or knowledge is necessary to take part.

By practicing together, we enhance our ability to listen to the voice within and expand our sense of interconnectedness.



Rabbi George, leader of the Shomrei Torah community for more than 25 years, a graduate of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality's Jewish Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Training Program. Over the last two decades, he has developed Buddhist and Jewish meditative practices.



Alissa Hirshfeld, M.A., a licensed psychotherapist and certified Jewish Spiritual Director, has been practicing meditation for over 30 years; has studied with many esteemed Jewish and Buddhist meditation teachers; and has taught mindfulness meditation and yoga in secular, religious, and healing settings.

MEDITATION RETREAT

Gratitude: The Heart of Wisdom and the Gateway to Joy

November 19, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM.

\$18 for members; \$22 for non-members. Offered in person only, please register to attend.

Jewish tradition teaches that the only prayers we offer in the World to Come are prayers of gratitude. Join us at this half-day in-person retreat for the opportunity to refresh our grateful hearts and embrace joy in our everyday lives.

There will be plenty of time for learning, sitting, walking, and being in community. We will meet in silence from 9 am to noon to learn and meditate together. Afterwards, we will share a light lunch together.

Weekly Meditation

Tuesdays

Join us by Zoom or Live Stream three Tuesdays per month, 5:30-6:30 PM. Conducted by Rabbi George Gittleman or Alissa Hirshfeld, meetings include teaching, meditation instruction, and periods of silence.

Thursdays

From 7:30 to 8:00 AM on Thursday mornings, brief meditation sessions are facilitated by Lisa Ehrlich or another member of the Creating Sacred Space community. It's an opportunity to start the day from a place of peace and reflection and deepen our practice together.

No previous experience or knowledge is necessary to take part.

Visit the meditation page to find regular and special-session dates, to view past sessions and access meditation resources. For email reminders and links, sign up through the office at aa@cstr.org.

Creating Sacred Space sessions are open to all, at no charge. **ALL ARE WELCOME**, whether you are completely new to meditation or an experienced practitioner looking to deepen your practice.

www.cstr.org/meditation.html

FROM ERICA WISNER

CANTORIAL SOLOIST & B'MITZVAH COORDINATOR



The recent events in Israel have been felt intensely by the whole “am”, the people of Israel, who are spread throughout the world. These days are dark, scary, overwhelming, and sad. When our extended *mishpacha*, our family, is hurting, it’s challenging to think about much else.

However, as I write this, I realize many special musical *Shabbatot* are on the calendar in the next several months and if you’re like me, the music of Shabbat is not only a mode of prayer and a connection to the Divine but also a release and a salve. Especially during tough times, I can’t help but feel how important it is that we take advantage of our opportunity to partake in what Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel calls a “palace of time” and let Shabbat help lift, and maybe even heal our spirits.

In November, Congregation Shomrei Torah will continue our longstanding tradition of sharing an interfaith gathering with Christ Church United Methodist with music focused on gratitude and thanks. December brings us the light of Hanukkah and in addition to classic Hanukkah songs, there’s sure to be a parody (or two!) to sing along with. Our annual MLK Shabbat is in January and highlights the music of the civil rights era while honoring the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Also, in January is *Shabbat Shira*, the Shabbat of Song. This Shabbat is specially designated because it corresponds to the reading of *Parsha Beshalach* where Moses and Miriam lead the Israelites out of Egypt and across the sea from slavery into freedom. Once on the other side, the children of Israel sing songs of gratitude, including *Shirat Hayam*, the Song of the Sea where our song of freedom, *Mi Chamocha*, comes from. You won’t want to miss this *Shabbat Shira* service featuring special music.

In love and strength, *Am Yisrael Chai!*



The mission and purpose of Lifelong Learning is to offer educational opportunities for adult congregants of all age groups and all levels of Jewish learning. While program topics vary widely, they will include a connection to Judaism, Jewish life, or issues of importance to Jews.

www.cstsr.org/lifelong_learning

Service Leading WORKSHOP



Service Leading Workshop

Wednesday, November 1, 7:00 PM

Interested in learning how to lead Friday night services? If you have a basic familiarity with the Friday evening Shabbat service and want to learn how to

lead it at CST, join Rabbi George and Cantorial Soloist Erica Wisner for this workshop.



