



CONGREGATION  
SHOMREI TORAH  
שומרי תורה

October 2021 - January 2022

# VOICE & VIEW SPECIAL EDITION



## TRADITION TO GIVING

### Tradition of Giving – Your support is vital!

Our 3rd Annual Tradition of Giving Campaign began at the end of break-the-fast on Thursday, September 16, 2021.

**Last year our fundraising efforts were a resounding success—  
THANKS to all of you!**

So much has happened since then, but some things have not changed... only 60% of our operating costs are covered by membership pledges.

The importance of YOUR participation cannot be overstated. Congregation Shomrei Torah works to support the principles of equality, freedom and *shalom* for all people—something we all agree deserves our continued attention. Your donation, regardless of the amount, makes a difference. Please give as generously as possible. Thank you.



Stay up-to-date with the most recent Covid-19 related updates and how they affect Shomrei Torah.

visit [www.cstsr.org/covid\\_updates](http://www.cstsr.org/covid_updates)

### Save the Date

**Rabbi Michael Robinson  
Memorial Lecture and Tisch**  
*Friday, December 10*

Our country is based on a few myths: If you go to school, get a job and work hard, everything is going to be ok. Every day, we meet thousands of people who challenge those myths...



Join us this December for our annual Michael Robinson Memorial Lecture, more details on page 3.

### Introduction to Judaism Class Classes Begin in October

Congregation Shomrei Torah is pleased to offer an "Introduction to Judaism" course taught by Rabbi Cheryl Rosenstein.

We will learn the basic elements of Judaism, holidays, the synagogue service and the practical aspects of observing Judaism.

All are welcome to attend; it does not matter whether you wish for a refresher in Judaism, are "just curious", more details on page 4.

## From Rabbi George Gittleman

Before you enter our sanctuary, you pass through Shalom Hall and the stained-



Rabbi George

glass windows installed along the length of the curving wall. Take a close look the next time you visit and you will see that the windows illustrate a description from the Talmud listing what it means to live a Jewish life:



*To honor your parents*  
*To engage in deeds of loving kindness*  
*To prioritize learning*  
*To welcome guests*  
*To visit the sick*  
*To celebrate with bride and groom*  
*To comfort the mourner*  
*To be devoted in prayer*  
*To pursue shalom*

Which of these values is most important to you? As we embark upon this new year, what new commitments might you consider making in order to fulfill some of what this Talmudic teaching instructs us about living Jewishly?

While all these values are meaningful, “welcoming guests” calls to me the most. When I arrived twenty-five years ago, the founders of Shomrei Torah had already established an inclusive culture for all Jews and their diverse families who desired to be a part of a pluralistic Jewish community. Over time, we learned more

about hospitality from Christ Church United Methodist, where we shared space for decades. We learned about the value of nametags—and then name buttons—and other ways to welcome people, like having greeters, a mainstay of church life but foreign to most synagogues at the time. And we grew. We have welcomed hundreds of Jews into our community over many years.

We are still a welcoming place, but we’ve learned from the Visioning Process that feeling welcomed is not consistent or felt by all. There are many factors that influence an individual’s experience, like our size and the fact that those of

us that grew up with the congregation know each other, which feels great to us but can be

off-putting to folks trying to enter our community.

Our roots and our history as a welcoming community remain. The “muscle memory” is there: we know how to welcome guests, strangers, the person who finds their way to us because they lost a loved one and want to say *Kaddish*, or because this week’s news was scary, and they are searching for a moment of connection and reassurance. We know how to reach out to those who are simply looking for a Jewish place to call home, as all of us once were.

Whoever the person, no matter what the circumstance, as the new year begins, let’s recommit ourselves to audacious hospitality, opening our arms and our hearts to everyone in our community, whether we know them or not, whether they are members, guests, friends or strangers to us. After all, God is in the space between people but only when we truly see one another.

## From the President of the CST Board of Directors, Ann DuBay Joyfully Facing Uncertainty

Economist Ben Bernanke said, “If you want to understand geology, study earthquakes. If you want to understand the economy, study the Depression.” Perhaps we should add: “If you want to understand uncertainty, study Sonoma County in 2021.”

Because of the time needed to edit, format, print, and mail the View, I’m writing this article in early July – about three months before it lands in your mailbox in October. In pre-pandemic, pre-fire times, I would have written a congratulatory column lauding the perfect execution of the recently celebrated High Holy Days. I would have written that column with 99.9% certainty that there would be no disasters between July and October to interrupt our best-laid Holy Day plans.