Lunch and Learn

Wednesday, January 10, 12:00 PM

David Bocarsly, Executive Director of the Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California (JPAC), the voice of California’s Jewish community to the State Capitol and the largest single-state coalition of Jewish organizations in the nation



Adult, Child & Baby CPR/AED Class

Monday, November 6, 7:00 PM

This lifesaving CPR class will be helpful in becoming prepared for the first few critical minutes when someone needs medical assistance. During the 1.5 hour session, Paramedic Ted Williams will teach you skills and knowledge about scene safety, CPR for adults and children, use of the AED, and choke saving. This course is offered in person only and meets OSHA requirements for workplace certification. \$36 members \$45 non-members, LIMIT 20.

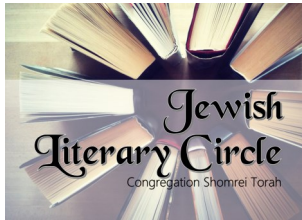


Bereavement Lunch

Sunday, March 3, 12:30 PM

We invite those who have experienced a loss in the past year to a special gathering. Lunch will be provided by the Caring Committee and Congregation Shomrei Torah. We’ll eat, talk, and simply be together. We will also be honoring those who have died over the last few years. There is comfort in community. Hosted by the Caring Committee and Rabbi George Gittleman. This event is available in person only.

INTEREST GROUPS



Jewish Literary Circle

Third Thursday of the month at 4:30 PM

Please join us in person at CST or on Zoom. The Zoom link is available in our weekly CST Connect email, or by request.

Free, all are welcome. Our focus is Jewish literature and other published materials. Through lively discussions, participants enjoy each other's insights. If you have questions about the group or are interested in joining, please contact the office.

November 16: The Dawning of the Day by Haim Sabato.
December 21: Red Sea Spies: The True Story of Mossad's Fake Diving Resort by Rafi Berg.



Chavurah - 20's, 30's, & 40's

Wednesday, November 29, 6:30 PM

This gathering is for people who are interested in being a part of a Chavurah based on age group.

Our hope is to facilitate the creation of a Chavurah for people in their 20's, a separate Chavurah for people in their 30's and a separate one for people in their 40's. Join a Chavurah at www.cstsr.org/chavurah-social-groups.



Torah Study

Saturday Mornings at 8:45 AM

CST's Torah Study is a lively discussion of the week's Torah portion, led by Rabbi George or a temple member.

Participants represent a range of knowledge and perspectives. Newcomers are welcome, whether you've read any Torah or know Hebrew. We invite you to study with us!



Let's Dance!

Every Sunday, 6:15 PM - 7:00 PM

Don't know how to dance? I will teach you. Know how to dance? Come teach me. Katie Evenbeck taught Zumba for over a decade in Occidental. This class is geared to all fitness levels. \$8 CST member, \$18 non-members per class. Contact the office to register.



Women's Retreat Returns!

Save the Date: Weekend of November 15 - 17, 2024 at Camp Newman

We hope you'll join us in the fall of 2024 at Camp Newman in the newly constructed lodging. Pricing and more information to follow.

Women's Groups at CST

Women's groups are a great way to connect with other members. Please contact the office for more information and to get involved.

- * Women's Knitting & Crochet Group - Second and last Mondays of the month from 1:00 to 3:00pm, alternating between meeting on Zoom and at CST.
- * Women's Dinner Group - The original dinner group, formed in 2018, continues to meet at different restaurants each month. The members of the group started as strangers and, over time, have become treasured friends. A second group has recently been added.

Contact the office to get involved.



Men's Retreat

Sunday, April 14, 2024, 9.00 AM to 4.00 PM

This will be meaningful time to celebrate our relationship with Rabbi George and get to know each other better. Within 5 miles of downtown Santa Rosa. More information will be coming in your weekly CST Connect email, please SAVE THE DATE.



What's Cooking at CST?

"What's Cooking at CST" returns with a series of Jewish cooking and baking events. Save the date for these upcoming cooking classes:

Dec 21, 7-8:30 PM

Feb 15, 7-8:30 PM

April 18, 7-8:30 PM

Offered in-person only. LIMIT 18 participants per class. Members: Donation welcomed, non-members: \$18.

THANK YOU!



Thank You Denise Harrison for Your Many Years of Service!

Denise is retiring on November 1, 2023. For many of us, Denise is the face of Shomrei Torah. The person who first welcomed us into the community, answered our questions and guided us as we sought to find a Jewish home in Sonoma County.

Warm and welcoming, over the 25+ years of her service to the congregation, Denise did as much as anyone to establish the culture of inclusion and caring that we have today. In addition to being our receptionist and general

helping hand in the office, for many years, Denise was my personal assistant, scheduling appointments, answering correspondence, giving me directions (I am directionally challenged and especially before GPS, Denise guided me to many appointments), remembering names (she has the memory of an elephant!), etc. We were a great team and those were some of the best years of my time at Shomrei Torah.

Denise, know we love you and you will be sorely missed!

- From Rabbi George

Dear High Holy Day Donors and Volunteers,

Thank you to all who contributed in any way to make High Holy Days so memorable. Whether you donated your time to volunteer, read the Torah, shared a talk, participated in the choir, and/or made a financial contribution to offset the costs associated with High Holy Days, THANK YOU.



We are grateful to our High Holy Day musical volunteers who elevated our 2023-5784 services!

Shomrei Shira, our choir, was 36 people strong and prepared for the High Holy Days with total dedication of heart and soul.

Sopranos:

Alicia Kane
Arlie Moore
Dorothy Schwartzberg
Emily Hamp
JoAnne Grimshaw
Kelsey Perlman
Nancy Packard
Odalys Medianero
Tink Moss
Wendy Gross

Altos:

Alexis Boutin
Alissa Hirshfeld
Ann Sheppard
Anne Howson
Amy Haedt
Carolyn Carregui

Deborah Zitrin
Ellen Samuel
Jill Silverman
Laura Gittleman
Leslie Perlman
Linda Elyad
Roberta Berg
Tracy Candiotti
Virginia Harrison

Tenors:

Beverly McChesney
Charlie Catlett
Gary Amari
Neal Goldberg
Robin Briskin
Sam Rose
Sharon Pollack

Basses:

Craig Meltzner
Jim Campagna
Marty Graff
Russ Sawyer

Musical Collaborators:

Benjie Kushins
Dave Fichera
Ella Kushins
Gavi Geffner
Milly Fichera
Nolan Gasser
Sofia Fichera



SHOMREI TORAH CULTURAL COMMITTEE PRESENTS

A Season of Eclectic Music and Art

Register to attend at www.cstsr.org/cultural-events.



Musical Art Quintet

Sunday, December 3, 3:00 PM

The Musical Art Quintet, led by composer and bassist Sascha Jacobsen, merges classical and world music traditions, whether Jazz, Argentine Tango, Afro-Cuban, or Klezmer. They will perform the "Kanta Judezmo" oratorio, composed by Sascha Jacobsen. Sung in Ladino and English, it tells the story of the Sephardic Diaspora, through the eyes of an immigrant woman.

Shomrei Torah Art Show

Sunday March 17, 2024, 2:00 PM

Inspired by Shomrei Torah artists, we will be showcasing the breadth of talent in our congregation. A call for artists will be offered in November, 2023, stay tuned in your weekly CST Connect email for more information.



An Evening of Music by Dave Frishberg and Frank Loesser

Saturday April 6, 2024, 7:00 PM

Shomrei Torah member and vocalist Marni Davis and pianist Jonathan Davis will perform songs by jazz pianist and songwriter Dave Frishberg and composer/lyricist Frank Loesser, known for their wit and humor and for songs that provide a deeper commentary on life.

Celebrate!



Interfaith Thanksgiving Shabbat and Dinner with Christ Church United Methodist

Friday, November 17, 6:15 PM

Please join us at CST for a tisch-style celebration with Shabbat

dinner and table blessings, music and conversation with our longtime roommates at Christ Church United Methodist. While there will not be a regular service this evening, we will say Mi Shebeirach (prayers for healing) and Kaddish.

Please consider supporting Elisha's Pantry by bringing non-perishable, holiday-style foods to this event. We welcome items such as instant mashed potato mix, packaged dry stuffing, canned cranberry sauce, packaged nuts, packaged dried fruit, canned yams, cornbread mix, etc.