Today, I’m reluctant to make any assumptions. I know that the Board intends (and Rabbi George, Cantorial Soloist Erica Wisner, the Religious

*However, as I write this, the county’s COVID cases are on the rise and we’re in the midst of one of the driest years on record, making our community even more vulnerable to devastating fires.*

Practices Committee and staff are working toward) being together physically and spiritually for *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, and *Sukkot*. I know that the Religious School Committee and staff are preparing for

the in-person, on-time opening of STARS in September. And I know that the Lifelong Learning Committee is planning an exciting and enriching schedule of classes and speakers for the new year.

However, as I write this, the county's COVID cases are on the rise and we're in the midst of one of the driest years on record, making our community even more vulnerable to devastating fires. So, the chances of a 'normal' fall and winter are perhaps 50-50.

In the face of this uncertainty, it's sometimes easy to give up, using the excuse, "Why make such a big effort, when the event/activity/gathering may not even take place?"

But the reason I love and am committed to Shomrei Torah is that I know with 100% certainty that no matter how many disruptions or disasters we face, the CST community will creatively adapt. We will find new ways of celebrating, praying, and gathering that reflect the changing reality of climate change's impact on our environment, and that honor and respect our changing culture and demographics.

This is what our visioning process is all about; it's why we end the Seder with the words "Next year in Jerusalem"; and it's how Jews have survived and thrived for millennium. So, please, join us by volunteering, participating or contributing as we audaciously and joyfully move forward together -- despite the uncertainties.

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## From Executive Director, Katie Evenbeck

It is hard to imagine that it has only been three months since I arrived at Congregation Shomrei Torah. I vividly recall the first in-person Tisch in August when we celebrated Rabbi George's 25th anniversary. Throughout August and September, including the High Holy Days, I have been fortunate to meet so many people. Thank you for the incredible welcome I have received.

*The visioning process and this year's annual giving campaign are intricately connected. The visioning process allows us to move from a system that tells us **that** you give to a system gives us a better understanding of **why**.*

As we turn towards the fall and winter months, we are kicking off the 3rd annual Tradition of Giving! Your generosity helps sustain the day-to-day operations of CST and the programs and services we provide. The visioning process and this year's annual giving campaign are intricately connected.

The visioning process allows us to move from a system that tells us we **THAT** you give to a system gives us a better understanding of **WHY**. I am confident that, through our visioning process, your continued generosity and our conversations, we will chart the course for our continued viability and growth for years to come.

On the second Friday of each month, join your CST family at the Rabbi's *Tisch* (table) in lieu of regular Friday night *Shabbat* Services. Come at 6:15 PM to start with *Kiddush* and a catered communal dinner. Or gather around a *tisch* at 7:00 PM for *Shabbat* blessings and prayers (including *Kaddish*), and the special evening program. \$12 suggested donation for the catered meal, register to attend on our website.

**A Child's Life on a Kibbutz:  
a Personal Story with CST  
Member Malka Osserman**  
*Friday, October 8*



In her talk, Congregation Shomrei Torah member Malka Osserman will explore the different emotional, spiritual and social effects of growing up in children's houses rather than a nuclear family. She will explore the historical necessity of raising children communally in the absence of a support system for the young pioneers on the *kibbutz*.

This system arose in 1920 out of a combination of a necessity and ideology. A group of young adult pioneers with no grandparents to help were having babies but had no clue how to raise them. So they adopted the communal system and sent some adults to be trained in childcare. They also were heavily influenced by Freudian psychology,

*Continued on page 3*

believing that neurosis was rooted in the way children related to parents in traditional bourgeois nuclear families.

In her presentation, Malka will touch on her own family experiences and the influence *kibbutz* upbringing played in her life and discuss the latest research of *kibbutz* psychological effects on adult children of the Israeli *Kibbutzim*. Read more about Malka on our website.

## The Alliance for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide: *Where Have We Been and Where Are We Heading* Friday, November 12

Barbara Lesch McCaffry will be speaking about the role of the Alliance in preventing the escalation of prejudice into genocide and the annual lecture series on the Holocaust and Genocide at Sonoma State University, now entering its 39th year. She will be joined by Rachel Sibley, the newly



Barbara Lesch McCaffry



Rachel Sibley

appointed coordinator of the Alliance Education Committee, who arranges presentations by Holocaust and genocide survivors and descendants in local schools and in the community. The talk will include brief video clips of local Holocaust survivors: Hans Angress, Al and Susanne Batzdorff and Lillian Judd, z'll.

Read more about Barbara and Rachel on our website.

## Rabbi Michael Robinson Memorial Lecture with David Goodman - *What Disaster Reveals* Friday, December 10

Our country is based on a few myths: If you go to school, get a job and work hard, everything is going to be OK. Every day, we meet thousands of people who challenge those myths.



David Goodman, Hunger Relief Worker and CEO, arrived at the Redwood Empire Food Bank in the summer of 2000 with a vision of ending hunger in our community. David has overseen impressive growth of the Redwood Empire Food Bank over two decades. In addition to its three hunger-relief initiatives—Every Child – Every Day; Senior Security; and the Neighborhood Hunger Network—the REFB is a primary source of food for 175 other non-profit and faith-based organizations that operate a wide range of human service and hunger relief programs. Read more about David on our website.

## Daniel Lienau, art conservationist, speaks about WW1 artist Max Pollak (1886-1970) - *A Diary in Prints, 1905-1955* Friday, January 14

A retrospective of Max Pollak's remarkable color aquatints, from his time as a student and then a World War I official artist of the Austrian Army, his time



in Vienna and his portraits of friends (including Sigmund Freud) and the Modern Dance world of the 1920s, to his travels throughout Europe and the Holy Land in the late 1920s and again in the mid-1930s.

The talk will also feature examples of his work after he and his wife Friedl moved to the US in 1927, first to New York and then traveling across the U.S. to their final stop in San Francisco in 1938, where he chronicled the city and did portraits of its residents. There will be examples of his work from the Pollaks' trips to Mexico to Guatemala. Most of Pollak's paintings were left in Austria and destroyed by Hitler in the 1930s as "Degenerate Art." The Annex Galleries obtained the personal print collection of his wife, Friedl, which consisted of single works from his broad oeuvre. Read Daniel's full bio on our website.

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## Mindfulness Meditation

*Sundays at 5:00 PM*

See our calendar for exact dates,  
[www.cstsr.org/calendar](http://www.cstsr.org/calendar)

Jewish mindfulness connects meditation to the wisdom of our tradition and the seasons of the Jewish calendar. Sessions include teaching, meditation instruction, and periods of silence. No previous experience or knowledge is necessary! By practicing together, we enhance our ability to listen to the voice within and expand our sense of interconnectedness.

Creating Sacred Space sessions are usually held on three Sunday afternoons a month. They are typically conducted by Rabbi Gittleman, a graduate of the Jewish Mindfulness Meditation Program of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, and a practitioner of both Buddhist and Jewish meditative practices over the past two decades. We are also excited to occasionally welcome guest leaders such as Rabbi Lavey Derby, Alissa Hirshfeld and Cantor Sherith Spencer-Shapiro.

Fall and winter themes will include:

- *Hachnasat Orchim:*  
Welcoming the stranger
- *Hanukkah:* Festival of Light
- *Hoda'ah:* Gratitude
- *Tu B'Shevat:* New Year of the Trees

Visit the meditation page of the Shomrei Torah website [[www.cstsr.org/meditation.html](http://www.cstsr.org/meditation.html)] to find session dates, leaders, and times, and to view past sessions and access meditation resources. For a weekly direct email reminder, sign up through the office at [aa@cstsr.org](mailto:aa@cstsr.org).

Creating Sacred Space sessions are open to all, at no charge, whether in person or virtually -- feel free to bring family or friends!

## The Bagel Club at Shomrei Torah

*First Sunday of the month at 9:00 AM*

See our calendar for exact dates,  
[www.cstsr.org/calendar](http://www.cstsr.org/calendar)



The Bagel Club invites you to join with us on the first Sunday of the month, September through June, to meet at Shomrei Torah for a nice Bagel brunch followed by live speakers.

Our programs include talks about Jewish life and genealogy, Israeli politics and culture and Jewish archeology. We will also cover issues of local interest, such as the use of solar power, local parks and recreation, finance and Covid vaccines. During the year, we will also hear from Rabbi George and Cantorial Soloist Erica. We typically have one field trip; this year we plan to visit Cline Vineyards in Sonoma and learn about organic vineyard practices.

Our brunch always includes a selection of bagels, cream cheese and lox along with all the trimmings and other Jewish specialty brunch items. A special bonus that was missed during Covid is the opportunity to sit and visit with each other.

Although originally started as a men's group, Bagel Club is open to all genders. Bagel Club has funded several significant items for the congregation, such as LED light conversions and audio-visual equipment. We also have prepared meals for many congregational activities.