Shabbat Hanukkah Party

Friday, December 8, 6:15 PM

Please join us for a tisch-style Shabbat Hanukkah party. Candle lighting? Check! Latkes? Check! Donuts? Check! Dreidels? Check! Music

and fun for all ages? Definitely! We will light the candles together - bring a menorah with candles from home and wear your Hanukkah gear!



Shabbat Service Commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Friday, January 19, 6:15 PM

Join us for a moving Shabbat service commemorating the

spirit and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This service will feature the CST Choir and include songs of justice and hope as well as music from the Civil Rights era.



Shabbat Shira Service (Shabbat of Song)

Friday, January 26, 6:15 PM

Join us for Shabbat Shira and celebrate the Shabbat of Song with joyous music. Our choir, Shomrei Shira, (Guardian of Song), will sing at this service.

This Shabbat corresponds to the reading of Parsha Beshalach which includes Shirat Hayam, the Song of the Sea where our song of freedom, Mi Chamocha, comes from.



Purim Spiel Saturday, March 23, 2024

Purim at CST is not to be missed! Mark your calendars and save the date.

Passover Seder Tuesday, April 23, 2024

What plagues you? What liberates you? Passover at Shomrei Torah is more than the retelling of the ancient story of the Exodus; our interactive community Seder also honors our ongoing struggle for freedom, justice and equality. A delicious Passover meal will be served.



STaRS and the Israel-Gaza Conflict

By Lara Brown - Director of Education & Youth Engagement

Recently, as we all have been, I've been thinking about the crisis in Israel. Specifically, I've been reflecting on the complexity of holding dualities. How do I hold multiple truths at the same time that may conflict with each other? How do I move through the world knowing that so much tragedy and horror is occurring in a part of the world where I can't help? How do I allow myself to live and - dare I say it - enjoy life while those who are affected by the ongoing crisis in Israel cannot?

But then I am with the children here at STaRS, and they remind me that hope burns eternal. The greatest gift the children in our lives can give us is the gift of perspective and unbridled optimism even when things feel grim.

The magic of children is in their ability to see joy even when the adults around them cannot. And our job as their trusted adults is not to squash that flame with our own pessimism. Children are unintentional masters of holding difficult dualities and we would be greatly served as adults in following their lead.

Our focus at STaRS is to provide a safe and loving space to celebrate Jewish joy. We are going to remind our students to feel empowered within themselves by rejoicing in who they are. One good way we can help stomp out anti-semitism around the world is to foster a community of Chesed - Loving Kindness, right here at home.

At STaRS, we will be processing with any child who brings up the events in Israel. We will use developmentally appropriate language provided to us by Jewish LearningWorks, the Jewish Ed Project, PJ Library, and the URJ. We are avoiding specific details, but will remind children that we are safe here in our community.

If you would like more information on how to speak with your children at home, please see the resources below:

- * **How to Talk to Kids About What's Happening in Israel Right Now** (Sivan Zakkai, 2023)
<https://tinyurl.com/59hxxn7a>
- * **Have We Been Teaching Kids About Israel All Wrong?** (Sivan Zakkai, 2022)
<https://tinyurl.com/3f3rjrip>

- * **How to Talk to Children About Israel | Reform Judaism** (Robbie Gringras, date unknown)
<https://tinyurl.com/yzw8vdzw>
- * **Responding to Crisis** (Jewish Education Center Cleveland, 2015)
<https://tinyurl.com/3c9xdneh>
- * **Resources for Understanding the Current Israeli Palestinian Crisis** (Union for Reform Judaism)
<https://tinyurl.com/t5un7km9>
- * **Resources for Coping with Acts of Violence and Terror** (Union for Reform Judaism)
<https://tinyurl.com/39e2suvc>
- * **Exploring the Current Israeli-Palestinian Crisis** (Jewish Education Project, 2021)
<https://tinyurl.com/2z73pxxe>
- * **On The Map** (Jewish LearningWorks)
<https://tinyurl.com/5n8aeffz>
- * If you would like more information on ways to help the people of Israel and **CST's response** to the ongoing crisis, please visit our website:
www.cstsr.org/israel-support#

Thank you all for being a part of this Kehillah - Community. As I've been getting to know this congregation, I have been so grateful to see the strength of character and kindness that everyone holds for each other.