Look for each month's program in Shomrei Torah announcements and on the Shomrei Torah web page. We welcome all CST members and especially parents of STaRS students to join us while your child(ren) attend class.

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## Introduction to Judaism - 2021-2022 / 5782

*Classes begin in October, sign up at*

[www.cstsr.org/event/intro-to-judaism-2021.html](http://www.cstsr.org/event/intro-to-judaism-2021.html)

Tuition is free for members of Congregation Shomrei Torah,  
 \$72 per semester for non-members.

Visit our website for exact dates and to register for this class.



Congregation Shomrei Torah is pleased to offer an "Introduction to Judaism" course in two phases, beginning on Sunday, October 3rd, 2021 at 3:00 PM. The first series will run for 9 weeks and will be taught by Rabbi Cheryl Rosenstein, a member of Shomrei Torah and Rabbi Emerita of Temple Beth El in Bakersfield, CA, where she served for twenty-six years. Classes will meet at Congregation Shomrei Torah for 75 minutes. The second series will begin in mid-January, 2022.

Included in the lectures and discussion will be the basic elements of Judaism, with emphasis on the Jewish holidays, the synagogue service and the practical aspects of observing Judaism. All are welcome to attend; it does not matter whether you wish for a refresher in Judaism, are "just curious" or if you are a candidate for conversion or marriage. Members and non-members are invited.

## Wise Aging with Rabbi Meredith Cahn

*First Friday of each month at 11:00 AM*

See our calendar for exact dates, [www.cstsr.org/calendar](http://www.cstsr.org/calendar)

This group is based on, but not limited to, *Wise Aging: Living with Joy, Resilience and Spirit*, by Rabbi Rachel Cowan and Linda Thal. We will explore ways to find meaning, joy, acceptance and wisdom on our journey into our later years. Jewish and other texts, reflection and sharing, will let us learn from each other and from our sources. This class is currently available via Zoom only; please contact Meredith Cahn for the link: [mcahn2@mac.com](mailto:mcahn2@mac.com).



## Torah Study

*Saturday mornings at 8:45 AM*

See our calendar for exact dates, [www.cstsr.org/calendar](http://www.cstsr.org/calendar)

CST's Torah Study is a lively discussion of the week's Torah portion, led by Rabbi George or by a temple member. We represent a range of knowledge and perspectives. Newcomers are welcome, whether or not you've read any Torah or know any Hebrew. You may call the office to arrange to borrow a Torah text with commentary. We invite you to join us! Contact Fran Danoff with any questions, [frandanoff@aol.com](mailto:frandanoff@aol.com).

## Jewish Literary Circle

*Third Thursday of each month*

See our calendar for exact dates, [www.cstsr.org/calendar](http://www.cstsr.org/calendar)

FREE, all are welcome. Jewish Literary Circle is one of Shomrei Torah's LifeLong Learning programs. 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, please contact Sandy at [sandy@sidorsky.com](mailto:sandy@sidorsky.com).

- October 21: *Anne Frank Remembered* by Miep Geis - Autobiography of Miep Gies, the woman who helped the Frank family.
- November 18: *Two Among the Righteous Few* by Marty Brounstein - A Story of Courage in the Holocaust.
- Readings for December-January to be announced soon.

## Women's Interest Groups

After meeting on Zoom for a long time, the Women's Interest Groups are grateful to return to in person meetings. If enough people are interested, this is a good time to form a new dinner group, possibly a lunch group, new mah jongg groups and any other activities that will bring people together. Now that it's safe to attend movies, the group is ready to get back to meeting at the Summerfield Theater to watch movies.

If you are interested in joining or facilitating a group, if you would like any information about the current groups or have an idea for a future group, contact Ronnie Cohen Campagna at [ronniecc@gmail.com](mailto:ronniecc@gmail.com).

## Hanukkah Party Featuring SF Yiddish Combo

*Wednesday, December 1, 6:15 PM*



Join us for a congregational *Hanukkah* party with the rockin' klezmer band SF Yiddish Combo, a Shomrei Torah favorite.

All are welcome! We will have a group *Hanukkah* lighting (bring your own *Hanukkah* and candles to light with us), *latkes* and dancing!

The San Francisco Yiddish Combo (SFYC) was formed by accident when a love of Klezmer music collided with their collective backgrounds in every genre except Klezmer.

SFYC presents their own unique blend of everything that is Klezmer, mixed with jazz, blues, folk, and even hip hop.