Kehillah Sonoma County Teens 9th - 12th Grade

*A meeting space for Jewish connection
and conversation*

Celebrating over three decades of
Jewish teens sharing current teen

topics and values together through a “Jewish Lens.” Teens
find their groups to be an important community and that the
discussions help them to discover their own beliefs and
voice. Join for connection and fun!

Meetings for the 2023-2024 school year will be on
alternating weeks, approximately twice a month at
Congregation Shomrei Torah.

To enroll, email Rick Concoff at concoff@yahoo.com.



Chevrotah: A Jewish Youth Group for 7th & 8th Graders

Welcome to Chevrotah, the middle school
class with a renewed focus on social/
educational experiences dedicated to
fostering friendship, personal growth, and
self-reflection.

Chevrotah, a mandatory component of CST’s B’Mitzvah
Program, is designed to engage students in self-reflection and
help them make better choices throughout their lives. By
incorporating Jewish values, teachings, and traditions, this
youth group offers a unique perspective on personal
development. Students will explore various topics such as
empathy, resilience, responsibility, and ethical decision-
making, all within a Jewish context.

For more information, contact Lara at lara@cstsr.org.

TEEN PROGRAMS AT SHOMREI TORAH



**SHORTY -
TEEN SOCIAL GROUP**
Social Events
Community Planning
Lasting Memories
cstsr.org/shorty


**KEHILLAH -
TEEN DISCUSSION GROUP**
Jewish Problem-Solving
Application of Jewish Values
Friendship and Meals
cstsr.org/kehillah





**MADRICHM -
TEEN WORK GROUP**
Give Back to the Community
Work Readiness Skills
Leadership Building
cstsr.org/madrichim

More Programs & Info :
www.cstsr.org




Parent Chats

Hosted by:
Rabbi Gittleman - Rick Concoff - Lara Brown

Please join STaRS parents, caregivers, and your rotating hosts as
we discuss various topics relevant to modern Jewish families

11/12 | 12/17 | 1/21 | 2/25 | 3/10 | 4/14
9:15 to 10:45 AM - During STaRS





Fall Camp
2nd-5th Graders



West Coast Party JR.
6th-8th Graders



Two events - One EPIC Weekend

NOVEMBER 10-12

Youth Director's Update

As we venture into another inspiring year at STaRS, I'm delighted to share the highlights of our journey thus far, as we collectively nurture faith, spirituality, and the bonds of our loving community.

A Memorable Opening Day

On September 10th, we opened our doors to eager young minds and their families. The attendance was heartwarming, and the day was filled with opportunities for children to meet their classmates and connect with their dedicated teachers. Parents had the chance to gather essential information, get acquainted with our teaching team, and, most importantly, forge connections with one another.

High Holy Days Reflection

The High Holy Days were a resounding success. Our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur family services saw an excellent turnout. These sacred moments allowed us to connect spiritually, celebrate joyously, reflect with intention, and strengthen our sense of community. During our daytime child care offering, our children enjoyed activities such as honey tasting, writing letters to loved ones, and reading Jewish stories. They also enjoyed opportunity to simply be themselves in the company of their Jewish peers.

Family Shabbat's Return

Families of all ages, including those young at heart, are warmly encouraged to join us for the Shabbat Shaboogie at 5:00 PM. Dinner will be served at 5:30 PM, followed by a soul-nourishing service approximately an hour after the meal. See upcoming dates below.

Monthly Parent Chats

Our monthly Parent Chats are an invaluable resource for our congregation. In September, Rabbi George led a heartfelt discussion on "Raising Jewish Children - Finding Ourselves," delving into the significance of nurturing your child's Jewish identity and how it is intertwined with our own. In November, I am honored to be your presenter, and I look forward to hosting the chat on 11/12 during STaRS.

Hanukkah Celebration

With Hanukkah approaching, STaRS is gearing up for our annual celebration. Join us on Sunday, December 10th from 9:00-11 AM. Keep an eye out for other fantastic community events and stay updated through the CST website and your weekly CST Connect email.

Embracing Community Service

We're excited to announce our community service days, starting on Sunday, November 19th. This unique initiative will replace our typical STaRS class day as we gather in the community for a morning of service and bonding. More information will be shared as we approach the event, but rest assured, this will be a meaningful opportunity to engage with our broader community and put our faith into action.

Our journey at STaRS this year is marked by growth, faith, and the strengthening of our beloved community. I am incredibly thankful for the dedication and enthusiasm of our congregation, and I look forward to the continued growth of our religious school. May we walk this path together with grace and purpose, nurturing the spiritual journey of our children and ourselves.

Kol Tuv, Lara Brown









COMMUNITY FAMILY SHABBATS

ALL ARE WELCOME

ENROLL INTO STaRS! (K-8TH)



ENROLL INTO KIDDISH! (2YR-4YR)



Upcoming Dates:

01/19/24

02/23/24

3/29/24

4/26/24

5/24/24

REGISTER FOR FAMILY SHABBAT



www.cstsr.org/family-shabbats.html

IT'S GOING TO BE A GREAT YEAR!

www.cstsr.org/religious_school - (707) 578-5519 - lara@cstsr.org

Landslide Update

By Christopher Reiger

It's that time of year again. We find ourselves adjusting to shorter days and dark afternoons. Sure, we're all totally modern sophisticates, but it's hard to ignore the still small voice asking if midsummer's protracted daylight will ever return. For the Shomrei Torah staff, leadership, and landslide-focused volunteers, that same voice sometimes asks if we'll ever reach the end of the landslide recovery process. The answer, of course, is a resounding "Yes!," but our engagement with FEMA, the City, and geotechnical engineers has made it clear the repair and resolution will take time. That fact can seem daunting, much like the winter darkness, but our just-around-the-corner holiday reminds us what to do – make more light! To that end, we thought we'd share some heartening updates.

Between January – August 2023, Shomrei Torah spent \$83,000 on landslide-related emergency expenditures. Thanks to our community's abundant generosity and the hustle and dedication of our staff and volunteers, we have received \$46,000 in designated gifts and grants to offset those costs. In addition, we have submitted our FEMA reimbursement request and are awaiting their final review. If approved,

FEMA will issue Shomrei Torah \$58,490, a figure that covers 100% of the emergency protective measures taken in the first few months following the landslide's start.

That's good and promising news, but there are more costs, present and future. Currently, we are working with the City to tarp the entire hillside in preparation for winter rains. The city will also be performing additional mitigation work to protect the houses below. As we mentioned in an earlier update, there will be substantial costs associated with geotechnical engineering and, of course, with the repair and improvement of our hillside and parking lot. Those are costs we anticipated, but we're not always so lucky! We recently learned that, because the landslide undermined our solar panels, forcing us to take them offline, Shomrei Torah is no longer receiving solar credits and we must pay PG&E an adjusted rate; in October, PG&E made us aware of a substantial, one-time fee that will be distributed across our electricity bills over the next few months, but we were also informed by PG&E that, if we don't replace or reinstall the solar panels, our 2024 electrical bills will be considerably higher.

These considerations are current priorities. We continue to communicate regularly with the City as well as with FEMA, and are confident that there is light at the end of this long tunnel.



Simchat Torah



SAC's Building Alliances



Trip to GLIDE San Francisco

IMPORTANT UPDATES

Financial Update

By Reuben Weinzev, VP Finance

We are happy to report that the new Fiscal year has started well. The finance committee meets bi-monthly, and the accounting firm, Nonprofit Suite, continues to provide financial reports and projections based on our annual budget. The committee is working on simplifying the financial statements and reviewing all funds to ensure compliance.

Here are a few observations from the first two months of the fiscal year 23/24:

- * As of October 15th, 168 member households increased their yearly commitments, totaling \$60,301 in annual financial contributions. Based on current annual membership commitments for the fiscal year, we are projecting \$685,370. Thank you!
- * We saw a substantial increase in donations this High Holy Days. (\$68,000 this year/ \$49,000 last year).
- * On the downside, inflation has been a factor in rising operational costs, and electricity costs are moving substantially higher due to offline solar panels due to the landslide.