Made up of classically trained musicians who enjoy stretching musical boundaries, the SFYC has played for groups all over the world; from China to Iceland and beyond.

We think you'll love their fresh spin on Klezmer, with plenty of recognizable nods to an eclectic mix of genres.

# STARS

Shomrei Torah Religious School

If we haven't had the opportunity to meet, my name is Brandon Binder and I am the Interim STaRS Director for the 2021-2022 school year. Prior to accepting this position, I've taught the KIDdish class for the past four years. Before that, I was Youth Director and URJ Service Corps Fellow.



I absolutely love the community at CST and look forward to working with you in this new capacity. Outside of CST, I've taught elementary school and middle school music for the past six years. I earned my bachelor's degree and teaching credential from Sonoma State University and I recently earned my master's degree from the University of Colorado, Boulder. I've spent many summers at Camp Newman on the senior staff team and worked at other synagogues throughout California.

I am so excited about STaRS this fall! We are committed to creating a safe experience for our students. Our school's top priorities are to provide an excellent Jewish education and build a deep sense of community with our younger generation. After a year of distance learning, Zoom, and FaceTime, what could be a better gift to our children?

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions about our religious school program.

**Brandon Binder,**  
rsdirector@cstsr.org



## Kehillah for Teens with Rick Concoff

Check out this new and exciting program for Jewish Teens Grades 8-12th!

Kehillah is the same kind of teen program we have always had, but with a new name. We gather every other week at Congregation Shomrei Torah and look at teen-related issues through a Jewish lens. We socialize, connect and eat together (covid-permitting).

Classes start in September, but students may join at any time of the year.

Special new feature: we are now offering a virtual portal at our live meetings! If you have cousins, friends, etc. who are outside of the area who are interested in this program, send them our way.

Register for this program by contacting Rick Concoff, Teen Educator, at concoff@yahoo.com, or 707-477-9196.

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## Erica Wisner - Cantorial Corner

Shortly after moving to Santa Rosa in 2008, I attended a Friday night service at CST. As I sat in the sanctuary, I was overcome with the deep feeling that this synagogue would play a large role in my family's future. I imagined the B'nei Mitzvah of kids I didn't even have yet and felt my values aligned with those of Shomrei Torah. Little did I know it would be so much more than that!



The Academy for Jewish Religion California (AJRCA), based in Los Angeles and founded in 2000, is a seminary unique in its structure. It offers flexibility in course load, low-residency requirements, and an engaging pluralistic approach. Several years ago, I attended a Western region Cantorial conference in Palm Springs where I had the opportunity to meet many AJRCA students and faculty. I virtually visited the school last December, observing and participating in classes and minyan. From the Director of Admissions, to the faculty and student liaisons, I found everyone to be incredibly warm, welcoming and inclusive. Between January and June of this year, I dipped my toe in the waters and took three courses as a nonmatriculated student. Upon completion of the first course, I knew AJRCA was the school for me and began the application process. I was accepted into the program over the summer and began my first true semester in August, a few weeks before Holy Days. As you know, Holy Days take a lot of preparation and my running joke had been, "Thank goodness I attend a Jewish school, so I have the High Holy Days off!"

My role at Congregation Shomrei Torah over the past seven years has immeasurably helped me prepare for school. While I have been blessed to grow in my job, there is much more to learn. More importantly, I know I have much more to give. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be on this path and thankful for the support of Rabbi George, our board of directors and each of you.

## Shomrei Torah Gift Shop

The Shomrei Shop is open again! We have a lot of new items, including jewelry, books, gifts, baby items and so much more. Come purchase a hostess gift to take to a Shabbat dinner! Or purchase a gift for that wedding couple! Come by during our regular office hours to take a look.

## Social Action Committee

The Social Action Committee plans to host local politicians to address concerns and a forum on anti-Asian relations. We also hope to continue presentations concerning criminal justice reform. By January 2022 we will be immersed in voter engagement as we head into a new political election period.

## Rabbi George Celebrated 25 Years as Our Rabbi

On July 9th, congregants completely filled our outdoor patio and even more joined virtually on Zoom as Rabbi George spoke about receiving his Honorary Doctorate from the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion for 25 years of service to the Jewish community.

Rabbi George also shared insight gleaned from his experience at Shomrei Torah as well as a vision for the future.

Twenty five years as a rabbi is not that unusual, but rarely does a rabbi have the honor of serving one congregation for that many years!





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Or email [zoom@cstsr.org](mailto:zoom@cstsr.org)

### 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 principles of equality, freedom and shalom among all peoples.