We have a lofty goal of raising \$150,000 and 100% member participation for the Tradition of Giving. This money is essential as it closes the gap between the income received by membership contributions and our ongoing operating expenses.

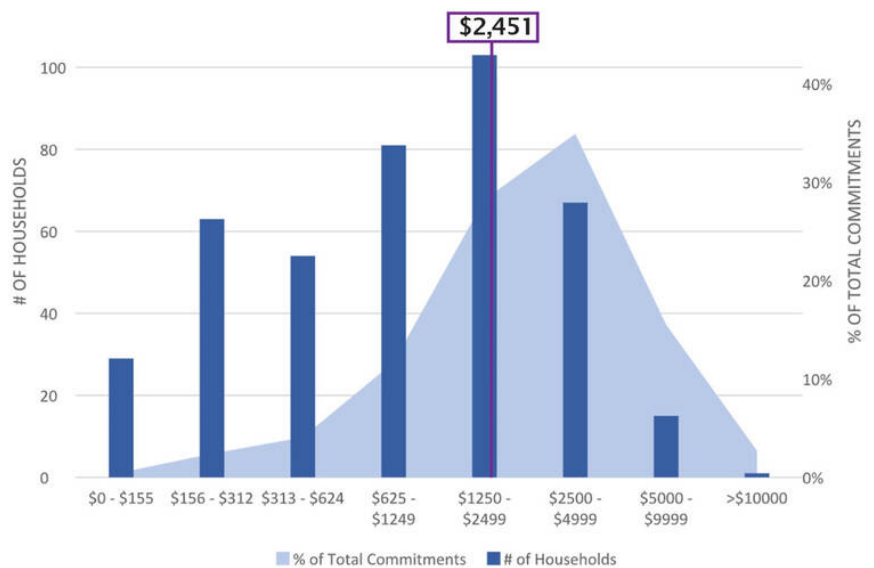
Thank you to all who responded regarding your 23/24 annual financial commitment to Congregation Shomrei Torah. We have yet to hear from 272 households. Your response gives the finance

committee and board a more accurate snapshot of projected income compared to our anticipated budget. Reach out to Katie Evenbeck to discuss any modifications to your annual contribution.

This chart shows the distribution of members' yearly commitments for the current fiscal year. It illustrates two critical features of our operations. First, more than half of our members can commit no more than \$1,250 annually, a number well below our per-household annual cost of \$2,451. Second, members representing just 20% of our membership make contributions that account for over 50% of total yearly commitments.

This membership dynamic is not unique to Shomrei Torah; however, it necessitates that each community member/household make a significant but manageable annual commitment to Shomrei Torah.

Wherever you fit on this chart, your annual financial commitment is the foundation of our community. We are grateful for your investment in our shared future.



Celebrate Shabbat

Join us to study, sing and pray. All are welcome.



Shabbat occurs every week and is central to Jewish life. Shabbat Services includes blessings over candles, wine, challah, and more.

The blessings can help us slow down, unwind, and truly set Shabbat apart from the rest of the days of the week, whether with centuries-old customs and traditions or with new rituals and practices that fit our modern lives.

Join us in person or online:

Friday Evening Shabbat Service

Every Friday evening at 6:15 PM

Saturday Morning Torah Study

Every Saturday morning at 8:45 AM

Saturday Morning Shabbat Service

Every Saturday morning at 10:30 AM

Having Trouble Connecting to Us Virtually?

- Need help with Zoom or Streaming?
- Would you like to listen through your phone?

We are here to help!

Call (707) 578-5519

Or email zoom@cstsr.org

Want to advertise your business in our publications?

	MEMBER	NON-MEMBER
Business Card	\$265	\$330
Quarter Page	\$580	\$625
Half Page	\$1100	\$1490

More information available at:
www.cstsr.org/the-voice-newsletter



We're on Facebook!

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS CONGREGATION

- To worship God in accordance with the beliefs and teachings of Reform Judaism.
- To cultivate and nurture in ourselves and our children a love and understanding of Jewish heritage.
- To develop a sensitive, caring and supportive congregational community where all are welcome and included.
- To act with responsibility and compassion in our community.
- To support the principals of equality, freedom and shalom among all peoples.